

II

MULLĀ ṢADRĀ'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE UNIFICATION ARGUMENT

2.1. ṢADRĀ'S ONTOLOGY

Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument is rooted in his general ontology. Definition of knowledge as a mode of existence is an attempt to redefine epistemology in terms of existence and its modalities. In this sense, Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge is an exercise in his 'gradational ontology.' Very often we find Ṣadrā reverting back to his ontology before discussing a particular problem in epistemology. His constant references to the principality of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) over against essence confirm the ontological weight of his thought. Therefore, we will begin with Ṣadrā's ontological assumptions and work our way to his theory of knowledge and the unification argument.

The first observation Ṣadrā makes concerning existence (*wujūd*) is that it is self-evident (*badīhī*). Although a common theme in Islamic philosophy, this has a particular significance for Ṣadrā's overall purpose to establish existence as the primary reality over against quiddity (*māhiyyah*). He develops a line of argument that can be summarized as follows: in everyday thinking, existential propositions do not present any particular problem. When we say 'there is a tree in the garden' or 'stars exist,' we have an intuitive grasp about the meaning of these statements: a tree, a horse, stars, my neighbor, the school building down the block 'exist.' i.e., they *are* within the realm of concrete and detectable existence. This minimal intuition

about the concrete reality of things is a prerequisite of the human mind, for all of our propositions and judgments depend on it. To stress this point, Ṣadrā borrows the term 'inscription' or 'impression' (*murtasimah*) from Ibn Sīnā¹ and states that the meaning of such self-evident statements is inscribed in our minds without the help of second-order conceptualizations. I know that the tree of which I speak here is an existent out there, presenting itself to me in some cognitive fashion. I have no need to explain the *meaning* of the existence of the tree in front of me other than assuring myself of its concrete existence if it really exists. Since all attempts to define primary concepts result in either infinite regression (*tasalsul*) or tautology (*dawr*), we take such concepts as self-evident.²

In this ordinary way of knowing things around us, the *existence* of things does not arise as an epistemic problem. We simply know that something exists. When we want to explain the meaning of the words 'is' and 'exist,' i.e., the copula, however, we are faced with a formidable task. First of all, as Kant would later state, the copula does not furnish us with any new knowledge about our subject. When I say that the tree in front of me exists, this does not say anything about the properties of the tree which distinguish it from other natural beings. Secondly, the absence of the copula in Arabic makes it even further compelling that we can talk about existence and its modalities without employing the copula at all. Thirdly, Ṣadrā argues that we can know something unknown to us by comparing it to more familiar things. But he hastens to add that there is nothing intuitively more known than existence. As Ṣadrā's great commentator Sabzawārī states, 'the notion of existence is one of the best-known things, but its deepest reality is in the extremity of hiddenness.'³

We run into a similar difficulty when we try to make existence known (*ta'rīf*) through logical definition (*ḥadd*) and description (*taṣwīr*).⁴ A logical definition is based on genus (*jins*) and specific differentia (*faṣl*). When we define man as rational animal, for instance, we refer to his genus 'animal' (*ḥayawān*)

and his differentia 'rational' (*nāṭiq*). Keeping in mind that definitions apply to classes and not to individuals, a genus designates the general category to which 'man' belongs whereas differentia denotes his specific attributes or difference from other members of the category of 'animal.' This, however, does not apply to existence because it has no genus or differentia. The reason is that to have a genus and/or differentia means to include something and exclude others. In logical terms, to be an 'animal' means to exclude the possibility of being a stone or star. But as we intuitively know, there is nothing outside existence, and as the ground of all there is, existence does not leave anything out. Ṣadrā's conclusion is that 'since existence is the most general and inclusive of all things, it has no genus, no differentia and no definition.'⁵ Therefore, whoever has thought of explaining existence with some other things has made a grave mistake because existence is more evident than them.'⁶

Nor can existence be described, for description is based on more evident concepts and definitions than the definiendum. As Ṣadrā insists, there is no term or concept known to be more evident and clear than existence despite the fact that we may not always be able to articulate it in such definitive terms. This suggests that existence can be explained only by itself. It is, however, obvious that this is a *petitio principii* and not a definition because defining something by itself begs the question. This leads Ṣadrā to conclude that existence has neither definition nor proof (*burhān*).⁷ In short, existence is the most evident of all concepts. This conclusion, however, is misleading if not wrong because it construes existence as a concept rather than a reality *in concreto*. But this is precisely what Ṣadrā ought to avoid if he is to ground all cognition in existence and its modalities. Furthermore, it is by positing existence as a concrete reality that we can make sense of Ṣadrā's claim that the only proper access to the reality of existence is 'illuminative presence' (*ḥuḍūr ishrāqī*) and 'direct witnessing' (*shuhūd 'aynī*).⁸

a. Essence and Existence

In Ṣadrā, the distinction between the concept (*mafhūm*) and reality (*ḥaqiqah*) of existence is of paramount significance and can be considered an extension of the distinction between the order of thought and the order of being. As a mental concept, existence can be compared to a universal: it is applicable to a multitude of objects univocally, remains abstract and generic, and denotes a category and/or class rather than an individual.⁹ 'Existence as a concept is a generic term predicated of concrete existents univocally (*bi'l-tafāwut*), not equivocally (*bi'l-tawāfi'*).'¹⁰ Existence applies to all things that exist whereas an essence applies to a limited number of things as in the case of a genus or species. The essence of man, for instance, applies only to human beings. 'Humanity' as an essence includes certain things and excludes others. But this is not the case with existence. By definition, existence cannot leave anything out. Ṣadrā considers even non-existence (*'adam*) and mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*) as a special instance of existence. That is why God has no essence. Essence or quiddity (*māhiyyah*) is shared by a multitude of subjects. But God is the only instance of His kind and no other being can partake of whatever we may conceive of as God's quiddity.

What the mind perceives of the reality of existence is only its mental representation, and this further removes us from the actual reality of things as they are. This is something we cannot escape but perhaps grasp once we understand the distinction between the concept and reality of something:

Every concrete being represented in the mind with its reality ought to maintain its quiddity despite the change in its modality of existence. The reality of existence is such that it is in the extra-mental world (*fī'l-a'yān*). Everything whose reality is such that it is in the extra-mental world cannot be found in the mind [as it is] otherwise this would lead to the alteration (*inqilāb*) of something from its own reality [into something else]. Therefore the reality of existence cannot be found in any mind. What is represented of

existence in the soul whereby it takes on universality and generality is not the reality of existence but one of the aspects of its constitution and one of its names. *Aṣfār*, I, 1, pp. 37–8

The reality of existence in the extra-mental world defies such second-order conceptualizations. Ṣadrā holds that every individual substance is a unique being that participates in the all-inclusive reality of existence. Everything is an instantiation and ‘particularization’ (*takhaṣṣuṣ*) of existence which unfolds itself in a myriad of ways, modes, states, and degrees.¹¹ The universals which we use to designate existence as a concept do not belong to existence itself; they apply only to its ‘degrees of descent.’ Ṣadrā’s extremely critical attitude toward representation (*irtisām*) is a result of his concern that representation becomes a substitute for reality and that we are somehow deluded into thinking that our mental representation of things through ‘meanings’ and concepts reveal their true nature:

The reality of existence-qua-existence is not limited by generality and delimitation, universality and particularity, and inclusiveness and specificity. It is neither one [numerically] by a oneness added to it, nor many.... In its essence, it is nothing but full realization, actuality and manifestation. These meanings of contingency, concepts of universality, attributes of rational consideration, and terms of mental analysis are attached to it on account of its degrees and stations. *Aṣfār*, I, 1, p. 259

Ṣadrā analyzes the concept and reality of existence from two closely related standpoints. The first corresponds to the common-sense view of existence mentioned above, i.e., to look at existence through its individual instances. Obviously this includes everything because nothing can be outside the realm of existence. The two frequent examples given to illustrate this are the mathematical and natural sciences where the particular aspects of things rather than their universal qualities are investigated. Ṣadrā states this obviously Aristotelian point¹² as follows: ‘Mathematical objects and their specific qualities are

studied in mathematics (*al-riyādiyyāt*)...natural objects have their own accidents and are studied in the natural sciences (*al-ṭabī'īyyāt*). By the same token, the existent-qua-existent has its own specific aspects and they are studied in metaphysics (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*).'¹³

This brings us to the second context of analysis where the proper subject matter of metaphysics is existence-qua-existence (*al-wujūd bimā huwa'l-wujūd*).¹⁴ In the first case, we deal with existence through its instances that partake of it univocally. Anything that exists can be taken to be an instance of existence, and this yields some information about existence, its states and modes. The reality of existence, however, cannot be relegated to the sum-total of its instantiations. Existence is not a property of things by which we define them; rather it is the very reality by virtue of which things exist. If this is warranted, then existence is more than what its particular instances amount to. In contrast to Quine and Rorty, existence is neither a thing nor a property of things and thus cannot be construed as the 'value of a variable.'¹⁵ Things do *have* attributes but as far as their existence is concerned, they can only *be*. Ṣadrā's following description of existence makes this point clear: 'Existence, insofar as it is existence, has no agent from which it emanates, no matter into which it transforms, no subject in which it is found, no form by which it is clothed, no goal for which it is [established]. Rather, it itself is the agent of all agents, the form of all forms, and the goal of all goals.'¹⁶

Treatment of existence as an absolute term in and of itself is a common theme in the classical ontology of Greek and Islamic philosophy. We should remember that Aristotle had introduced the notion of existence-qua-existence¹⁷ without pursuing it in any helpful way. This was in part due to the peculiar nature of the verb 'to be' in Greek. The Greeks did not have a distinct verb meaning 'to exist' as a generic term. Instead, they used the verb 'to be' in a predicative context, i.e., in relation to a particular being. 'To be' always meant to be a tree, a pen, a wall, a woman.¹⁸ To use Kahn's example, 'for a particular tree to exist

is for it to be a living oak or chestnut. For white *to exist* is *to be a color*, that is a quality, belonging to some particular substance.¹⁹ Existence does not arise as a distinct philosophical problem in Greek thought because the predicative context of the Greek verb 'to be' allows us to translate all existential propositions that have the form 'x is' into 'x is something.' In other words, we always speak of existence through its particular instances. This explains to a large extent the reason why for Aristotle the primary subject matter of 'first philosophy,' i.e., metaphysics was substance, for substance is a definite and definable entity to which various existential properties can be attributed.²⁰ In sharp contrast, Ṣadrā insists that existence is neither a substance nor an accident 'because both are parts of what actually exists (*al-mawjūd*) but existence is not what exists in actuality.'²¹

At this juncture, Islamic philosophy represents a major break away from the Greek concept of existence. It is true that the Muslim philosophers have preserved the predicative context of existence in logic and physics. We find elaborate discussions of substances and their accidental properties in Ṣadrā as well as the other philosophers before him. In fact, a good part of classical philosophy of nature revolves around these concepts. Existence as a distinct philosophical problem, however, arises fully when Greek philosophy is revised in light of what Kahn calls 'a metaphysics of creation.'²² Within the purview of this new metaphysical vision, contingent beings *ultimately* borrow their existence from another source by virtue of being created.

Historically speaking, this took place in full force when Muslim philosophers introduced the idea of the ontological contingency of the world as part of the Islamic doctrine of creation. Whether we define creation as emanation with Muslim Peripatetics, *creatio ex nihilo* with the theologians, or perpetual creation and 'theophany' (*tajallī*) with the Sufis, the idea of radical contingency takes precedence over the Greek notions of the *world as a given*. Something fundamental is gained in philosophy from this obviously religio-theological principle:

existence as the reality or principle which makes the world what it is cannot be relegated to its modalities (*anḥā'*) or concomitants (*lawāzim*). We have to look somewhere else to understand what it means to exist in the first place. This leads us to two important conclusions. First, it affirms the ontological contingency of the world in a radical way: not only that things might have been different than what they actually are but, more importantly, they may not have *existed* at all. Second, it confirms once more that existence cannot be taken to be a property of individuals or classes to which they belong. Substance is no longer the proper starting point for the study of existence. Instead of construing existence as an effect of substances that exist in actuality, as Aristotle has done, Ṣadrā reverses the picture and turns all substances into a modality of existence.

A further distinction is made between existence and essence. A preliminary version of this distinction can be traced back to Plato (*Phaedo* 74a, *Republic* 509b, *Timaeus* 50c) and Aristotle (*Posterior Analytics* 92 b–93a and *Metaphysics* 1003–1004). Yet the distinction does not assume any philosophical significance until al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.²³ With them, the distinction becomes a cornerstone of the metaphysical study of beings, and rests on two basic questions: *is* it and *what* is it? The first question concerns the reality of things in the external world and confirms their existence *in concreto*. When I think of a mountain, the first question I ask is whether it exists or not. The same question can be asked even of things that subsist in the mind. In either case, my question is one of ontological assertion or lack thereof.

The second question pertains to the *what-ness* of the mountain, i.e., *what* it is that I am investigating. Granted that the mountain in question does really exist in some detectable way, my next question will be about its attributes, size, color, location, etc. It is here that we enter the domain of essences or quiddities (*māhiyyah*).²⁴ The questions we ask about things and their attributes help us assert the existence of something and state its differences from others.²⁵ In this broad sense, existence is a generic term in which all things participate: man, tree, horse, and

the sun share the quality of existence univocally. What distinguishes them from one another is their quiddity given in the form of such definitions as 'man is a rational animal' and 'accidents do not subsist by themselves.'

Actually existing things, however, are not composed of two things, 'existence' on the one hand, and 'quiddity' on the other, which we antecedently put together and turn into a single unity. It is the opposite: they are single units and we divide them into compartments through conceptual analysis. Therefore the distinction is not a real one. It is rather what Ṣadrā calls a 'rational operation of the mind' (*i'tibār al-'aql*).²⁶ It is imposed by the mind which can perceive only quiddities as universal properties of things.²⁷ Actually existing beings are not affected by these universal properties:

Beings (*wujūdāt*) are actual identities particularized by themselves. They are not qualified by genus, species, universality and particularity in the sense that they belong to a species or genus or in the sense that they become particular through something added to them from outside. Rather, they are differentiated by themselves, not through differentia (*faṣl*) or accident ('*araḍ*). In this sense, they have no genus, differentia or definition.²⁸

In the case of actually existing beings, what we have is not concepts but actualization (*taḥaṣṣul*), actuality (*fī'liyyah*), and disclosure (*ẓuhūr*).²⁹

Ṣadrā takes a further step and argues that quiddities are nothing but various modes and particularizations of existence, which the mind constructs as abstract and generic qualities. Ṣadrā's radical claim is that in mental analysis, essence precedes existence because the mind can conceive only the universal properties of things. Going back to our example of the mountain, I can conceptualize a mountain in my mind without 'establishing' (*ithbāt*) its concrete existence in the extra-mental world. I can speak of it in many different ways, analyze and describe it without ever asking the 'is-it?' question.³⁰ The reality of things, however, is such that existence precedes essence because an

essence that is not existentiated in one way or another cannot be said to be an essence in the first place. Ṣadrā summarizes his arguments as follows:

...essence is united with existence *in concreto* in a kind of essential unity (*ittiḥād*). When the mind analyzes them into two things, it asserts the precedence of one over the other *in concreto*. Now, this [reality that precedes the other] is existence because it is the principle in being the reality emanating from the [First] Principle (*al-mabda'*). As for the essence, it is united with and predicated of existence not like an attached accident but in its own reality [as essentially united with existence]. Insofar as the mind is concerned, the essence precedes the latter [i.e., existence] because essence is the principle in mental judgments. *Aṣfār*, I, 1, p. 56

There is a sense in which we can say that existence refers to the actual reality of things whereas essence refers to their existence in the mind. Ṣadrā insists that 'the reality of existence and its truth is not found in the mind; what arises in the mind concerning existence is a kind of mental abstraction. But this is also one of the aspects of existence.'³¹ Yet, what we have is not two different beings but a single reality seen from two different points of view. They correspond to what Ṣadrā calls the two modes of external and mental existence, and the relation between them is comparable to the relation between a universal that applies to a multitude of individuals and an individual that partakes of that universal. In Ṣadrā's words, 'the relation of abstracted conceptual existence (*al-wujūd intizā'ī*) to real existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*) is like the relation of 'humanity' (*al-insāniyyah*) to an individual human being (*al-insān*), and of whiteness to a white object. Its relation to essence is like the relation of humanity to he who laughs and whiteness to snow.'³² While particular existents are constructed in the mind as essences with a number of universal qualities, they remain particular and real existents as they are. The source of such 'mental effects' is nothing but 'real existences which themselves are actual ipseities (*huwiyyah* 'ayniyyah) existing by themselves, not conceptual existences

which are intellectual things with no concrete existence in the external world.³³

The fact that knowing the essence of something conceptually is not the same as knowing its reality is further corroborated by the limits of mental existence. To quote Ṣadrā again: 'It is rationally clear that nobility, happiness, and joy are not found in perceiving the essences of particulars but in their existence. By the same token, taste is not perceiving the essence of what is tasteful but its actual realization by the faculty of perception. Not everyone who thinks of the essence of power is a king and not everyone who thinks of the essence of might is a hero.'³⁴ This underscores the essential difference between the concept and reality of things. But they also point to another distinction Ṣadrā draws between mental existence and 'something being in the mind.'

The meaning of something existing in the external world is that it has an existence from which particular effects result and specific states (*aḥkām*) emanate. Its being in the mind is not like this. [But] the meaning of the mental existence of something is not merely its being in the soul or in the faculty of perception otherwise such qualities that exist in the soul as knowledge and power for those who know and those who have strength will be mental entities. Obviously this is not the case; otherwise it would be a contradiction. *Aṣālah* in *Majmu'ah*, p. 191

The upshot of the foregoing considerations is the *ultimate* reducibility of essence to existence. As we shall see shortly, Ṣadrā's notion of the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) invites this conclusion, and it plays a pivotal role in his definition of knowledge as a mode of existence.

b. The Primacy and Gradation of Existence

The primacy of existence over essence is one of the central themes of Ṣadrā's ontology and has important consequences for his concept of knowledge. The word *aṣālah*, meaning to be

principal and primary, refers to that which is real and which gives actual reality to existents in the extra-mental world.³⁵ It accounts for both ontological affirmation and epistemic credibility—the two qualities that the really existing beings have. Existence as principal reality establishes things in concrete existence and saturates them with meaning. If this is true, then deciding on this 'principal reality' is no trivial matter since it can land us in an 'existentialist' metaphysics as in the case of Ṣadrā or an 'essentialist' one as in the case of Suhrawardī and most of the Mutakallimūn.

Ṣadrā asks whether existence or essence has a corresponding *reality* in the external world. Before turning to Ṣadrā's response, however, it is important to note that in defending existence as the principal reality, Ṣadrā works against the backdrop of both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions. Ibn Sīnā had simply stated the distinction between existence and essence without bringing up the question of *aṣālah*, for his primary concern was to lay out a tripartite division of existents as impossible (*mumtani'*), contingent (*mumkin*) and necessary (*wājib*), and draw a categorical distinction between the last two, i.e., the created and the Creator.³⁶

While Ibn Sīnā's works do not contain a clear discussion of the primacy of existence, they can be read to support either position. The key issue for Ibn Sīnā's medieval interpreters especially in the Latin West was his alleged espousal of the accidentality of existence. The problem stems from Ibn Sīnā's somewhat recondite analysis of how existence is related to essence.³⁷ In the *Mubāhathāt*, for instance, he says that 'existence is an accident in things with quiddities to which existence is attached as we see in the case of ten categories.'³⁸ He then adds that 'but in the case of that which exists by itself, it does not have an existence by which it exists apart from being an accident for it. It is therefore a necessity that it exist by itself.' In spite of this clarification, St. Thomas Aquinas and other Scholastic philosophers read Ibn Sīnā as arguing that existence is an accident conferred upon things antecedently: things exist and

their quiddities require existence only as an accident or attribute. Interestingly enough, this (mis)reading of Ibn Sīnā goes back to Ibn Rushd.³⁹

Ṣadrā and his followers, however, took a different approach and interpreted Ibn Sīnā as saying that existence is a 'special accident' in the case of contingent beings (*mumkin al-wujūd*) because the existence of contingent beings is a 'borrowed existence' and depends on the Necessary Being for their subsistence.⁴⁰ This implies that contingent beings 'receive' their existence from another source, namely from the Necessary Being or, to use the language of theology, from 'high on.' In this onto-theological scheme, existence is an 'attribute' granted to created things by God who, as the Necessary Being, sustains them in existence. We may also conceive existence as an accident (*'araḍ*) 'happening' to things because their concrete existence is not required by mental abstraction or, as Aristotle would say, by definition. As we shall see shortly, existence is an accident only when considered from the point of view of logical analysis. As far as extra-mental existence (*al-wujūd al-'aynī*) is concerned, however, existence is not added to things *a posteriori*, otherwise we would have to say that things can 'exist' without 'existence' because it is only an accident—a logically absurd conclusion. Ṣadrā thus concurs with Ibn Sīnā that the existence of something is its actual existence (*mawjūdiyyah*) in the extra-mental world, not something added to its essence.⁴¹

When we turn to Suhrawardī, whom Ṣadrā has once called the 'Divine master' (*al-shaykh al-ilāhī*) and 'the possessor of lights,'⁴² the problem receives a different treatment. Suhrawardī founded a metaphysics of essences when he defined essence as the sole agent that constitutes the reality of things. He proposed two objections against the primacy of existence. First, if we take existence as a real attribute of essence, he argued, then essence, in order to have this attribute, has to exist prior to existence in which case existence would be a quality of something which already exists.⁴³ Secondly, if existence is taken to be the real constituent of reality, then existence will have to exist before

being a constituent of external reality and this second existence will have to exist, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁴⁴ In conclusion, existence cannot constitute the reality of things.

Suhrawardī's conclusion was a turning point in the history of Islamic metaphysics. He argued that existence is only a generic term, a secondary intelligible (*ma'qūl thānī*) applicable to a multitude of objects but to which nothing concrete corresponds in the extra-mental world. In a sense, this is a reformulation of the peculiar nature of the copula mentioned above: ontologically speaking, the copula is dysfunctional in that it does not add anything to our knowledge of things. Ṣadrā rejects this deduction by saying that we cannot logically say 'existence exists' just as we do not say 'whiteness is white.' Existence exists by itself and the actualization of existence in the external world takes place by itself, not by virtue of something else.⁴⁵ Therefore existence is not something that *has* existence just as whiteness is not something that *has* whiteness.⁴⁶ Whiteness is that reality by virtue of which things are white. By the same token, existence is that very reality by virtue of which things exist.

For Ṣadrā, Suhrawardī's false conclusion arises out of his failure to distinguish between the concept and reality of existence.⁴⁷ It is true, Ṣadrā reasons, that existence, when conceived by the mind, is a general notion without any corresponding reality in the extra-mental world. It is at this level of abstraction that we take existence as an attribute of something. That is why we can think of essences without their actual existence in the physical world.⁴⁸ It is then logical to conclude that existence as a secondary intelligible cannot be a basis for the reality of actually existing things.⁴⁹ The reality of existence, however, defies such a definition. Even though at the level of conceptual analysis one is allowed to say that existence is 'something that has existence' (*shay' lahu al-wujūd*), its basic structure is such that it is existence by itself or existent *par excellence* (*al-wujūd huwa al-mawjūdiyyah*).⁵⁰ Existence is 'reality and realization (*taḥaqquq*) itself, not something that is realized.'⁵¹ Ṣadrā's conclusion is thus diametrically opposed to

that of Suhrawardī: existence is not an extraneous quality imposed upon existent entities but the very reality thanks to which they exist.⁵²

In rejecting Suhrawardī's essentialist ontology, Ṣadrā reiterates an old issue in Islamic philosophy and asks whether existence is a predicate or not. The word 'predicate' is used here in its logical sense as denoting some property or attribute of actually existing things. Muslim philosophers have usually answered this question in the negative and made a distinction between the logical and ontological senses of existential propositions.⁵³ From a logical point of view, we can analyze the sentence 'this table is brown' into a subject and predicate. The subject of the sentence, 'this table,' is a noun and the predicate, 'brown' also a noun and an attribute qualifying the table.⁵⁴ We can turn this sentence, composed of a subject and a predicate, into an existential proposition by saying that 'the table is,' 'the table exists,' or 'the table is an existent.' When we look at these sentences from a logical point of view, existence, stated by the copula 'is,' turns out to be a predicate and attribute qualifying the table. From the ontological point of view, however, the conclusion is absurd because it assumes the existence of the table prior to its having existence as an attribute.

Al-Fārābī was the first to note this difficulty. He proposed two ways of looking at such propositions. In the proposition 'man exists,' existence, al-Fārābī says, is both a predicate and not a predicate. From a 'logical point of view' (*al-nāẓir al-manṭiqī*), the sentence has a predicate because it is composed of two terms, subject and predicate, and is liable of being true or false. From a 'natural point of view' (*al-nāẓir al-ṭabīʿī*), which here means the ontological point of view, however, it does not have a predicate because the 'existence of something is nothing other than itself.'⁵⁵ The most important conclusion that Ṣadrā derives from this analysis is that existence is not an attribute conferred upon things antecedently. It is their very reality and makes them what they are. For Ṣadrā, this is another proof for the primacy of existence.

Having established existence as the principal reality, Ṣadrā turns to the question of how it applies to individual entities, which he calls 'shares of existence' (*khiṣaṣ al-wujūd*). We can summarize his analysis as follows. Existence is predicated of all things that exist *in concreto*. In this most generic sense, existence applies to things univocally (*ḥaml bi'l-tawaṭi'*). Predication, however, takes place with varying degrees of intensity. To give an example, light is predicated of the candle, the moon and the sun univocally in that they all participate in the quality of light, luminosity and brightness. Each of these beings, however, displays different degrees of intensity in reflecting light. Light is the most intense and brightest in the sun and weakest in the reflection of the moon on the pool. By the same token, existence is predicated univocally of necessary and contingent beings. Their share of existence, however, is not the same because a necessary being, say God, is ontologically prior and superior to contingent beings. Having the most intense state of existence, God has more 'existence' than other things. The same analogy holds true for cause and effect since cause, by definition, precedes effect: it causes the effect to be what it is, and this imparts on it a higher ontological status. Ṣadrā calls this kind of predication 'equivocal predication' (*ḥaml bi'l-tashkīk*).⁵⁶ When applied to existence, it is called the 'gradation of existence' (*tashkīk al-wujūd*).⁵⁷

As for its equivocal predication by primacy, priority, precedence and intensity, this is so because, as we shall explain, existence requires itself in some beings, has precedence in some in terms of its nature, and is more perfect and stronger in some others. A being that has no cause has priority in existence compared to others, and is by definition prior to all other beings. By the same token, the existence of each one of the active intellects has a priority over the existence of other intellects, and the existence of substance is prior to the existence of accident. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 36

This paragraph, which is taken almost verbatim from Bahmanyār,⁵⁸ shows how Ṣadrā uses *tashkīk* as a term of ontology rather than

logic. This helps Ṣadrā construct a hierarchical view of existence whereby things are defined in proportion to their ‘ontological intensity’ or lack thereof. Since equivocality implies different degrees and grades of existence, I shall call this ‘gradational ontology.’ Ṣadrā applies gradation to the entire spectrum of existence: things partake of existence with different degrees of intensity and diminution, strength and weakness, priority and posterity, perfection and imperfection. As we shall see below, this hierarchy also applies to the order of intelligibility. In fact, Ṣadrā explains degrees of knowledge in the same way he explains degrees of existence. There is nothing surprising about this because Ṣadrā defines intelligibility as an aspect of existence: the more ‘beingful’ something is, the more intelligible it is.

2.2. EXISTENCE, INTELLIGIBILITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Before embarking upon a full discussion of knowledge, Ṣadrā broaches the subject with a number of observations on the elusive and ‘mysterious’ nature of knowledge. In a condensed section of the *Asfār* entitled ‘Concerning That Intellection Consists of the Unification of the Substance of the Intellector (*al-‘āqil*) with the Intellected (*al-ma‘qūl*),’ he identifies our ability to know as the most difficult and baffling problem of philosophy. The fact that we are able to know ourselves and the world around us is a mystery, Ṣadrā states, and the riddle cannot be solved within the matrix of sense-perception or knowledge as representation. The difficult question is not what kind of a relation, say a relation of correspondence or coherence, we can establish between the intellect and its object of intellection. Rather, it is the soul’s ability to perceive the *intelligibilia* in the first place. Ṣadrā appeals to a historical aphorism to make his point:

The fact that the soul is able to intellect the forms of intelligible things is the most mysterious and obscure problem of philosophy, which none of the scholars of Islam has been able to solve up to our own day. When we looked at the difficulty of this problem and pondered over the question that knowledge of substance is substance and accident, we did not find what cures the disease and what quenches the thirst in the books of the people [i.e., philosophers], especially those of their master Abū 'Alī [Ibn Sīnā] like the *Shifā'*, *al-Najāt*, *al-Ishārāt*, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah* and others. Rather, what we have found among his group, peers and followers such as his student Bahmanyār,⁵⁹ the master of the followers of the Stoics (*al-riwāqiyyīn*),⁶⁰ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and others who came after them, is that they did not propose anything on which one could rely. If this is the case with those who are considered the most respected [in philosophy], think of the situation of the people of fanciful thoughts and imaginations, and those who are the first and foremost in discussions and dialectical argumentation. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, pp. 312–313

The difficulty is further augmented by the fact that knowledge, like existence, does not lend itself to easy definitions. Definition of knowledge is circular in that every time we try to define it, we are bound to do it through knowledge. We cannot exclude the term 'knowledge' from its definition. Ṣadrā points to a strong parallel between knowledge (*'ilm*) considered from this point of view and existence that defies definition. He takes this to be a first step toward constructing knowledge as a 'mode of existence' (*naḥw al-wujūd*):

It seems that knowledge is among those realities whose ipseity (*inniyyah*) is identical with its essence (*māhiyyah*). Realities of this kind cannot be defined because definition consists of genus and difference, both of which are universals whereas every being is a particular reality by itself. It cannot be made known through complete description either because there is nothing more known than knowledge as it is an existential state of consciousness (*ḥālah wijdāniyyah*)⁶¹ which the knower, being alive, finds in his essence from the very beginning without veil or obscurity. It is not [in the nature of knowledge] to allow itself to be known by something more apparent and clear because everything becomes clear to the intellect

by the knowledge it has. How does then knowledge become clear by anything other than itself? *Aṣfār*, I, 3, p. 278

Even though the tautological and non-definitional nature of knowledge represents common sense epistemology in Islamic thought and is shared by various schools,⁶² this is where Ṣadrā takes his departure from the tradition when he subsumes knowledge (*‘ilm*) and other related terms under the intrinsic intelligibility of existence. For Ṣadrā, the ultimate object of knowledge is existence for when we say that we know something, we affirm or deny a particular aspect of existence presented as an object of knowledge.⁶³ This is underlined by Ṣadrā’s radical identification of existence and truth/reality (*ḥaqīqah*): ‘The reality of every thing is its existence through which it receives the effects specific to it, for the ‘being-ness’ (*mawjūdiyyah*) of something and its having a reality/truth have one single meaning and one single subject, there being no difference between the two except in expression (*lafẓ*).’⁶⁴ Existence is thus the standing condition of knowledge and precedes the discursive considerations of the knowing subject.⁶⁵

Furthermore, to know something is to grasp and appropriate its intelligible form (*al-ṣūrat al-ma‘qūlah*). Ṣadrā’s conceptual realism leads him to define intelligible forms as substances that belong to the world of the *intelligibilia* rather than as mere concepts, notions or contents of the mind.⁶⁶ The key issue is to understand the ontological status of the intelligible world from which the intellect obtains intelligible forms. Following the neo-Platonist tradition, Ṣadrā establishes the world of the *intelligibilia* as an independent realm of existence where the archetypal realities of individual beings reside. In a strictly hierarchical scale of existence, the sensate objects are placed at a lower ontological plane because they are dim reflections of the world of Platonic Ideas. In Ṣadrā’s terms ‘material forms are nothing but icons and moulds of these disembodied [i.e., intelligible] forms.’⁶⁷ Similarly, ‘the disembodied existence (*al-wujūd al-mufāriqī*) is stronger [in actualization] than the material existence

(*al-wujūd al-māddī*).⁶⁸ Since 'intelligible forms' exist in an immutable world above the world of generation and corruption, they enjoy universality and permanence. The radical distinction that Plato and his followers had drawn between the *sensibilia* and the *intelligibilia* is fully incorporated with a clear sense of ontological superiority: since the *intelligibilia* are not bound by such material conditions as generation and corruption or movement and rest, they enjoy a higher ontological status. The sensible world is too ephemeral and fragile to be a ground for the enduring identity of things. The epistemological corollary of this view is no less significant: since the *intelligibilia* are grounded in the immutable world of the Forms, they are cognitively more reliable than the senses. The senses through which we come to experience the *sensibilia* help us establish the corporeal reality of things. Their meaning, i.e., intelligible structure, however, is disclosed by the intellect when it turns to the world of the *intelligibilia*.

Ṣadrā draws a good part of his conclusions concerning the *intelligibilia* from a realist ontology of intelligible forms. For him, the mode of existence proper to intelligible forms is higher than the mode of existence proper to material substances. At its face value, this is nothing more than a refined statement of the distinction between *sensibilia* and *intelligibilia* just mentioned. The way Ṣadrā uses it, however, reveals the extent to which he wants to formulate the question of knowledge in terms of existence and its modalities.

Now, it is further assumed that the order of intelligibility enjoys a higher ontological status because it transcends the limitations of corporeality. Intelligible forms have a concrete existence of their own; in fact, they are more concrete and 'powerful' than corporeal substances. In Ṣadrā's terms, 'the realization of perceptual forms in the perceiving substance is stronger in terms of actualization (*tahṣīl*) and perfection (*takmīl*) than the realization of natural forms in matter and its kinds.'⁶⁹ This explains why for Ṣadrā and the Platonists before him, the 'intellective horse' (*al-faras al-aqlī*), i.e., the intelligible reality

of the horse is more 'real' than the physical horse in the barn: the intellective horse is a simple unique being containing in its simplicity the lower species and instances of 'horse-ness.'⁷⁰ The 'real' horse is not the physical horse composed of flesh and bones but the archetypal horse detached and disembodied from the entanglements of material existence. An individual horse may die, disappear, and come in various colors, sizes, and types, all of which lend themselves to impermanency and imperfection whereas the intellective horse remains constant and provides the context within which we attribute various 'meaning-properties' to the physical horse. Šadrā states this as follows:

These forms [i.e., the archetypal forms] are more exalted and nobler than what is to be found in lower existents. This animal in flesh, composed of contradictory qualities and forms in constant change, is a parable and shadow for the simple animal while there is still a higher [animal] above it. Now, this is the intellective animal which is simple, singular, and containing in its simplicity all of the individual instances and classes of material and mental existence under its species. And this is its universal archetype, i.e., the intellective horse. This holds true for all species of animals and other existents.... When the existence of something intensifies, it passes from its present species to a higher one even though every intensification takes place with full involvement in its current species. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 304

To establish the ontological status of intelligible beings as 'more' and 'higher,' Šadrā adopts a well-established Aristotelian principle⁷¹ and defines intelligibility as incorporeality and disembodiment (*tajarrud*). In the Peripatetic ontology of disembodiment, the more removed a thing is from corporeality, the closer it is to have more meanings or meaning-properties. Put differently, the further removed a thing is from its material accidents (*'awārid*) and attachments (*lawāḥiq*), the more real it is because it is closer to its 'formal' (*al-ṣūri*) reality. The possibility of a substance becoming more intense in intelligibility is proportionate to its being disengaged and disembodied from

the limitations of material existence. Such a thing is more real in the sense that it contains more qualities of intelligibility.⁷² The symmetrical relationship between ontological intensity and epistemic credibility is borne out by the fact that 'every existent is a witness to its own existence because it is a glimpse of it. And whatever is closer to existence [in terms of actualization] is a more complete witness to it.'⁷³

The difficulties posed by individual substances versus their universal properties are notorious. Aristotle admits the difficulties of accepting true universal knowledge as based on corresponding universal principles of existence.⁷⁴ This can be interpreted as a paradigm case of the unity of the ontological and the noetic mentioned above but the question that demands answer is this: how can a substance, which, for Aristotle, is what really and primarily exists, become more intelligible and thus more 'real' when it is less of an individual and more of a universal? If 'every perception is particular and through a corporeal instrument,' as Ibn Sīnā says,⁷⁵ then how do we account for the uniqueness of individual beings against the fact that some universal attributes are predicated of them? It is not always easy to find a satisfactory answer to this conundrum either in Aristotle or in his Muslim followers. After all, this is the perennial challenge of the empiricists.⁷⁶

The asymmetrical relationship between disembodiment and intelligibility leads to a tripartite division of knowledge, whose formulation in Islamic philosophy goes back to Ibn Sīnā. When a substance is completely immersed in matter and corporeality, it is called sensation (*ḥiss*) and forms the basis of sense-perception. For Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā, this level represents the minimal definition of existence and knowledge: sense-perception is not only the 'weakest' form of perception but also corresponds to the lowest level of existence. When a substance is partially disembodied from matter, it is called 'imagination' (*khayāl*) and represents the intermediary stage or isthmus (*barzakh*) between matter and pure intelligibles. This corresponds to *mundus imaginālis* (*'ālam al-khayāl*) through which we move from the

purely sensate and material to the intelligible and the spiritual. Finally, when something is completely disengaged from material attachments, it becomes a pure intellect (*'aql*) and intelligible (*ma'qūl*), making intellection (*ta'aqqul*) possible.⁷⁷

a. Disembodiment as Intelligibility and Gradation in Knowledge

To further elaborate this point, Ṣadrā returns to the gradation of existence and argues that things are subject to intensification (*tashaddud*) and diminution (*taḍa'uf*) in accord with their level of existentiation. Ṣadrā tries to do this by redefining the Aristotelian framework of potential and actual substances within the context of his gradational ontology. The principle of gradation establishes a hierarchical world-order within which substances belong to differing degrees of existence and intelligibility. When a being realizes its dormant potentialities and becomes actual, it does not simply acquire more material or sensate properties. Rather, it intensifies in existence. To bring this into sharper focus, Ṣadrā reverses common-sense ontology. Instead of defining the necessary existential properties of things (*lawāzīm al-wujūd*) as qualities acquired by a substance, he construes them as various modes and states of existence. When a red apple ripens, its existence 'increases in' redness rather than becoming 'more red' in quantity. By the same token, when substances actualize their potentialities and become more perfect, they eventually increase in existence. This is predicated upon the Platonic principle that actuality implies perfection while potentiality signifies privation and imperfection. In the language of Greek and Muslim Neoplatonists, actuality means full realization because such a substance is not deprived of any real qualities it may possess. By contrast, a potential substance is marred by imperfection because it can be really what it is only to the extent to which it realizes its potentialities, and it would need an external agent, a *more* actualized substance, to reach this state of actuality.⁷⁸ Obviously, it is only God who can be properly

called actual and perfect because unlike contingent beings, there is no distinction between God's essence and existence.⁷⁹

The potentiality-actuality framework, which Ṣadrā adopts with some revisions, is also underlined by the Peripatetic idea of hylomorphism. Hylomorphism identifies two principles in things: matter (*hylé*) and form (*morphos*). Matter refers to the physical constitution of things while form is the principle that gives structure, order and meaning to them. It is important to emphasize that Aristotelian hylomorphism does not posit matter and form as 'things' or entities but rather as *principles* of existence thanks to which actual substances become what they are. In Ṣadrā's revised version, assuming a form and becoming actual is the same as assuming a new mode of existence. This is evinced by the fact that matter as the *hylé* or prime matter (*al-māddat al-ūlā*) is not an aggregate of material stuff out of which corporeal things are made. Rather, it is pure capacity (*isti'dād mahḍ*)⁸⁰ and can be actualized only when united with its proper form.⁸¹ Similarly, form is not shape but that which imparts upon a thing its meaning by making it what it is.⁸² This definition of form, which is ontological and Platonic in essence, comes close to the meaning of essence (*māhiyyah*): it is that which makes a thing what it is. Ṣadrā does not shy away from equating form with a particular aspect of existence.

In our view, what is meant by the form of a thing is its existence, not its concept and universal meaning. [In this sense], form is one and simple for everything. But it may become applicable to various meanings and attributes of perfection. Or, it may not be so, and this is because existence can be strong and intense or weak and deficient. Whenever existence is stronger and more intense, it contains in itself more meanings and effects (*āthār*) and vice versa. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 90⁸³

It is these 'meaning and effects' that the mind can properly claim to know for they correspond to what is universal in individual beings. It is only the forms that the mind can know because they are both actual and disengaged from matter. Form as a mode of

disembodiment and intelligibility underlies Ṣadrā's assertion that the further removed a thing is from corporeal existence, the closer it is to pure intelligibility. The *intelligibilia* are distinguished by their disembodiment and universality whereas the *sensibilia* are defined as belonging to matter.⁸⁴ In a typical passage, Ṣadrā explains this as follows:

Forms of things are of two kinds. The first is the material form that subsists with matter, position, space, and so on. This kind of form, due to its mode of material existence, can be neither intelligible in actuality nor sensible (*maḥsūṣah*) except accidentally. The second kind is the form that is disengaged from matter, position and space either completely, in which case it is an intelligible form in actuality, or partially in which case it is an imaginal or sensate form in actuality. It has become clear in the view of all the philosophers that the existence of the intelligible form in actuality and its existence for the intellector are one and the same thing from one point of view. In the same way, the existence of a sensible, insofar as it is a sensible, is identical with its existence for the sensate substance. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 313–314

Disembodiment as a condition of intelligibility is thus an important step toward subsuming all cognitive terms under the rubric of existence. There is, however, another side to it, which should be briefly mentioned here. An ontologically higher substance is defined as simply 'more' in terms of its existential constitution. But such a substance is also more perfect, more real, more reliable, and more likely to be the immediate concern of the philosopher. We can even say that ontologically higher beings are closer to meeting the criteria of the Platonic trinity of being true, good, and beautiful, corresponding to knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics, respectively. This explains the reason why Ṣadrā defines existence as pure light (*al-nūr*) and says that 'existence and light are one and the same thing.'⁸⁵ Light represents 'goodness' and this is always in sharp contrast to darkness that corresponds to non-existence and relative evil. Using another vocabulary taken from Ibn Sīnā and Ibn al-ʿArabī,

Ṣadrā defines existence as goodness *par excellence* (*khayr mahd*, *summum bonum*) because existence is not only the ontic ground of sensate objects but also the source of such valuational qualities as reality, meaning, goodness, beauty and perfection. This means that the language of ontological states is saturated with qualitative and valuational terms. Ontological states are intertwined with axiological qualities.

The following depiction of the world of the *intelligibilia*, which Ṣadrā quotes from the *Theology of Aristotle*, provides a neat summary of the axiological content of existence:

The higher world is the perfect living [reality] in which everything is contained, for it has originated from the first perfect source. In it is to be found every soul and every intellect, and there is absolutely no indigence and need here since things therein are all filled with richness and life as if it is life that exceeds and gushes forth. The life of these things issues forth from one single source, not just from one single heat (warmth) or one single wind (smell). Rather, all of them are one single quality in which is to be found every food [i.e., livelihood for them]. *Ittiḥād* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 100⁸⁶

Ṣadrā gives his version as follows:

There are two worlds: the world of disengaged substances that pertain to the intellect and the soul, and the world of luminous and dark bodies. The world of disembodied substances is the world of knowledge and vitality in which God created a perceptual, intellectual and imaginal form vis-à-vis what is to be found in the world of physical bodies, which is their life and the mirror of their appearance. The Divine Book refers to this: 'For those who of their Lord's Presence stand in fear, two gardens [of paradise are readied]' (Qur'ān 55:46). Concerning this matter, the noble Plato has said that the world is of two kinds: the world of the intellect in which are to be found the intellectual Forms (*muthul*), and the world of sense (*ḥiss*) in which are to be found the obscurities of sensation⁸⁷.... The existence of the world of the intellect is the principle of all other beings and their sustainer, active principle, and ultimate goal. Their clear vision is hidden to man because of the excess of their

manifestation and our veiling from them because of the distraction of material bodies. We can reasonably point to the unity of this world and the simplicity of everything in it and the multiplicity of this world [of physical bodies] in view of the number of individuals. It should be known that the luminous Platonic Forms are substances in themselves and their existence is the source of the substances of this world and their quiddities. They are also the realities of these sensate bodies. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 503–504⁸⁸

As a source of meaning and value, the intelligible world signifies plenitude, perfection, actuality, and comprehensiveness. Ṣadrā occasionally uses a language of personal beings to refer to the intelligible world as, for instance, when he says that ‘celestial spheres [as the locus of intelligible forms] have noble spirits.’⁸⁹ In this sense, Ṣadrā’s gradational ontology is founded upon what Leslie calls ‘axiarchism,’ i.e., the view that the world is grounded in value and that the reality of existence can be explained primarily in valuational terms.⁹⁰

This meeting between the ontological and the axiological is a common theme in Ṣadrā and has important implications for his theory of knowledge. Since existence is intrinsically intelligible and ultimately the source of all cognitive terms, it is only natural that it should be grounded in value. Ṣadrā uses a number of examples to demonstrate the relevance of this premise for his concept of knowledge. One such example he is fond of using is man and his relation to plant and animal kingdoms. As a higher state of existence, ‘humanity’ contains everything that belongs to the species of plant and animal existence. Vegetation is the most important differentia the plants have. Animals possess the vegetative faculty with a host of other qualities missing in plants such as mobility and sensation. Finally, man contains all of these qualities in addition to speech, intelligence and free will, in which plants and animals lack. To express this higher state of existence, Ṣadrā introduces the concept of ontological simplicity (*basīṭ*). Simplicity denotes a concentrated state of existence whereby a substance contains multiple existential qualities without a break or fissure. Man contains the totality of plant and

animal attributes in a simple manner, and being a simple substance vis-à-vis the lower states below it, man gains a higher ontological status. Ṣadrā's celebrated phrase that 'a simple reality is all things' (*baṣīṭ al-ḥaqīqah kull al-ashyā'*) expresses this simplicity.⁹¹ Although a general principle meant to apply to all things, the exact meaning of this phrase can be clarified only within the specific context in which it is used. When we apply it to the concept of man, for instance, it signifies that 'man-ness' contains all qualities and properties that belong to 'plant-ness' and 'animal-ness.' Another example is light and its degrees of intensification. A candle light is imperfect compared to moon light and moonlight is imperfect compared to the light of the sun. The sun, the most condensed source of light, is ontologically higher than all other forms of light.

It is not difficult to see the relation between this notion of ontological simplicity and the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*),⁹² and Ṣadrā applies it to intelligible substances without any reservations. Like the order of existence, the intelligible world allows gradation in terms of intensification and diminution: an intelligible substance becomes more intense and higher when it contains all intelligible realities under its species. To use our previous example, man contains in himself all levels of intelligibility and meaning available to animal and vegetative states. When we talk about the essence of man-ness or humanity, we do not exclude from it anything that belongs to the definitions of animal-ness and plant-ness. Man-ness as an intelligible form contains all of the lower and imperfect states of meaning 'in a simple manner.' In applying this principle of ontological simplicity to the intelligible world, Ṣadrā simply replaces existence with intellect: 'A simple intellect is all intelligibles' (*'aql baṣīṭ kull al-ma'qūlāt*).⁹³ This implies that a simple substance such as man vis-à-vis a tree or horse is more meaning-laden and has a higher level of intelligibility. The noetic superiority of man in intelligibility is not simply a result of his intelligence, in which plants and animals lack. Rather, it is a necessary corollary of the fact that man is more 'beingful' than

others. Here, again, Ṣadrā defines intelligibility in terms of the degrees of existence rather than the knowing subject's mastery of a discourse.

There is another principle that warrants this conclusion. If knowledge is to be universal, as the Peripatetics argue, it has to correspond to a reality of an equal value. In this case, the three modes of perception, accepted unanimously by Muslim philosophers, have to correspond to three different modes of existence. Following Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā introduces a tripartite division of existence with three corresponding stages of disembodiment.⁹⁴ Sensible forms apply to corporeal bodies in that their disembodiment (*naz'*) from matter is conditioned by such attributes as quantity, change, time, etc. Ṣadrā calls this type of disembodiment 'imperfect and conditioned.' Imaginal forms apply to things that are suspended between matter and intelligibility. Ṣadrā calls their mode of disembodiment 'medial' (*mutawassit*). Finally, intellectual forms denote the intelligible reality of things, which are above the limitations of corporeal and imaginal existence. Their mode of disembodiment is called 'perfect' or 'complete' (*tāmm*) because at this level of gradation nothing is left out of the ontological definition of things.⁹⁵ When the soul or the intellect in actuality reaches this stage, it becomes ready for even a higher journey to the world of Proximate Angels (*al-malā'ikat al-muqarrabūn*):

These meanings are such that it is in the nature of the soul to become a knowing intellect through them in an intellectual order from the First Principle to the intellects which are the Proximate Angels [that are close to the Divine Throne]⁹⁶ and to the souls that are the angels after the First and to the heavens and the elements (*al-'anāṣir*)...and the soul becomes knowing and intellecting by being illuminated with the light of the First Intellect. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362

In an important gloss on the first part of Ibn Sīnā's *Ilāhiyyāt* where Ibn Sīnā discusses the subject matter of metaphysics, Ṣadrā explains the meaning of the 'science of metaphysics' (*'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*) in terms of disembodiment. The ascending

and descending orders of existence and perception confirm the point mentioned above: for any perception to be reliable, it must correspond to a reality of similar value. Sensation corresponds to what is sensible in physical objects. Intellection corresponds to what is intelligible in them. But the way they possess these qualities and the way we come to perceive them are asymmetrical. The first aspect of perceivable things *in themselves* is their intelligibility, i.e., their intelligible form. For us, however, it comes last in the order of perception because the human mind begins with sensible forms and works its way up to the world of the intelligible.

Things have an existence in themselves and in relation to us. As far as the order of their existence in themselves is concerned, the first is the intelligibles, then imaginable and estimative forms, and then the sensibles. As for the order of their existence in relation to us, the first is the sensibles, then the imaginable and estimative forms, and then the intelligibles. That is why it has been said that 'whoever has lost [his] sense has lost [his] knowledge.'⁹⁷ The reason for this is that our existence starts with the sensibles; when our perception of the sensible is completed, we receive from the effusing principle (*al-mabda' al-fayyāḍ*) the lights of life and the powers of the animal soul capable of perceiving imaginative and estimative particulars. When we complete the state of animal [soul] in a gradual manner, we receive the lights of the intellect and the powers of the rational soul capable of perceiving universals and disembodied intellectual [forms].

The perceiver cannot be other than the kind of what is perceived. Since the order of man's existence is the opposite of the order of things emanating from the actual reality (*al-ḥaqq al-wāqī'ah*) in the chain of beginning from the principle of existence because in the chain of return he moves towards the utmost reality of existence, then it is not surprising that his knowledge of things is in proportion to his existence. In fact, knowledge of something is nothing but its existence for the knower. It is then natural that for him the existence of sensible and imaginative forms comes before the existence of the intelligibles. That is why his knowledge of these things has been called the 'knowledge of what comes after physics' (*'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*). *Sharḥ ilāhiyyāt*, Vol. I, p. 90

An important conclusion Ṣadrā derives from this view of existence and intelligibility is what he calls the ‘penetration of knowledge’ (*sirāyat al-‘ilm*) in all things including animals, plants and minerals. Just as existence penetrates all things, intelligibility as an epiphenomenon of existence is to be found in things with varying degrees of intensity and reality. Although ‘rocks and material bodies’ represent the lowest level of existence, they nevertheless partake of intelligibility in some way: ‘Knowledge is a single reality. It is necessary in the Necessary Being and contingent in contingent beings in accordance with the reality of existence. As we have pointed out before, the source of knowledge, volition and the like is existence but some people among the intelligent are incapable of understanding the penetration of knowledge, power, and volition in all existents even in rocks and material bodies just like the penetration of existence into them.’⁹⁸ The simple intellect (*‘aql basīṭ*) is thus closely tied to simple existence. Ṣadrā states this as follows:

When the soul passes from potentiality to actuality, it becomes a simple intellect, which is all things. This is a matter that has been firmly established in our view. The explanation of this is as follows: knowledge and intellection (*al-ta‘aqqul*) are a mode of existence, and existence is united with quiddity. In the same way, knowledge is united with what is known (*al-ma‘lūm*). Some beings are low in degree and weak and some lofty and strong. Those that are low [in degree] have very little share in meanings (*ma‘ānī*) and confined to one single meaning like a single quantity (...) whereas those that are noble [in rank] are the essence of the plenitude of meanings even if they are small in quantity or have no quantity at all like the rational soul. By the same token, knowledge has various kinds some of which are low in degree such as sense-perception [since] it is impossible to sense multiple sensibles through a single sensation. [But] some are higher in rank such as intellection in that a single intellect is sufficient to intellect an infinite number of intelligibles as in the case of the simple intellect. In short, whatever as knowledge has a higher status in existence, it is more capable of [attaining] what can be known (*ma‘lūmāt*) and more intense in containing

quiddities...when we know something through its perfect definition, we know it with its full truth and reality even if we cannot know all of its parts at once due to the impossibility of knowing the very truth and reality of something at once. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 377–379

A similar point is made in the following paragraph which concludes with a historical note:

The realization of this matter [i.e., the unification of the intellect and the intelligible] is not possible except by having recourse to the principles that were mentioned in the beginnings of this book concerning the view that existence is the principal reality in existention (*mawjūdiyyah*) and quiddity is derived from it. It is certain that existence allows intensification and diminution, and whatever is strong in existence (*qawiyy al-wujūd*) becomes more inclusive and encompassing of universal meanings and disembodied intellectual quiddities. When existence reaches the level of the simple intellect, which is completely disengaged from the world of corporeal bodies and quantities, it becomes all of the *intelligibilia* and all things in a manner more virtuous and nobler than whatever they are based upon. Whoever has not tasted this path cannot understand the simple intellect, which is the source of all detailed knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-tafṣīliyyah*). That is why you see most of the virtuous people finding it very difficult and unable to verify it in spite of their deep involvement in the sciences of wisdom as in the case of Shaykh Suhrawardī in the *Muṭarahāt*, *Talwīḥāt*, and *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* who has clearly rejected this view, and Imām [Fakhr al-Dīn] al-Rāzī and those who enjoy their ranks. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 373–374⁹⁹

In the end, Ṣadrā returns to his initial assumption concerning the correlative relationship between the terms of existence and the terms of intelligibility. Since intelligibility corresponds to a particular level of existence, it is no longer conceived to be a property of the mind. We shall return to this issue below when we discuss Ṣadrā's criticism of the previous theories of knowledge. Ṣadrā's radical claim is that intelligibility is constitutive of reality. Intelligible forms are not just conceptual

instruments by which we know the extra-mental world. Rather, they are coterminous with the world and that is why we can conceptually know it. There is a sense in which we can say that without intelligible forms, there would be no such thing as the 'world.' This implies that 'reality' does not precede intelligibility. What we call reality is not an aggregate of objects devoid of intelligibility to which clusters of meaning and signification are attributed *a posteriori*. Šadrā uses the example of physical instruments and light to illustrate this point. Intelligible forms, he argues, are not like manual instruments with which we operate but which are dispensable in themselves. Rather, they are like light that makes vision possible:

One cannot say that these forms are instruments for the soul's intellecting things other than itself. Rather, they are intelligible for the soul by themselves in the sense that whatever corresponds to them outside the soul [i.e., in the extra-mental world] becomes intelligible for the soul through them. Because we say that if these forms were not intelligible for the soul in the first place, they would not be perceived by it. The mediation of these forms in perceiving things is not like the mediation of manual instruments (*ālāh šīnā'iyyah*) in carrying out bodily works (*al-a'māl al-badaniyyah*) but rather like the sensate light in perceiving visible things whereby light is seen first and then everything else is seen through it. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 318

b. Four Theories of Knowledge and Their Critique

Šadrā launches a relentless attack against the Peripatetics and the Mutakallimūn for failing to see the connection between the ontological and the noetic. While he criticizes the four major theories of knowledge which he attributes to various philosophers and theologians before him, his primary target remains the representational knowledge (*al-'ilm al-irtisāmi*) advanced chiefly by the Muslim Peripatetics. What Šadrā finds as most troubling is Ibn Sīnā's definition of knowledge as a negative term and privation on the one hand, and representation, on the other. His

critique of 'abstraction' (*tajarrud*)¹⁰⁰ as privation is based on the application of his gradational ontology to knowledge and intellection (*ta'aqqul*) whereby he asserts the primacy of self-knowledge and what Suhrawardī has called 'knowledge-by-presence' (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*). In fact, a good part of Ṣadrā's criticisms rely on knowledge-by-presence and how knowledge as representation and correspondence fails to account for a strongly ontological noetics.

The four theories of knowledge that Ṣadrā criticizes can be summarized as follows. The first is knowledge as abstraction, which turns cognition into a 'negative affair' (*amr salbī*). The second is the representational theory of knowledge which argues for the 'imprinting' of intelligible forms in the mind. According to Ṣadrā, this view, closely related with the first view, turns knowledge into a mental construction and fails to account for its relation with existence. The third theory is the definition of knowledge as a relation (*iḍāfah*) obtaining between subject and object, which Ṣadrā attributes mainly to the Mutakallimūn. The fourth theory defines knowledge as an accident ('*araḍ*') residing in the mind. Of these four theories, Ṣadrā spends the most time with the second one for his primary target remains the Peripatetic concept of knowledge as abstraction. As for Suhrawardī's definition of knowledge as manifestation or appearance (*ẓuhūr*), he accepts it with revisions on the grounds that it reveals an essential aspect of knowledge, which is presence (*ḥuḍūr*).¹⁰¹

To begin with the first theory, the Peripatetic concept of 'abstraction' (*tajarrud*) is based on the idea that when intelligible forms are 'disengaged' from their material properties, they are *deprived* of certain qualities and become abstract notions in the mind. For instance, the concept of horse, when abstracted from the actual horse, becomes a mental representation and image, which, in turn, occupies a lesser ontological position compared to the actually existing horse. Ṣadrā takes this to be a minimalist definition of knowledge for this makes intellection a process of privation (*amr salbī*), turning knowledge into something less than the actual object of knowledge (*ma'lūm*). The purpose of

knowledge, however, is to know things *as they are*, i.e., as concrete, unique individual beings with universal meaning-properties.

In contrast to this meaning of 'abstraction' as privation, Ṣadrā defines it as 'disembodiment,' i.e., as a process of existential intensification through the gradation of existence on the one hand, and substantial motion on the other. In this process of elevated disembodiment, intelligible forms become more 'condensed,' viz. able to contain more meanings. When we know something through its intelligible form, our knowledge cannot be less than its actual reality, for it is assumed that the reality of that particular being is contained in its intelligible form *in a simple manner*. Ṣadrā insists that we can know things in and of themselves when we perceive and appropriate their intelligible forms which are more real and concrete than their corporeal existence: 'It is obviously false to define intellection as privation. When we turn to our consciousness in intellecting something, we find out in our consciousness that something has occurred for us, not that something has ceased from us.'¹⁰² In his commentary on the Metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā's *Shifā'*, Ṣadrā restates his position in similar terms: 'When we know something after we did not know it, this must have an effect on our selves. Otherwise our state would remain the same before and during the perception [of something]. This effect is nothing but a matter of existence (*amr wujūdī*). We know through our consciousness that when we know something, some kind of perfection (*amr kamālī*) happens to us, not that something disappears from us.'¹⁰³

There are two primary reasons for Ṣadrā's relentless denial of *tajarrud* as negation and privation. First of all, Ṣadrā defines knowledge in terms of positive ontological qualities. In knowing something, we come to conceive and attain (*idrāk*) a particular aspect of existence. Since existence is the most concrete, perfect and actual of all realities, its perception can only lead to a higher state of consciousness, which, in turn, leaves no space for terms of negation. For Ṣadrā, every act of perception implies moving

a step closer to the reality of the existence of what is perceived provided that it is not obstructed by the presence of such gross qualities as matter, sensation, ignorance, desire or error. In this sense, all veritable perception that yields knowledge is a positive exercise in existence.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, when Ṣadrā criticizes the Peripatetic concept of intellection as privation, he has in mind knowledge-by-presence, which is foundational to Ṣadrā's attempt to define knowledge as arising out of the unification of the intellect and the intelligible.

To exemplify the primacy of this kind of knowledge, Ṣadrā refers to God's knowledge of things and the self-knowledge of human beings. Insofar as God's knowledge is concerned, it can contain no imperfections, potentialities and negations. It is based on existential plenitude, affirmation, and comprehensiveness. The Qur'ānic verse, which Ṣadrā quotes, states that 'nothing escapes His knowledge.' In an important section of *al-Maṣāhira al-ilāhiyyah* titled 'On God's Knowledge of Himself and Other Things,' Ṣadrā equates existence with Light (*al-nūr*) and quotes several verses from the Qur'ān:

Existence is neither mixed with non-existence nor concealed by cover, veil or obscurity. No darkness veils it. It is thus uncovered by itself, present to and never absent from itself. Its essence is knowledge, knower by itself and known to itself. Therefore existence and Light are one and the same thing: 'God is the Light of the heavens and the earth' (Qur'ān 24:35). It is never veiled except through non-existence and imperfection.... Since the Necessary [Being], exalted by His Name, is above the veil of non-existence, corporeality, composition and potentiality, He is in the highest degree of being a perceiver and perceived and being an intellector and intellected: 'Should He not know—He that created? And He is the One that understands the finest Mysteries (and) is Well-acquainted (with them)' (Qur'ān 67:14).¹⁰⁵ '[Nothing] is hidden from Thy Lord (so much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in heaven. And not the least and not the greatest of these things but are recorded in an evident book' (Qur'ān 10:61). *al-Maṣāhira al-ilāhiyyah*, pp. 88–89

This emphasis on 'presence' and 'perfection' as a condition of intelligibility is in tandem with the above definition of knowing as a positive exercise in cognition. As for self-knowledge, it is based on the Aristotelian-Suhrawardīan principle that one never ceases to be conscious of oneself.¹⁰⁶ As a first-order state of experience, self-knowledge enjoys permanence and continuity whereas its articulation as a second-order concept leads to representation, which, for Ṣadrā, signifies an epistemic rupture between the subject and its self-consciousness.

In short, Ṣadrā's main concern is to show that in knowing we gain something, and this signifies a process in positive terms whereby we increase in knowledge and appropriate the intelligible reality of what we know. It is true that in abstracting intelligible forms we leave out certain properties that account for the corporeal constitution of things. The concept of hot-ness, for instance, is not itself hot; otherwise we would be hot when we think of it in our minds. This is another way of stating the difference between the concept and reality of things. Ṣadrā, however, insists that the meaning of things contained in their intelligible forms does not diminish in epistemic value. Instead, it becomes more intense by leaving behind such imperfect qualities as materiality, darkness, grossness, etc. It is in this sense that knowledge is 'a matter of affirmation' (*amr thubūtī*). Ṣadrā makes this point clear in his countenance of Suhrawardī's definition of knowledge as clarity and presence.

As for the *Shaykh al-maqtūl* [Suhrawardī], the author of the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, he argued that knowledge consists of 'appearing' (*ẓuhūr*), and appearing is light itself. But light can be a light for itself or for something else. If it is for itself, then it is perceiving of itself; if it is for something else, then this [light] is either a light for itself or for something other than itself...he thus reasoned that the knowledge of something by itself consists of its being a light for itself and the knowledge of something by something else consists of an illuminative relation between luminous things. At their face value, these views are contradictory but they can be interpreted in such a way as to relegate them to one point of view, and it is the idea that

knowledge is comprised of the existence of a disembodied thing whereby existence is conditioned by the privation of obscurities whether it is knowledge for itself or for something else. If this disembodied being from which obscurities are removed is existence for itself, then it is an intellect by itself. If it is a being for something else like the accidents, then it is an intellect or an imaginal (*khayāl*) or sensate [form] for something else. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, pp. 285–286

The representational theory which construes knowledge as mental impression is the basis of what we might call common-sense epistemology. For Ṣadrā, it accounts only for certain types of objects for it is based on subject-object bifurcation. When the mind encounters actually existing objects, it creates images and representations by utilizing universals and generic terms. This, in turn, lands us in the celebrated correspondence theory of truth: true knowledge of things obtains when mental images sustained by the knowing subject corresponds to the objects in the extra-mental world. But this view, which Ṣadrā attributes to Ibn Sīnā in particular, cannot apply to *knowledge of concepts* for concepts are not in the external world in the way physical objects are.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the correspondence theory is predicated upon the subject-object dichotomy and cannot explain self-knowledge which transcends the binary opposition of the knowing subject and the object known. Self-consciousness and self-knowledge entail the idea that we operate in a first-order conceptual scheme in which the subject, the *I*, and the attributes predicated of it are one and the same thing. As Wittgenstein would later elaborate, when I say that 'I am in pain,' there is no distinction between the *I* who utters this sentence and the *I*/person who is in pain.¹⁰⁸ The self-conscious *I* is a unique existent to which universals or generic properties are attributed only antecedently, and the same holds true for self-knowledge.

This is where knowledge as representation fails to explain the essential unity of subject and object in self-knowledge. The following is Ṣadrā's response to knowledge as 'impressions in the mind':

As for the second school that considers knowledge as consisting of a form impressed (*munṭabi'ah*) upon the intellect, it is to be rejected as well from three points of view.

First of all, if intellection were to consist of the occurrence of a form in the intellector, we would not have intellected our own essences. The conclusion is false as is the premise as necessitated by [our] consciousness. Our self-intellection is either our very essence or [not in which case] another form arises in ourselves from ourselves. Both parts are false.... Secondly, this is necessitated by a single thing's being a substance and an accident because the form of ourselves is like our very selves.... Thirdly, all mental forms are universals even if they are particularized a thousand times, and this does not prevent them from being universals and being shared by multiple subjects. But we know ourselves as a particular identity without the possibility of sharing [it with other subjects]. Whatever is superadded to ourselves, we refer to it as 'it' whereas we refer to ourselves as 'we' ['I']. If our self-knowledge were through a form added to ourselves, we would have referred to ourselves as 'it.' The conclusion is false as is the premise. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 288–289

Ṣadrā makes a similar point when he argues against the concept of knowledge as a relation or attribution (*iḍāfah*) between subject and object. Ṣadrā's general principle about relational terms rules out the possibility of defining knowledge as a relation because 'the attributed (*al-muḍāf*) is dependent and not independent. It moves if its subject moves and remains still if its subject remains still. It increases if its subject increases and decreases if its subject decreases. It intensifies if its subject intensifies and diminishes if its subject diminishes.'¹⁰⁹ What this means for knowledge as relation is that we cannot conceive intelligibility without a knower. There must be a knower for anything to be known. At its face value, the proposition seems to make sense. We gain knowledge at the point where the knower meets the object of his knowledge. This is what Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī claims when he defines intellection (*ta'aqqul*) as a relation between a knower and the mental representation of what it knows.¹¹⁰ A closer look, however, reveals that the proposition is fallacious, for it makes intelligibility dependent on the cognitive act of the knower.

Ṣadrā's working principle is that intelligibility as the proper basis of all meaningful statements has an existence of its own and does not impart any privileged position to the knower. Ṣadrā sees knowledge and intelligibility as interchangeable, and the *content* of what is known precedes the knower. If knowledge and intelligibility can exist only with the knower or when the knower meets the object of his knowledge, this turns all knowledge into a property of the knower or what Ṣadrā calls a 'quality of the soul' (*kayfiyyah nafsāniyyah*). This, in turn, makes knowledge 'a purely mental thing among the category of things known (*ma'lūmāt*). But the knowledge of every category is nothing other than this category without its having an existence in and of itself.'¹¹¹

There are further difficulties with defining knowledge as a relation. Divine knowledge is a case in point. If knowledge were to be a relation, then God's knowledge of things would be an accidental and *a posteriori* state between Him and objects of His knowledge. God's knowledge of contingent beings would be 'a quality superadded to His Essence which subsists as one and is more exalted than having one of His attributes of perfection coming from one of the weakest created [i.e., contingent] beings.' But perhaps the most pernicious result, theologically speaking, is that this view makes God a non-knower before He encounters His objects of knowledge. God's existence precedes all of His other attributes, which means that if knowledge is nothing but a relation between subject and object, then God 'would not be knowing anything before receiving this attribute [of knowledge].' Moreover, this would make God's knowledge dependent upon contingent beings which His very existence creates. This is absurd for 'it is impossible for that which is the source of all perfection for other things to receive perfection from others.'¹¹² In a similar way, knowledge designates a state of perfection whereby we gain something whereas 'relationality alone is not a quality of perfection for anything.'¹¹³ Lastly, even if we accept knowledge as relation, it does not always depend on the two terms of a relation but requires a third term by which

we judge the relationship between them. Therefore 'when we judge that the moving body is different from the mover, father from son or an angry person from the person he is angry with, we know all these through a demonstration outside the concepts of the two sides [of attribution].'¹¹⁴ In other words, a relationship between two things does not always yield knowledge about them.

The following paragraph provides a concise summary of Ṣadrā's general criticism of knowledge as relation:

As for the third view that knowledge is a relation between the knower and the known without there being any other state beyond it, it is also false. As it was explained in the section on attribution (*iḍāfah*), the terms of a relation have no independent existence and do not come about except in the case of two relational terms. Furthermore, much of what we perceive does not have concrete existence in the outside world. When we perceive ourselves, there is no attribution between ourselves [that perceives] and ourselves [that is perceived] except from the point of view of mental analysis (*al-i'tibār*). If the knowledge of ourselves were to consist of an attribution of ourselves to ourselves, our knowledge of ourselves would not be obtained except as mental analysis and comparison. But this is not the case for we are incessantly conscious of ourselves. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, p. 290

It follows then that the knowledge we have of ourselves is not different from ourselves. In self-knowledge, that which knows and that which is known are one and the same. It is true that we can have a *conception* of the self through conceptual analysis. This, however, is only a second-order conceptualization and does not state the actual self which is both the subject and object of self-cognition. Such an analysis does not overcome the subject-object bifurcation for it treats self-knowledge as a kind of object-knowledge. What Ṣadrā wants to affirm is that we cannot objectivize self-knowledge in the way we do the representational knowledge of things that exist in the external world. Ṣadrā generalizes this rule to knowledge as both relation and representation:

...what needs to be investigated is how something knows itself when we say that perception (*idrāk*) is a relational state (*ḥālah iḍāfiyyah*) or when we say that it consists of the representation of the perceived in the perceiver. If knowledge were to be a relational state, then relation happens between two things whereas one single thing cannot be attributed to itself, in which case it would not know itself. If we say that it consists of representation, a thing is represented for something else, in which case it would not be known to itself. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 353–354

In summary, Ṣadrā's overall concern is to formulate a substantive rather than relational concept of knowledge. For an ontologist like Ṣadrā, 'relation' is too weak a term to do justice to knowledge as a mode of existence. That is why he also criticizes the idea of knowledge as an accident ('*araḍ*') on similar grounds. First of all, when we define knowledge as an accident, we define it as an accident *in* the mind. As we said before, this makes knowledge a property of the knower, which Ṣadrā rejects as a subjective view of knowledge. Ṣadrā's insistence on this point stems from the fact that 'the existence of intelligible forms in the mind' is not like 'the existence of accidents in their substratum.'¹¹⁵ Otherwise, we would have to say that all we perceive is accidents. Or, everything we know becomes an accident when they take on the status of mental existence in which case 'there would be no difference between substance and accident in mental existence; the difference would hold only in external existence.' This, however, does not apply to such things as God, ourselves, actual substances¹¹⁶ and separate intellects for they cannot be conceived of as accidents. The basic question is then how a substance becomes an accident when it is known in the mind. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who remains Ṣadrā's main target here, sees no problem with 'something being an accident from the point of view of its mental existence and a substance from the point of view of its actual essence.'¹¹⁷ By contrast, Ṣadrā asserts that 'knowledge of substance is substance and knowledge of accident is accident.'¹¹⁸ What we know as substance in the external world remains a substance in the mind. The only

difference is the new mode of existence that a 'substance-in-the-mind' (*fī'l-dhihn*) assumes.

At this point, it is important to clarify the expressions 'in the external world' (*fī'l-khārij*) and 'in the mind' (*fī'l-dhihn*). In Ṣadrā's vocabulary, neither of these expressions refers to some place 'in which' things reside. Rather they denote different modes of existence. The 'external world' is not a 'place' in which things exist. Otherwise we will have to place this place in another place, and that place in another and so on *ad infinitum*. That is why it is more appropriate to understand *fī'l-khārij* as 'externally' rather than 'in the external world' and *fī'l-dhihn* as 'mentally' rather than 'in the mind.' As the following statements show, they refer to different modes and levels of existence.

What we mean by actual [i.e., external] existence (*al-wujūd al-'aynī*) is that the concomitants (*lawāzim*) of an [actual] essence follow from it. When blackness is found in the external world, its proper nature is to cause absence of sight. The proper effect of hotness is to cause hotness. But when they occur in the soul, these concomitants do not follow from them. We call the former actual [external] existence and the latter mental existence. *Asfār*, 1, 3, p. 312¹¹⁹

It is clear that what we mean by 'the external' and in 'the mind' when we say 'this exists in the external world' and 'that exists in the mind' is not one of substratum, place or subject. Instead, the meaning of something existing in the external world is that it has an existence to which effects and states (of existence) occur. Its existing in the mind means the opposite. If existence had no reality except the actualization of a quiddity, then there would remain no difference between the external and the mind. *Mashā'ir*, par. 22, p. 12

What Ṣadrā means by the 'subsistence of a form in the mind' is not that the soul creates the forms themselves. This would make all cognition and knowledge a creation of the mind. Instead, what the soul creates is the *mode of existence* proper to things that exist in the mind.¹²⁰ This is borne out by the general principle that what we perceive is not the physical object itself but the form proper to it when the necessary conditions are met. To

quote Ṣadrā, 'what is in the external world has no presence in the perceiver. Instead [perception] takes place through the soul's conceptualization of a form which, when the necessary conditions are actualized, corresponds to what is in the outside world and which exists also in the world of the soul.'¹²¹ As I mentioned in Chapter I, Ṣadrā, following the Peripatetics, admits that we cannot know matter itself, for matter is pure potentiality and can be known only when coupled with a particular form. Since what is intelligible in things is not matter but their form, we can only perceive the forms.¹²² This, however, does not mean that when we know something, what we know is only an abstract form, not the thing itself. Such a conclusion would lead us to radical conceptualism and eventually to skepticism whereby our relation with the external world would be confined to the contents of our mind. Ṣadrā refers to this as one of the consequences of Ibn Sīnā's concept of knowledge according to which 'the knower, whether a soul, an intellect or God, can intellect only itself or a property of itself.'¹²³ Instead, Ṣadrā insists that even though we know things through their form or a particular form 'representing' (*mumaththilah*) the actual beings in the extra-mental world, what we know is not an abstract notion but a particular being with existential qualities. Ṣadrā compares the function of these forms to the perception of colors as follows: 'The relation of colours in the external world to the eye is like the relation of quiddities in the external world to their intellectual forms.'¹²⁴ In other words, what we know is not a mere concept but the thing itself for its form is its very reality. When I perceive a mountain, the mountain as a physical being is not transplanted into my mind. Yet, what I know as the mountain is no less than the reality of the mountain.¹²⁵

Ṣadrā is rather relentless in reiterating this point. In his commentary on the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'*, he says that 'the retention of essences is as follows: when the mind conceptualizes something, it looks at this mental form not from the point of view of its mental determination (*ta'ayyun*) but from the point of view of its external existence by which the category to which

it belongs is particularized such as its being a substance, a corporeal body and a sleeping being and through which the concomitants of its actual reality are predicated of it.’¹²⁶ This suggests that the fundamental nature of things is retained by their ‘essence’ even when they are conceived in the mind as abstract and general notions. The essence of a substance does not change when it is transferred to the mind: a father is a father, i.e., the father of a son, both in the external world and in the mind. The physical properties of a magnet are not transferred to the mind. But its essence, i.e., that metal object that attracts other metal objects, remains the same in the mind. Even if the magnet is in one’s pocket and thus prevented from attracting things, i.e., performing its essential function in the external world, it is still a magnet. It is then concluded that ‘the intellective forms of substances that exist externally are the very meanings of these beings and their essence.’¹²⁷

It must be clear by now why we cannot claim to create the form, i.e., the essence and meaning of the horse that we see in the field. For Ṣadrā and for all Platonists before him, the intelligible form of the horse exists independent of our perception of it. Otherwise, we cannot explain the meaning of abstracting intelligible forms from sensible, i.e., physical objects. In this limited sense, even the Peripatetic tradition accepts the independent existence of intelligible forms. The mind knows things by *extracting* their intelligible forms *from* their matter. That is why Ṣadrā’s choice of the word ‘subsistence’ is by no means fortuitous: subsistence denotes the mode of existence of physical objects in the mind, not their generation by it. It is also here that the analogy of light comes in handy: just as light makes vision possible, intelligible forms make cognition possible. In Ṣadrā’s words, ‘[intelligible forms] are in fact the dawning of an intellective light on the soul by which the essences are seen just like the dawning of sunlight on the faculty of sight by which visible things are seen.’¹²⁸

This brings us to an aspect of Ṣadrā’s concept of the soul that needs to be understood properly. In a broad sense, the soul *is* the

ideas it contains. It is not the case that the soul is an essence on the one hand, and the concepts and ideas it embodies are separate beings on the other. 'The soul by its essence consists of its perceptual cognitions (*mashā'ir idrākiyyah*).'¹²⁹ The soul's intellecting of other things and 'its being intelligible to itself is the same thing as its own very existence.'¹³⁰ In Ṣadrā's words, 'when the soul perceives sensible and imaginal [substances], it intellects'¹³¹ the forms that subsist with it. But this is like the subsistence of a passive agent with an active agent, not like the subsistence of an accident in a subject. In this regard, what is established in the mind is that very thing which subsists with it, not that they are two separate things in essence.'¹³² Ṣadrā insists that the 'subsistence of sensible and imaginal forms in the soul is not through incarnation (*ḥulūl*).'¹³³ It is more appropriate to say that perception takes place not through the 'incarnation of an intelligible form in the soul but through archetypes (*muthul*) that reside in the mind and through the soul's unification with them.'¹³⁴

Coming back to his criticism of knowledge as relation, Ṣadrā makes a distinction between two kinds of relation. The first is the relation that obtains both in the external world and in the mind, an example of which is the relation between father and son. The second is the relation that obtains in the mind but not in the external world. The distinction between essence and existence is a relation of this kind. There is a third kind where no distinction occurs either in the mind or in the external world, and this is what Ṣadrā seeks to present as yet another argument against knowledge as relation.

Knowledge consists of the existence of an actual thing for something else. We further say that it is the existence of something disengaged from matter whether this existence belongs to itself or to something else. If it is for something else, then it is knowledge for something other than itself; if it is not for something else, then it is knowledge for itself. This is what we call relation (*iḍāfah*) like the relation of existence. Existence in and of itself can be an existent for itself or for something else. The latter is like the existence of accidents

vis-à-vis their subjects and the former like the existence of substances. The existence of [those substances] is unchanging for themselves but not for other things. The relation between existence and quiddity, however, is only metaphorical and as such there is no differentiation between the two except by way of mental analysis. Therefore if the relation in question necessitates the differentiation of two sides, it necessitates it in terms of actualization (*taḥaqquq*) in the external world. If relation occurs in the extra-mental world as in the case of father-son and writer-writing, the differentiation [between them] comes about in the external world. It is thus impossible for father and son, who is related to that father, to be one single existent. But when the relation takes place only in the mind without being in the external world, then the differentiation of the two sides takes place also only within the context of this relation (*nisbah*). *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 354–355

In contrast to these kinds of relations, however, there is another kind of relation that does not presume duality in existence *in concreto* or in the mind. Ṣadrā's working principle is that one single existent can be the subject of multiple meanings without there being the duality or multiplicity of attribution and predication. A frequently used example is man having the attributes of vitality/animal-ness (*ḥayawān*) and speech/rationality (*nuṭq*) at the same time. When we define man as rational animal, we do not refer to three discrete things called 'man,' 'rational,' and 'animal.' As a whole, they give us the concept of 'man.' Insofar as the actual reality of man is concerned, there is again no separation between 'man,' 'rational' and 'animal.' What we have before us is a single unit. That is why Ṣadrā insists that when we talk about ourselves as knowing and known on the one hand, and as the locus of knowledge on the other, this does not lead to 'multiplicity in reality or in mental analysis.'¹³⁵

According to this line of argument, the ability to intellect and, by extension, intelligibility is the standing condition of agency, for we cannot conceive the human agent without affirming of him the qualities of speech and intelligence. When applied to knowledge, this implies that a thing that exists is intelligible and

can be known by itself in proportion to its share of existing: 'Knowledge is neither a negative thing like abstraction from matter nor a relation. Rather, it is existence. Not every kind of existence but actual, not potential existence. Not every kind of actual existence but existence pure and unmixed with non-existence. It becomes more intense in knowledge [i.e., intelligibility] in proportion to its level of purity from the blemish of non-existence.'¹³⁶ In such cases, there is no relationality between a thing and its intelligibility. In the case of God, knowledge is necessitated by His very existence, which is simple (*basīṭ*), for existence by definition implies consciousness and is the proper locus of intelligibility. As a general rule, one cannot speak of the plenitude of existence without acknowledging its cognitive content. To drive this point home, Ṣadrā returns to the question of how multiple meanings are predicated of God without jeopardizing His absolute unity:

When the Sublime, exalted be His Invocation, is qualified as existing by Himself and subsisting and knowing through His own essence or when we say that He has Power, Will or Life, there is in reality no relation, attribution, connection, accidentality or any kind of attribution and relation but only a pure existence which is itself the locus of knowledge, power, volition, life, and other qualities of perfection.¹³⁷ Just as His existentiality (*mawjūdiyyah*) does not necessitate in Him an attribute and a subject of attribution (*mawṣūf*), He has in reality no accident, subject of accident and thus no accidentality either in concrete reality or in the mind. The same applies to other names whose judgment is the same as existence because they are nothing but existence. But the mind presumes here an attribute, a subject of attribution, and a relation between the two. Thus we say [falsely] that He the exalted has Being, Knowledge, and Will.... This relation between Him the Exalted and His essence is what the mind extrapolates by way of comparison with what it sees in things other than the Divine...the relation here is only metaphorical, and it goes back to the absence of attributing composition and multiplicity to Him. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, pp. 355–356

We can paraphrase Ṣadrā's point as follows: in cases where a single being assumes multiple meanings, relation is a mental concept. The mind conceives a set of relations between a being and its various attributes but in reality what we have is a single unitary being. This is most obvious in the case of self-knowledge. It is true that I can establish a relation between myself and *my knowledge* of myself when I retroactively think upon the proposition that 'I know myself.' This relation, however, ought to be mental otherwise I would have to say I have a relation between myself and myself. Occasionally, Ṣadrā compares this to the distinction between essence and existence. The distinction is purely mental and does not correspond to anything real in the external world. What really exists is a single being with multiple meanings and attributes. It is in this sense that 'relation is only a metaphor.'

This conclusion is also warranted by Ṣadrā's general principle that perfect disembodiment and, by extension, pure intelligibility enable higher beings to take on multiple attributes and 'meanings.' It goes without saying that the word 'meaning' (*ma'nā*) is to be understood here in the light of Ṣadrā's realist ontology of Platonic Forms. When such beings reach higher levels of disembodiment through gradation of existence and substantial motion, they increase in existence rather than simply having more accidents added to them. This, in turn, reduces all dualities and relations to mental distinctions. The duality of name and the named, for instance, takes place only for those beings that remain attached to material existence and thus lack in complete transparency and luminosity. Such dualities disappear as beings become ontologically simpler and more condensed. Qualities such as knowledge, intelligibility, life, volition, and so on are constitutive of simple substances, not mere attributes residing in them.

In our view, knowledge is existence that is disengaged from matter. As this being exists by itself, it is also intelligible by itself. Just as the existentiality (*mawjūdiyyah*) of existence by itself does not

require duality either in essence or in the consideration of essence except only as pure mental analysis, by the same token its intelligibility by itself does not lead to differentiation in its essence, aspects (*jihāt*) or considerations except as difference in concept [i. e., in the mind]. As you have seen before, different concepts can unite in one being and reality, and a being that is one and simple without any obscurities can rightly be the locus of multiple concepts all of which are united in existence despite the fact that they may exist in different loci with multiple beings *in concreto* or with different concepts in the mind. Since a disembodied and simple essence is disengaged from being the locus [of one single attribute], the concept of substance is affirmed of it. Since it is a form disengaged from matter, the concept of the intellect is affirmed of it; since it is a form by itself, the concept of the intelligible is affirmed of it; since it is existent by itself and not by something else, the concept of the intellector (*'āqil*) is affirmed of it; since it is a being beyond all evils, it becomes the subject of love; since it perceives this goodness, it loves its own essence, and so on. In this way, it is possible to affirm these relational meanings of one single essence without there being multiplicity and difference in actual reality except in concepts. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 356–357

The gist of Ṣadrā's above criticisms is that knowledge should be conceived as a substantive rather than an instrumental and relational term. For Ṣadrā, the definitions of knowledge as abstraction, impression, relation and accident all fall short of the substantive nature of cognition and intelligibility.

c. Modes of Perception and the Simple Intellect

Following the Peripatetic tradition,¹³⁸ Ṣadrā divides perception (*idrāk*) into four modes as sensation (*iḥsās*), imagination (*takhayyul*), estimation (*tawahhum*) and intellection (*ta'aqqul*). Each of these modes corresponds to a level of existence or, more properly, to a level of disembodiment. Ṣadrā works from these levels of existence toward the mind rather than moving from the mind to how it perceives things as mental representations. The four modes of disembodiment denote both the types and

levels of perception. We can hardly overemphasize the significance of this point because for Ṣadrā our epistemic contact with things is mediated through a hierarchy of perception: in its cogitations, the mind knows things in stages and degrees rather than simply in different ways and through different means.¹³⁹ This hierarchy is essentially ontological as each level of perception corresponds to a particular mode of existence. In defining perception as an onto-epistemic encounter with things, Ṣadrā's intent remains thoroughly ontological: instead of construing perception as a state pertaining to the knower, he places it within the larger context of ontological disembodiment (*tajrīd* and *naz'*), luminosity, and clarity (*wuḍūh*), and situates perception 'somewhere' between the mental plane of the knowing subject and the non-subjective domain of existence. This is a decisive move away from a subjectivist-psychological notion of perception to a mainly ontological context in which the knowing subject, i.e., the 'intellector' (*'āqil*) is no longer seen as the sole locus of perception.

With this point in mind, we can now turn to how these modes of perception function in Ṣadrā's epistemology. The first kind is called sensation and acquired through the medium of the five senses. In discussing sensation, Ṣadrā focuses not so much on the senses as on the kind of disembodiment that makes sense experience possible. Sensation is the perception of existence as 'mixed with matter' and conditioned by such determinants as place, time, position, quality, and quantity.¹⁴⁰ Since sensate objects are conditioned by these material qualities without which they cannot exist, their disembodiment and, by extension, perception is 'incomplete.' In this sense, the senses are necessary but not sufficient for arriving at the form, i.e., the meaning of sensate qualities.

Imagination (*takhayyul*) corresponds to a higher level of perception despite the fact that it shares similar characteristics with sensation.¹⁴¹ The difference between the two lies in the fact that the imaginal faculty can retain forms or ideas in the absence of a sensate object without being able to generate universal

concepts apart from sensate objects and qualities.¹⁴² When perceiving heat as a property of corporeal beings, for instance, sensation remains completely dependent on the hot object whereas imagination can preserve the concept of heat after having a first experience of the hot object perceived. In this sense, imagination acts as an intermediary and isthmus (*barzakh*) between the purely material and purely intellective, and Ṣadrā, following Ibn al-'Arabī, uses imagination as an ontological state connecting the two spheres of existence.¹⁴³

Estimation (*tawahhum*) refers yet to a higher level of perception whereby the estimative faculty (*quwwah wahmiyyah*) can sustain forms as ideas and notions in the absence of sense experience and sensate objects. But it falls short of constructing these forms as universal qualities applicable to multiple objects. Since the estimative faculty perceives meanings only in relation to particular sensate objects, it represents a lower level of the intellective faculty. At the end, however, Ṣadrā drops estimation from his list of the modes of perception by saying that the 'estimative faculty is like an intellect that has fallen from its [higher] state.'¹⁴⁴

Intellection (*ta'qqul*) is the highest mode of perception whereby a 'thing is perceived from the point of view of its essence only and not from the standpoint of any other [consideration] whether taken by itself or by other perceptual attributes.'¹⁴⁵ Intellection pertains to the essences of things which contain in themselves all other sensate and perceptual qualities 'in a simple manner.' This is how the intellect is able to retain meanings and concepts in the absence of sensate objects to which such meanings are applied. As a condition of intelligibility, disembodiment reaches its highest level of intensity and incorporeality in intellection. This is the way of looking at things 'as they are' or as 'things-qua-essences' (*min ḥayth māhiyyāt*). At this juncture, knowing things through their essences reverses the process of representational knowledge: instead of abstracting forms/meanings inherent in things in an ascending order, the intellect knows them by uniting with their intelligible essences

in a descending order. Obviously, this does not suggest anything like 'knowing things without things.' Rather, it refers to perceiving things through their essential properties stored in their intelligible forms which enjoy a higher ontological status than sensate qualities.

Thus Ṣadrā reduces perception to three modes and classifies them according to their level of disembodiment and ontological intensity. In essence, this is a restatement of Ibn Sīnā, to which Ṣadrā adds very little. His attempt to collapse all modes of perception into modes of existence, however, is no small matter:

In fact, perception is of three kinds as there are three worlds [viz., the sensible, the imaginal, and the intellectual], and estimation is like an intellect that has fallen from its [higher] state. In every perception, there is a disengagement (*naz'*) of the realities of things and their spirits from the moulds of physical existence and temples of matter. The sensible form is disengaged from matter only imperfectly, being conditioned by the presence of matter. The imaginal form is disengaged medially, and that is why it falls between the world of the *sensibilia* and the world of the *intelligibilia*. The intellective form is disengaged completely in the case of forms that are taken [i.e., disengaged] from matter. As for that which is an intellect by itself, it does not need any of these disengagements in its intellection. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362¹⁴⁶

In its act of intellection, the soul does not simply abstract and discard certain qualities from sensate objects. Rather, it undergoes an intellective transformation and becomes 'more' in existential attributes through substantial motion. The soul's intellectual and existential journey is predicated upon Ṣadrā's view that the 'soul is corporeal in its origination but spiritual in its subsistence' (*jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth rūḥāniyyat al-baqā'*). To clarify this point, he returns to his view of disembodiment discussed above. He states that the

meaning of disengagement (*tajrīd*) in intellection and other kinds of perception is not like the common view of jettisoning certain

additional qualities (*zawā'id*). It is not the case that the soul remains stationary¹⁴⁷ and the perceptuals are transported from their material positions to the senses, from the senses to the imaginal faculty, and from the imaginal faculty to the intellect. Rather, both the perceiver and the perceived are disengaged together, pass from one being to another together, and travel from one mode of existence to another and from one world to another until the soul becomes an intellect, intellector, and intelligible in actuality after having been only potential in all of them. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 366

By reaching a level of disengagement proportionate to its ontological state, the intellect, once a potential agent of knowing, becomes fully actualized and is called the 'simple intellect' (*al-'aql al-basīṭ*). The simple intellect is preceded by several other intellects or levels of intellection, which Ṣadrā divides into three. The first is the domain of the potential or hylic intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*) whereby the intellect remains a dormant potentiality until it is united with an intelligible.¹⁴⁸ Like the Peripatetics, Ṣadrā postulates that the potential intellect needs an external agent to actualize it. This agent is the intelligible (*al-ma'qūl*) that is fully actual and intelligible regardless of the presence or absence of an intellect that perceives it. Since an intelligible is essentially a disembodied substance, it is also self-intellecting, and this, in tandem with the Platonic ontology of ideas, makes *intelligibilia* independent of the knowing subject.

The second level of intellection pertains to the imaginal world whereby the disembodied forms of things become established in the faculty of imagination in such a way that 'as if it looks at the forms in a detailed manner [i.e., knows them in full detail].'¹⁴⁹ The third and highest level of intellection obtains when the potential intellect becomes a simple intellect in which the *intelligibilia* are established as 'meaning properties' that are fully actualized. In principle, the simple intellect can conceive ideas and concepts without further analysis and investigation of specific instances. This is what Ibn Sīnā calls 'knowledge in detail' (*al-'ilm bi'l-tafṣīl*) as opposed to 'knowledge in summary' (*al-'ilm bi'l-ijmāl*). The latter form of knowledge requires further

articulation and is usually brought to its full extent in a dialogue. According to Ibn Sīnā, we know many things but only in a cursory manner. Our cognition reaches the level of the simple knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-basīṭ*) when we further articulate our conceptions through questioning and deliberation. Suhrawardī joins Ibn Sīnā in drawing a distinction between the two forms of knowledge and states that when we think of the concept of humanity (*al-insāniyyah*), we think of all of its conceptual concomitants (*lawāzim*). In other words, we do not exercise an additional second-order analysis to perceive the full extent of the concept of humanity.¹⁵⁰ This explains the possibility of knowing many things through a single mind or intellect. Continuing this discussion, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interprets the simple intellect as perspicacity and ‘quick wit,’ viz., the intellect’s ability to know things all ‘at once’ (*daḡ‘ah wāḡidah*) whereas ‘intellection in detail’ (*al-ta‘aqqul al-taḡṣīlī*) refers to the gradual cognition of things ‘one after another’ (*wāḡidah ba’d wāḡidah*).¹⁵¹

For Ṣadrā, the simple intellect represents full actuality and functions in a way similar to the active intellect. Ṣadrā, however, does not say in any clear manner if his simple intellect is a cognitive counterpart of the active intellect in the soul. Instead, he criticizes Ibn Sīnā for failing to see the connection between the simple intellect and the unification argument:

Proving this simple intellect is not possible except by having recourse to the idea of the unification of the intellect and the intelligibles as we have demonstrated before. What is strange is that the Master [Ibn Sīnā] should grant these matters that he mentions in this context and then be extremely stubborn in denying the idea of unification. If we do not acknowledge the existence of the simple intellect in man and in substances completely disengaged from corporeal bodies and matter in which there are intelligible meanings (*al-ma‘ānī al-ma‘qūlah*), how can that which is not actualized emanate upon the souls from the simple intellect? How can it bring the souls from potentiality to actuality by virtue of something that is not established in it [i.e., when it does not function as a fully realized agent]? By the same token, how can the forms of the *intelligibilia* be stored in it despite its simplicity while the soul,

having forgotten them, can find them stored in the simple intellect when it returns to its store of the intelligibles (*khazānat al-'aqliyyah*) just like the Master has demonstrated? *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 372

Simple intellect as the storehouse of intelligible forms is a logical result of the 'perfect disembodiment' of higher intellectual beings because the simple intellect stands for the highest rung of intellection at which level one can know things in their 'totality.' In contrast to sense experience where one's access to physical objects is conditioned by the available sense data and hence limited to particular instances of sensate objects, the simple intellect signifies intellectual cognition that comprises *in principle* everything there is to know about perceivable objects. When knowing the 'concept' of humanity, for instance, the simple intellect can know what it means to be human and all of the modes and secondary properties that belong to it. The mind as simple intellect can have such a perfect and complete perception without having to run through the entire spectrum of individual human beings, for to know something *in a simple manner* is to unite with its intelligible essence. Needless to say, one can grant this conclusion only if one accepts Ṣadrā's initial assumptions about existence and its gradation. We are once again reminded that the intelligible reality of things is ontologically more real and epistemologically more reliable than their corporeal templates, and this applies *mutatis mutandis* to the simple intellect that yields 'simple knowledge.'

Ṣadrā assigns to 'simple intellection' such an importance that he presents it as the only proper way of knowing God. Since God is the ultimate source of all existence, the perception of even sensate beings ends up being a perception of an aspect of the Necessary Being. To avoid the seemingly inescapable conclusion that all cognition leads to knowledge of God, Ṣadrā first makes a distinction between simple and composite knowledge:

Know that knowledge, just like ignorance, can be simple, and it consists of the perception of something without the awareness of this perception and without the affirmation of what is being

perceived. Or it can be composite and it consists of the perception of something with the awareness of this perception and the awareness of what is being perceived. Once you understand this, we add that the perception of the Real the Exalted One is based on this kind of simplicity and it obtains for everyone in the root of his innate nature (*fiṭrah*). This is so because what is perceived by itself in everything [we know]...is nothing but a mode of the existence of this thing whether this perception is sensual, imaginal, or rational, and whether it is by presence (*ḥuḍūr*) or by coming-into-being (*ḥuṣūl*). *Aṣfār*, I, 1, p. 116

After this prelude, Ṣadrā turns to his main argument to subsume all cognitive acts under the perception of existence. Ultimately, 'all perception is through a mode of existence higher and more luminous than the [level of] existence clouded with non-existence and material darkness.'¹⁵² This innate and intuitive perception of existence is found in all human beings whether they are aware of it or not.

According to the verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīn*) among the sages ('*urafā'*) and the theosophers (*muta'allihīn*) among the philosophers (*ḥukamā'*), it is clear and firmly established that the existence of everything is nothing but the reality of its identity (*huwiyyah*), which is related to the existence of the Real and Self-Subsisting One and which is the basis of judgment for the being-ness (*mawjūdiyyah*) of things. The most appropriate way to describe this is to say that [their existence] is a mode of their actual identity, which is related to the Divine Existence. We will establish further proofs for the fact that existential identities are among the degrees of the manifestation of His Essence and rays of His Majesty and Beauty.

The perception of everything is therefore nothing but a consideration (*mulāḥaẓah*) of this thing in a way that is related to the Necessary [Being] from this point of view, i.e., the fact that [the Necessary Being] is its existence (*wujūd*) and being-ness (*mawjūdiyyah*). And this is not possible without perceiving the essence of the Real One the Exalted.... Whoever perceives anything in any mode of perception, he has perceived the Creator. People may be ignorant of this perception except for the elect (*al-khawāṣṣ*) from among the Friends of God the Exalted as it was reported from the

Commander of the Believers [‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib] who said: ‘I have seen nothing but God before it, after it, with it, and in it.’ All of these [perceptions] are correct. It is thus obvious that this simple perception of the Real One the Exalted obtains for every one of His servants. But this does not lead to the perception of God with all of His Essence because this is impossible as it was proved before. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 116–117

While simple knowledge or perception is a first-order experience given to us in our ‘natural’ encounter with things, composite perception requires a second-order conceptualization whereby we reflect upon perception itself.

As for composite perception, it does not arise for everyone whether it is based on unveiling (*kashf*) or witnessing (*shuhūd*) in the case of the elect of the Friends of God and the sages or whether it is based on demonstrative knowledge as it obtains for intelligent thinkers concerning His Qualities and Effects. Furthermore, this is the place of responsibility (*taklīf*) and message (*risālah*) in which both error and truth have their way, to which the judgment of thought and faith return, and where there is a hierarchy of virtuosity among the sages and degrees among the people. This is in contrast to the former mode [of perception] in which there is no room whatsoever for error and ignorance. As it is said in Persian:

Knowing the Truth itself is innate (*fiṭrī*)

The knowledge of this knowing is but a thought

It is therefore clear that the five perceptions (i.e., the five senses) just like the other kinds of perceptual powers manifest the Divine Identity, which is the First Beloved and the Perfect Goal of man. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 118

While the three modes of perception are interrelated in a hierarchical way, all perception takes place ultimately through the soul as the simple intellect. The senses function primarily as ‘preparatory conditions’ for the soul’s reception of sensate objects because the senses cannot ‘know’ by themselves what they perceive. Sense-perception is governed by the intellect in

that what enables the mind to perceive a sensation as a meaningful experience is not the senses but the intellect: 'The senses or the sensate soul as sensate soul cannot know if the sensible object has an existence of its own in the external world. This can be known only through experience and it belongs to the intellect or the thinking soul and not to the faculty of sensation or imagination [to make this judgment].'¹⁵³ Conversely, what prevents the soul as a simple intellect from perceiving intelligible essences on a continuous basis or 'all at once' is the intervention of sensible and imaginal faculties and, by derivation, their corresponding levels of existence. The faculty of imagination, for instance, acts as an intermediary between the sensible and the intelligible and cannot sustain incorporeal forms at the same level as the intellect. But since the intellect belongs essentially to the world of the *intelligibilia*, it is capable of making multiple meanings present (*istiḥḍār*) all at once. As the saying goes, 'it is in the nature of the intellect to make many one (*tawḥīd al-kathīr*) and of the senses [to make] one many (*takthīr al-wāḥid*).'¹⁵⁴

At this point, the question is how the soul as a single substance can know an infinite number of things. We can anticipate that the answer will be to say that the intellect is an incorporeal disembodied substance, contains multiple meanings, and thus can know many things. Ṣadrā, however, goes further and creates an isomorphic relation between the intellect and the intelligible world—a conclusion that has deep repercussions for his cosmology. Stated briefly, this isomorphic relation suggests that the *anthropos* that knows and the *cosmos* that is known share the same domain of reality. In a sense, this is what Aristotle had in mind when he said that 'only the like can know the like.'¹⁵⁵ The soul or the simple intellect remains a single and unitary substance (*jawhar basīṭ*) in knowing various things, and multiplicity in intellection is attributed to such 'epistemic tools' as sensation and imagination. This leads Ṣadrā once more to assert the definition of knowledge as presence and unveiling:

The soul that knows a multitude of things through intellectual realization and disembodiment from the garment of being human does not become destitute of their knowledge but rather more [intense] as unveiling and clearing (*wuḍūḥ*). In spite of this, when the soul goes above the differences of time and space, its knowledge of things becomes present in it completely all at once as in the case of the knowledge of separate substances whose knowledge [of things] is fully present in them in actuality without the obscurity of potentiality. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, p. 379

The argument for the simplicity of the soul brings us to an important aspect of Ṣadrā's epistemology. We can call this the particularity of first-order perceptions. We have already stated that disembodiment as a condition of intelligibility does not make knowledge an abstract concept but rather establishes it as a concrete state of consciousness due to its higher level of ontological intensity. In this sense, knowledge, like existence, is a 'particular and simple identity' (*huwiyyah shakhṣiyyah baṣīṭah*) despite the fact that the mind at the level of second-order analysis considers all knowledge under the rubric of universals (*kulliyyāt*). Our 'ordinary' encounter with the world is given in first-order experiences. The second-order analyses of universals enter the picture through a process of self-reflection. In perceiving the tree in front of me, for instance, my knowledge-experience is a direct act of 'seeing,' which involves an intuition of some kind and which is not predicated upon such universals as species, genus and difference. It is only at the level of second-order conceptualization that we talk about intelligible realities as abstractions, concepts and notions. This is also what is meant by the presence of something to itself and to other things: 'presence' (*ḥuḍūr*) implies something concrete and particular.

We can contrast this view of knowledge with the Aristotelian idea that true knowledge is characterized by its generality and universality.¹⁵⁶ For Aristotle and his Muslim followers, a scientific proposition is important and useful not because it corresponds to a particular sensory object but because it makes a general claim about the class to which this particular object

belongs.¹⁵⁷ That is partly why the Peripatetics insist on 'abstraction' as the standing condition of knowledge for this is the only way we can arrive at universal and general propositions. Logic and metaphysics supply us with this sort of knowledge, and we need both to be able to go beyond the particular sensory entities that make up the physical world. As Ibn Sīnā asserts, the discrete and piecemeal descriptions of physical entities does not give us the 'world' because 'all perception is particular' and possible 'by means of a corporeal instrument.'¹⁵⁸

Ṣadrā does not deny 'abstract' and general knowledge as part of our knowledge about the world. But he insists that this concept of knowledge misses a substantial aspect of what it means to know. In knowing a thing, we have the direct experience of something concrete, particular and specific. Our 'ordinary' or natural encounter with the world, including our own selves, is not mediated through second-order concepts but given in first-order experiences. It then follows that our most intimate and primary standing toward the world remains particular and specific. It is only at the level of second-order conceptualization that we talk about intelligible realities as abstractions, concepts, meanings, notions, universals. Ṣadrā uses the language of presence (*ḥuḍūr*) to state this point: when something is defined as 'present,' it refers to something concrete and particular.

To emphasize the immediacy and self-evidentiality of perception, Ṣadrā adopts Suhrawardī's language of illumination and uses the words 'vision' (*ibṣār*) and 'witnessing' (*mushāhadah*) to describe the particularity of knowledge-experience.¹⁵⁹ Suhrawardī says that 'perception takes place only when the soul has a [concrete] vision [of something] and vision is through a particular form, not through a universal. It then follows that the soul has an illuminative and presential knowledge not mediated through a [representational] form.'¹⁶⁰ Ṣadrā complements Suhrawardī's point by saying that 'perception is nothing more than the soul's attention to and witnessing of that which is perceived. Witnessing takes place not through a universal but a particular form. Therefore the soul by necessity has an

illuminative and presential knowledge and not a form superadded to it [antecedently].'¹⁶¹ What Ṣadrā seeks to do here is to establish intellection in terms that we would normally attribute to sense-experience without the limitations of corporeal existence. His main concern is to construe intellection as a unique, simple and particular encounter with things in a manner as concrete and real as sense-perception. He says that

...knowledge, as we have explained before, is non-material existence, and existence in itself is not a universal nature belonging to a particular genus or species even if it is divided into species through the differentia or into individuals through individual properties or into classes through accidental conditions. Every knowledge is a particular and simple identity not to be grouped under a universal meaning [i.e., concept] that belongs to an essence. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 382

This leads us to another premise of the Sadrean noetics: universality and concreteness do not contradict one another. The perception of completely disembodied substances is a prime example of how something can be both concrete and universal at the same time. Speaking of the relationship between the human intellect and the world of the spirit, Ṣadrā defines all cognition in terms of the soul's participation in the spiritual world of actual beings whose reality makes them both concrete and universal at the same time: '...a concept (*al-mafhūm*) is a name for particular things whereas this active principle [of knowledge] (*al-mabda' al-fā'ilī*) has a reality by itself, and is its carrier and protector. By the same token, the universal natures are names for luminous essences (*dhawāt nūriyyah*), intellectual identities (*huwiyyah 'aqliyyah*), sacred angels, and the lords of the species of nature (*arbāb anwā' ṭabī'iyyah*).'¹⁶²

Ṣadrā's implicit argument here is that all perception is *ultimately* a concrete and first-order experience whether it is based on sensation or intellection. That is why he sees 'no difference between intellectual particularization (*al-tashakhkhuṣ*

al-‘aqlī) and universality and participation (*ishtirāk*) among many individuals.’¹⁶³

d. Active Intellect, Intuition, and Peripatetic Intellectualism

Ṣadrā’s discussion of the active intellect is largely based on the views of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Although he offers some new perspectives and revises parts of the Peripatetic view, he remains by and large loyal to the traditional four-fold division of the intellect into potential (*bi’l-quwwah*), actual (*bi’l-fi’l*), acquired (*al-mustafād*) and active (*fa‘āl*). There are, however, two important novelties in Ṣadrā. First of all, he discusses the so-called psychological intellects of the Peripatetics as stages of uncovering the modes of existence. Instead of simply abstracting intelligible forms from things *in concreto* and constructing mental images through them, the intellect is now placed in a position to reach out to the intelligible world and unite with it in a way that leaves no epistemological rupture between the intellect and the intelligible. This takes place through what we might call ‘appropriation’ and ‘participation.’ Secondly, Ṣadrā assigns a less prominent role to the active intellect in the process of intellection. Even though he accepts the conventional definition of the active intellect as an agent source of human thought, the active intellect becomes somewhat sidelined in view of his concern to construct knowledge as a mode and direct witnessing of existence. This second point is also supported by Ṣadrā’s implicit rejection of emanation (*ṣudūr*) as a principle of creation and cosmology.

Since I have already discussed the four types of the intellect in Chapter I, I shall focus here on the revisions Ṣadrā makes to dovetail the traditional four-fold division with his concept of knowledge. As a general rule, Ṣadrā’s hermeneutic strategy is not so much to reject the Peripatetics *in toto* as to show that they eventually concur with the unification argument.¹⁶⁴ When the soul passes from potentiality to actuality, Ṣadrā argues, it undergoes an existential transformation and becomes ‘more

intense' and 'powerful' in receiving meanings (*ma'ānī*). This is due to the intellect's being subject to gradation which 'enables an individual substance to move from its species to another [i. e., higher] species in a gradual and continuous manner as we see in the case of the intensification of blackness and hotness.'¹⁶⁵ Here Ṣadrā differs from his Peripatetic predecessors when he insists that the soul-intellect does not remain unchanged in the process of intellection. It becomes more intense, i.e., assumes a higher mode of being and becomes more capable of receiving new meanings. Furthermore, the soul, having gone through the gradual stages of intensity, becomes a 'simple intellect' and develops an innate capacity to know all things in a 'simple manner.' What makes the soul an agent of knowledge is something outside the soul, viz., the intelligible substance. This is predicated upon the Aristotelian principle that only an actual substance can bring a potential being into actuality.¹⁶⁶

This is where the active intellect comes in. As we know from Aristotle's Alexandrian and Muslim commentators, the active intellect refers to the highest level of intelligibility in actuality. When the soul begins to understand intelligible substances, it becomes 'the acquired intellect, which is very close to the active intellect. The difference between the two is that the acquired intellect is a non-material form which was once close to matter and then disengaged from it after going through various stages whereas the active intellect is a form that has never been in matter and can only be non-material.'¹⁶⁷ If we understand the active intellect as the *principle* of universal knowledge and not a *kind* of knowledge, then the emphatic expression 'never been in matter' can be interpreted as another way of saying that the principles of universal knowledge cannot be derived from sensate experience. When we state such mathematical truths as $2+2=4$, we partake of a universal axiom that is not derived from sense data. For Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā, such *a priori* truths are actualities that the intellect comes to discover rather than generate by itself. This suggests that the intellect can be said to exist properly to the extent to which it becomes related to

intelligible forms and substances. To that effect, Ibn Sīnā says that ‘the universal intellect does not exist alone as an established state; rather the universal intellect exists in conceptualization.’¹⁶⁸ The philosophers call our relationship with such *a priori* truths ‘conjunction with the active intellect.’ As a principle of knowledge and cognition, the active intellect is seen as both an epistemic and metaphysical term. Ṣadrā states this very point when he says that ‘the study of the active intellect in and of itself falls more properly within the domain of metaphysics (*al-ilāhiyyāt*) which investigates the states of the principles [of things] (*aḥwāl al-mabādi*).’¹⁶⁹

There are, however, shifting languages of personal and non-personal being used for the active intellect. Whether we conceive of the active intellect as a cosmological principle or noetic idea, it forms the backbone of the Greco-Islamic metaphysics of actuality.¹⁷⁰ More often than not, Ṣadrā uses a non-personal language when referring to it. In one of his summary definitions, he says that ‘intellectual perception takes place through the unification of the soul with the active intellect which is the form of things or that in which these forms are found.’¹⁷¹ In another passage, he says that ‘the majority of the philosophers called these rays and lights active intellects; the Peripatetics, who are the followers of the First Teacher, called them the forms of knowledge (*al-ṣuwar al-‘ilmiyyah*) subsisting in the Essence of God; the Platonists and their group called them illuminating similes (*al-muthul al-nūriyyah*) and divine forms (*al-ṣuwar al-ilāhiyyah*).’¹⁷² As these quotes clarify, the active intellect is more of a principle of actual-disembodied thought than an individual being or packet of knowledge. Conjunction or unification with the active intellect does not suggest acquiring from it bits of universal knowledge such as ‘ $2+2=4$ ’ or all ‘human beings are mortal.’ The active intellect does not supply the philosopher with that kind of information or deduction, or prediction of any kind. As ‘the form of things or that in which these forms are found,’ it refers to the principle of thought and disembodied (‘abstract’) knowledge. In this sense, the active intellect is the universal

principle of intellection that enables the mind to connect 2 to 2 and induce it to arrive at the right conclusion. Thus it is said that 'the active intellect that is in us is all things in the sense that it is by itself the depository of all universal meanings found in existential forms in the universe.'¹⁷³

Ṣadrā makes a similar point when he talks about how error is possible when one unites with the active intellect. We know the process by which we ascertain the truth or falsity of an empirical statement: we compare facts with ideas and pass a judgment. In such cases, we employ the correspondence theory of knowledge. In the case of intellectual knowledge where our main concern is not the relationship between facts and ideas but between ideas and ideas, i.e., concepts, we apply a different criterion of correspondence. Ṣadrā's quote from 'Allāmah Ḥillī's *Sharḥ tajrīd al-'aqā'id* makes it clear that the truth value of such propositions is determined according to their correspondence to what is contained in the active intellect. The quote in question reads that 'every form or established judgment in the mind corresponds to the forms engrained in the active intellect. [When this is the case], it is true; otherwise it is false.'¹⁷⁴ Ṣadrā concurs with this view by making all universally true propositions a part of the active intellect. This is possible only when we understand the active intellect as the depository of intelligible forms where all such universally true propositions are given as the *a priori* 'knowledge of all first principles' as opposed to 'description' (*taṣawwur*) and 'judgment' (*taṣdīq*), both of which are derived from logical syllogism.¹⁷⁵ In this sense, the active intellect is 'all intelligibles; in fact it is all beings insofar as its intellectual existence is concerned.'¹⁷⁶

The unity of the active intellect is an important premise of the Peripatetic tradition and underscores the universal nature of purely intellectual knowledge. The very same premise, however, has given rise to two major problems for the Muslim and Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages. The first is how the active intellect remains one as the depository of *all* intelligibles. If we are to imagine a case of unity-in-multiplicity, how would

it apply to the active intellect? The second problem is what happens when a multitude of human intellects conjoin or unite with the active intellect at the same time. Does the active intellect still remain one? If yes, how is the unity of intellectual knowledge maintained when a true proposition is known by two or more knowers?

Şadrā's answer to both of these questions is based on the gradation of existence. As stated before, 'meanings' (*ma'ānī*) as ontological properties exist as a single unity in incorporeal beings. The multiplicity of such meanings should not be confused with the kind of differentiation we see in corporeal substances. It is rather an internal enrichment and intensification of existence in the form of various modalities.

The contingent beings that can be perceived are of four kinds: the first is the kind that is perfect in existence and known fully. These are the intellects and the intelligibles in actuality. Because of their intense existence, light and purity, they are above corporeal properties, shapes, and numbers. In spite of their multiplicity and abundance, they exist as one single total being with no distinction between their realities, for all of them are sunk in the sea of the Divine. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 502

The intellective world is one single being with which all things in this world are conjoined. It is their beginning and end. It is the source of intelligibles and all essences without there being any multiplicity and division. Nothing is subtracted from it with the effusion of something from it nor does it increase with the conjunction of something with it. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 336

In regards to the second question, Şadrā introduces two kinds of oneness (*waḥdah*): 'numerical oneness' (*waḥdah 'adadiyyah*) denotes something's being one as opposed to being two or three. When such numerical units are added up, they increase in number: two trees are more than one tree or five horses are less than seven horses. 'Intellective oneness' (*al-waḥdat al-'aqliyyah*) refers to a different kind of oneness where oneness is defined in terms of simplicity and does not increase or decrease when things are added to or detracted from it. An example of this is

the concept of humanity (*al-insān*): no matter how many accidental qualities we may add to it, humanity remains a single unit. There can be many humans, as there really are, with many different qualities. But this does not lead to two or three 'humanities.' The same applies to existence in that the existence of even an infinite number of beings does not affect the essential oneness of existence. Ṣadrā claims that the soul knows through this kind of epistemic or intellectual oneness. The crucial point is then to show how the soul remains one even when it knows a thousand things. Similarly, thanks to 'intellective oneness,' what the soul knows as an intelligible reality does not become many when it is known by more than one soul. That is why Ṣadrā says that 'the intellective horse that is in the active intellect and the intellective horse that is in the soul, when it becomes an actual intellect through it, does not become multiplied from the point of view of meaning and reality. It becomes multiplied only from the point of view adding something to its definition and conceptual reality. What is in the soul and what is in the active intellect are therefore one and the same thing.'¹⁷⁷ In short, neither the multiplicity of intellective forms in the active intellect nor the multiplicity of minds that know these forms blemishes the unity of conceptual knowledge.

One last issue concerning the active intellect is the use of the language of a personal being when the active intellect is presented as the Archangel Gabriel—a tradition that goes back to al-Fārābī. After stating that God knows things either through 'His Essence or through the agency of His sublime command (*amr*),' Ṣadrā says that this is called 'the active intellect and the spirit. It is the proximate angel encompassing many angels who are the soldiers of the Lord as God pointed to it in His words that "no one knows the soldiers of your Lord save He."¹⁷⁸ It is also in this context that the active intellect is occasionally used in the plural when, for instance, Ṣadrā says that 'the active intellects (*uqūl fa"ālah*)...are God's words (*kalimāt Allāh*).'¹⁷⁹ This can be seen as an attempt to legitimize the active intellect within the Islamic religious discourse. Regardless of the

philosophers' intentions, however, positing the active intellect as the angel of revelation is consistent with Peripatetic intellectualism in that it is only by the intervention of an agent outside the knowing subject that one attains the true knowledge of things. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, this notion plays a crucial role in the 'rational mysticism' of the Muslim Peripatetics and gives Ṣadrā further reason to make a rigorous case for mystical knowledge.

Even though the active intellect is the locus of intelligible forms and thus indispensable for knowing concepts, there are several other stages involved. Following Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā defines all conceptual knowledge as coming from what he calls the 'world of the sacred' (*'ālam al-quds*). Human beings display different degrees of perspicacity in receiving illumination from this world. This leads to a hierarchy of perception whereby some people are endowed with an innate capacity to know *a priori* truths without much effort and study. This power or capacity is called intuition (*ḥads*)—a term Ṣadrā borrows from Ibn Sīnā.

For Ibn Sīnā, *ḥads* signifies the mind's ability to know the middle term in a logical syllogism without much effort: it is 'to remember the middle term without demanding it.'¹⁸⁰ That is why the word *ḥads* can legitimately be interpreted as 'quick wit.' Ṣadrā presents it as an exceptional faculty of the soul, which connects it to the 'Sacred Angelic world.' This establishes a direct link between the intuitive perception of primary intelligibles and receiving light and blessings from the Angelic world.

Know that the source of all knowledge is the world of the sacred but the capacities of human souls are different. In the case of perfect capacity, there is no difference in abundance between the primary and secondary intelligibles. In perceiving the primary intelligibles, man is like when he understands the middle term in perceiving theoretical matters in such a way that understanding takes place as if without a cause whereas the existence of something without a cause is impossible. But the cause is sometimes outward and visible and sometimes inward and hidden. That which dictates knowledge

to capable souls is in reality the very cause hidden from the senses... and its act on the souls is completely hidden but it may sometimes appear from the inward to the outward and become manifest from the abode of the Invisible (*al-ghayb*) to the world of the Visible (*al-shahādah*). The former is like the case of the prophets and the latter like the case of saints, peace be upon them all.

As for such external causes as study, repetition, listening to a human teacher, these are only preparatory conditions, not what calls for them. This can be explained as follows: every passage from primary intelligibles to theoretical concepts (*al-naẓariyyāt*) is either through the instruction of a human teacher or not. If it is through the instruction of a teacher, this will have to end eventually with that which does not come about in this way, [in which case] one reaches the conclusion from one's own self. Otherwise the regression of teaching and learning will continue *ad infinitum*. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 384–385¹⁸¹

Having ruled out the possibility of infinite regression, Ṣadrā attributes one's ability to perceive the primary intelligibles to an inner faculty of the mind, which only a limited number of people possess. He calls this ability 'intuition' (*ḥads*), which leads to the apprehension of intelligible forms in an immediate and direct manner. This exceptional quality enables one to be illuminated by Angelic light (*nūr al-malakūt*) and is called 'sacred power' (*quwwah qudsiyyah*).

Now, you know that definitions that correspond [to their objects] cause the mind to establish a relationship between the two. In most cases, the mind looks at the definition of a subject because it senses its particular qualities when its definition is present in it [i.e., the mind]. When this happens, the mind necessarily establishes this predicate for this subject without the aid of a teacher, narration, learning from a master or a just and reliable witness. Thus it is clear that man can learn by himself and whenever this happens, it is called intuition. This capacity displays great variety among people...when the degrees are unequal and the hearts different in purity and cloudiness, in intellectual power and weakness, plenitude and destitute in intuition, it does not affect, on the part of the higher [world], the existence of that noble and powerful soul which is fully

illuminated by the light of the Angelic world and quick in receiving emanations from the source of goodness and mercy. Such a man, due to the intensity of his capacity, perceives most of the truths in the shortest time possible and comprehends the realities of things... and his piercing mind reaches at conclusions without assiduously studying the middle terms. In the same way, he passes from these conclusions to others until he encircles the ultimate goal and final stage of humanity. This capacity is called sacred power. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 385–386

These and similar remarks we find in Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā may lead us to think that a kind of *mysterium* is involved in the process of intellection. Although such terms as ‘sacred intellect’ (*‘aql qudsī*) and ‘sacred spirit’ (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī*) used by Ibn Sīnā do suggest something of a mystical nature, a close reading of the *Shifā*’ and *al-Najāt*, which Ṣadrā uses *in extenso*, reveals that Ibn Sīnā does not go beyond establishing ‘quick apprehension’ and perspicacity as an exceptional quality of certain minds. In one place, Ṣadrā describes intelligence or perspicacity (*ḡakā*) as the ‘most intense form of intuition.’¹⁸² The same point is also borne out by the fact that both Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadrā discuss intuition as an important yet intermediary stage in logical syllogism. The following paragraph from the *Najāt* illustrates this point:

Know that learning, whether acquired without a teacher or from a teacher, is of different kinds. A particular learner can be closer to the [logical] description (*taṣawwur*) [of a term] because his [individual] capacity before [receiving] the capacity that we mentioned before can be stronger. If such person becomes capable of perfecting what is between description and himself [i.e., having a perfect understanding of logical description], this strong capacity is called intuition. This capacity may be stronger in some people so much so that he does not need anything significant or *takhrīj*,¹⁸³ or study in his conjunction with the active intellect. Furthermore, he becomes even more capable of this and as if a second capacity occurs for him and as if he knows everything by himself. This is the highest degree of this capacity. This state of the potential intellect should be called the sacred intellect.¹⁸⁴ Although this is a kind of the

habitual intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-malakah*), it is [a] much higher [intellect] of which not all people partake. *al-Najāt*, p. 205

Few lines later, Ibn Sīnā returns to intuition and explains its role in logical syllogisms. At the end of his discussion, he refers to intuition as a 'prophetic capacity' and calls it a 'sacred capacity.' He says that 'intuition is a work of the mind whereby it deduces the middle term by itself. Perspicacity is thus a power of intuition.' Still, it is defined as a 'divine effusion and intellective conjunction (*ittiṣāl 'aqlī*) that obtains without (intentionally) acquiring it, and reaches only some people.'¹⁸⁵ Some people have this exceptional quality in them in such a way that they come to have a 'union with intellectual principles' (*al-mabādī' al-'aqliyyah*). While knowledge based on imitation (*al-taqlīdiyyāt*) does not bring about 'intellective certitude' (*yaqīniyyah 'aqliyyah*), intuition based on perspicacity is 'a kind of prophethood (*al-nubuwwah*). In fact, it is the highest faculty of prophethood. It is more appropriate to call this ability a sacred capacity (*quwwah qudsiyyah*). And this is the highest degree of human capacity [to know].'¹⁸⁶

Even though Ibn Sīnā remains within the boundaries of 'rational mysticism' when he talks about intuition and the 'sacred world,' Ṣadrā does not miss the opportunity to interpret intuitive perception eventually in terms of mystical knowledge. In a section of the *Asfār* where mental existence is discussed, Ṣadrā states that what the mind creates through its imaginative power (*khayāl*) has no effect in the external world, and he invokes Ibn al-'Arabī's support to substantiate his claim. He, however, makes an important exception to this and assigns a special power to certain people to create actual effects in the extra-mental world. Even though Ṣadrā does not state it explicitly, it is not difficult to see that this is a reference to miracles performed by saints.

Some of the people of ascent (*mi'rāj*) who have completely disembodied themselves from the human garment are capable of generating (*iḥdāth*) things that exist in the external world to which (existential) effects occur. This is due to the intensity of their

conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the sacred world, the abode of munificence (*maḥall al-karāmah*), and the perfection of their power. As for the kind of existence to which existential effects do not occur and which emanates from the soul in this mode of appearance (*zuhūr*), it is called mental and shadow existence. *Aṣfār*, I, 1, p. 266

In conclusion, the active intellect brings us back to what I called the metaphysics of actuality. The active intellect terminates the infinite regression of potential substances and relates the soul to the *a priori* axioms of logic and metaphysics. There, however, remains a tension between the active intellect as *the source of human thought* and Ṣadrā's overall concept of knowledge as a mode of existence. It seems that Ṣadrā could easily dispense with the active intellect as an agent of knowledge for his robust defense of the unification argument contains virtually no references to the active intellect in the process of human intellection. As I shall discuss below, when Ṣadrā talks about unification, he has in mind unification between intellect and intelligible, not between human and active intellects. As a matter of fact, he discusses conjunction with the active intellect (*ittiṣāl bi'l-'aql al-fa'āl*) only indirectly, and what he has to say about it is not any different from Ibn Sīnā. Unless we equate the active intellect with the intelligible, Ṣadrā's desire to retain the active intellect seems to be out of place.

There is, however, another way of looking at the active intellect, i.e., as an instrument of thought. If the active intellect is an agent that brings about unification between the intellect and the intelligible, then it can be related to knowledge as a way of unveiling the modalities of existence. In this case, unification between intellect and intelligible would *also* be a unification with the active intellect, and the active intellect would be subsumed under the intelligible. And yet, Ṣadrā tells us very little about how these two are related.

e. Unification of the Intellect and the Intelligible

Ṣadrā's defense of the unification argument is found in many of his works. In addition to the relevant sections of the *Asfār* and *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, his *Risālah fī ittiḥād al-'āqil wa'l-ma'qūl* is devoted entirely to the subject. Throughout his extensive discussions, Ṣadrā's main target is Ibn Sīnā and his attacks on Porphyry. Since the translation of the *Ittiḥād* is given as an appendix at the end of the present work, I shall mention only Ṣadrā's main points against Ibn Sīnā. As it is clear from Ṣadrā's analyses, Ibn Sīnā's denial of unification was a result of his ontological considerations. To that effect, Ṣadrā returns to his gradational ontology before answering Ibn Sīnā in detail.

Ibn Sīnā's rejection of unification between the intellect and the intelligible was an extension of his rejection of unification between any two things. For him, unification had meant the dissolution of the subject in question and the generation of a new substance. It is not possible within the context of the Aristotelian-Avicennan notion of quantitative change to accept the view that when A and B are united, the result is a higher mode of A or B rather than a different substance called C. For the Peripatetics, when two things are united, they are transformed into a new substance and lose their initial identity. Ibn Sīnā's radical conclusion was that unification as understood by Porphyry and his followers amounts to nothing but 'poetic metaphors'—an expected conclusion within the precincts of Peripatetic ontology.¹⁸⁷ Historically speaking, this goes back to Aristotle's denial of change in the category of substance. Aristotle's working principle was that no matter what accidental qualities a particular substance may have, they do not infringe upon the essential identity of the substance. Following Aristotle, Kindī goes so far as to say that substance 'is not receptive to generation and corruption.'¹⁸⁸ A similar problem arises when substances increase or decrease in quantity. Ṣadrā notes the notorious difficulties caused by quantitative change, and says that Suhrawardī was forced to deny it altogether: 'The problem of motion [i.e.,

change] in the category of quantity...caused later thinkers many problems so much so that the author of [*Hikmat*] *al-ishrāq* [Suhrawardī] and his followers denied it by saying that adding a definite quantity to another quantity necessitates its dissolution.¹⁸⁹ Ibn Sīnā had faced similar difficulties, for he had accepted quantitative change in substances as a subcategory of generation and corruption rather than as intensification in existence.

To respond to these criticisms, Ṣadrā mentions three types of unification between two or more things. Before giving specific answers to Ibn Sīnā, however, he reiterates the primacy and gradation of existence. For Ṣadrā, it is only by accepting gradation in degrees of existence and its multiple modes that one can conceive unification between any two things as 'existential fulfilment.' In this sense, Ṣadrā's response to Ibn Sīnā entails also a critique of Avicennan ontology:

Two things need to be known before we embark upon rejecting the Master's (Ibn Sīnā's) denial of unification between two things in general and between the intellect and the intelligible in particular. First of all, it is existence that is the principal reality in all things, principle of its own particularity and source of its own quiddity. Existence allows intensification and diminution, perfection and deficiency. And the individual is what it is. Do you not see that from the beginning of his being a sperm and drop to the height of his being an intellectual and intelligible reality, man goes through many stages and undergoes many changes while preserving his mode of existence and personality? Secondly, unification can be described in three ways.

First, an existent (*mawjūd*) is united with another existent in that the beings of two things become one. There is no doubt that this is impossible as the Master said in his proofs for the denial of unification.

Second, a concept or quiddity becomes another concept or quiddity different from itself in that the first concept becomes identical with the [second] concept and the first quiddity with the [second] quiddity through essential primary predication (*ḥaml dhātī awwalī*).¹⁹⁰ This is also impossible. Different concepts do not

become one nor some of them become [united with] others insofar as they are concepts because every meaning is necessarily different from others insofar as they are meaning. For instance, the concept of the intellector cannot become the concept of the intelligible in spite of the fact that a simple and single being can be the subject of [the propositions] that it is an intellector and that it is an intelligible. As a result, existence can be one and meanings [predicated of it] many without necessitating the multiplicity of existential aspects [qualities].

Third, it is the transformation of an existent in that an intellective meaning and universal quiddity that was not available to it before is predicated of it as a result of the perfection that takes place in its existence. Now, this [meaning of unification] is not impossible. On the contrary, it is an actual reality since all intelligible meanings found separately in material, plant, and animal beings are found united in one single human being. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 324–325

Ṣadrā understands unification in the sense that one single being can take on multiple meanings without losing its essential identity. The multiplicity of meanings as 'ontological properties' does not lead to an entity with discrete properties, causing it to lose its essential unity. Rather, it results in a single unity that obtains a higher ontological state thanks to the intensity of meanings and concepts contained in it. The key point for Ṣadrā is therefore the possibility of containing multiple meanings (*ma'ānī*) and states of intellective existence while preserving one's identity and unity. Ṣadrā's frequent example is again 'man' who contains the states of mineral, plant, and animal existence in a simple manner, all of which grant him a higher ontological status. The definition of man as 'rational animal' (*ḥayawān nāṭiq*), for instance, is composed of two separate concepts, i.e., 'rational' and 'animal.' When combined in the existence of man, they assume one single existence without any duality. Thus Ibn Sīnā's objection that when two things conjoin, they lose their previous existence and become a new entity does not apply to such 'meanings.'¹⁹¹

Ṣadrā mentions another reason for Ibn Sīnā's objection: the Peripatetic concept of change or transformation (*istiḥālāh*) is

based on the idea that gradual change, whether quantitative or qualitative, takes place through a series of instant generations (*kawn*) and corruptions (*fasād*). It is the successive stages of generation and corruption that account for change in physical objects. The Peripatetics had denied change in the category of substance for the same reason: change in substance entails the generation of a new existent. Furthermore, it breaks the continuity of substances as ontological actualities.¹⁹² In short, Aristotelian ontology of substances disallows a dynamic, transformative and existential concept of the universe because it visions a world made up of solid and rigid substances. By contrast, Ṣadrā argues for ontological continuity through existence and its modalities and states that things change from one state to another due to their intensification in existence. This is called 'substantial motion' and Ṣadrā applies it to everything from the most corporeal to the angelic beings. What distinguishes Ṣadrā from Ibn Sīnā is that while the Peripatetics consider the world as a structure of actual and unbroken substances, Ṣadrā seeks to desolidify substances into states and 'instances' of existence with varying degrees of intensity.

As we would expect, this view of substantial-cum-ontological change dissolves any strong boundaries between the physical and the non-physical. In a sense, Ṣadrā turns the entire system of existence into a transparent structure in which 'existence-as-graded' (*al-wujūd bi'l-tashkīk*) weaves the physical and the metaphysical together. Things become 'material' or 'non-material' in accordance with their proximity to or distance from existence. The physical and the metaphysical exist through an ontological continuum, the only distinguishing factor being the level of intensity or lack thereof. This makes the physical order an extension of existence at a lower level, not the opposite of what is beyond the physical. An important problem to which Ṣadrā applies this view is the relation between the soul and the body. According to Ṣadrā's celebrated formula, the human soul (or the self)¹⁹³ is material in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence. What transforms the soul from being a material

substance into something incorporeal is the existential-substantial journey it undergoes. Needless to say, this establishes an ontological continuity between soul and body and holds true for all souls from the insane to the prophet.¹⁹⁴ Ṣadrā describes this process as follows:

...when the soul first dawned upon the matter of the body, it was one of the forms of corporeal existents. It was like the sensible and imaginal forms, not one of the intelligible forms. It is impossible that a single corporeal species should come out of an intellectual form and a corporeal existent without this corporeal existent undergoing [a series of] perfections and transformations.... The soul in its initial stages of disposition (*fiṭrah*) is simply one of the forms of this [corporeal] world except for the fact that it has the potentiality of journeying into the Angelic world in a gradual manner. It is first a form of corporeal existents with the potentiality of receiving intelligible forms, and there is no contradiction between this actuality and receiving perfection. As it was quoted from the Master [Ibn Sīnā], [the origination of] something from something else can be either through perfection, which is the series of vertical journeys (*sulūk al-silsilah al-ṭūliyyah*) or through mutual corruption and dissolution, which is the series of horizontal journeys. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, pp. 330–331

Having answered Ibn Sīnā's 'general proof' (*al-ḥujjat al-‘āmmah*) against the unification of any two things, Ṣadrā turns to his 'specific proof' (*al-ḥujjat al-khāṣṣah*). Ibn Sīnā's specific objection was that if we allow the soul to be united with an intellectual substance, it becomes dissolved in it, and this undermines the continuity of the self. Instead, Ibn Sīnā argued, intelligible forms come to reside in the soul as separate substances without destroying its unity. This takes place through conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) rather than unification (*ittiḥād*). Ṣadrā accepts the charge that something becomes dissolved in any process of unification but hastens to add that this does not alter the essential nature of the knowing intellect because what becomes dissolved is nothing other than the 'negative existential qualities' of the self which prevent it, or any other substance for

that matter, from evolving into a higher state of existence.¹⁹⁵ When such 'negative qualities' are left behind, the self does not become something less. Instead, it attains a higher level of existence and consciousness. When the soul appropriates an intelligible form, it becomes something 'more' thanks to the existential cognition it undergoes. Moreover, what enables the soul to know things other than itself is its isomorphic unity with the non-subjective world.

This is an extension of Aristotle's celebrated dictum that 'only the like can know the like,' of which Ṣadrā makes full use when he explains how the self is linked to what it knows. In the Aristotelian language of actuality and potentiality, this is stated as the soul's predisposition to know things before it receives an intelligible form. When the soul extracts a form, it does not cease to be itself but attains a higher level of cognition. This, in turn, establishes a strong link between the 'self' and the 'world,' and places the self within a larger context of existential relations. In other words, the knowing self encounters a world made up of relations of existence and structures of meaning. Unification between intellect and intelligible makes the self a reality whose meaning can be made explicit only by articulating its relation to the non-subjective world.

From the point of view of the self (*al-nafs*), how can an essence [essentially] separate from the intellect think of an intellective form whose essence (*al-dhāt*) is different from it and whose existence is outside its existence?... The intellective being as completely disengaged from matter and its relations cannot be established for anything unless there is something like this being in it by which it becomes an intellect and intelligible in actuality. An intelligible in actuality can be established only for an intelligible that is already actual. By the same token, the potential intelligible, which is the form of material beings, can be established only for a potential intelligible like corporeal beings (*ajsām*) and measures (*maqādir*), which are the material positions (*awḍā'*) themselves. You have already learnt that the soul, before it becomes an intelligible, is not the subject of any intellective forms except potentially. We see this in the case of imaginal and estimative forms before the light of the

active intellect shines upon the imaginal faculty and these forms. As for the intellective forms themselves, you have learnt from the proof with which God has inspired me that they are of an intelligible nature in and of themselves whether or not there is anything in the universe that intellects them. Therefore, when these forms are intelligible and self-intellecting in themselves regardless of the soul [that intellects them], then it is not impossible that the soul be united with them. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, p. 334

By establishing an isomorphic unity between intellect ('subject') and intelligible world ('object'), Ṣadrā takes a crucial step toward asserting the primacy of self-knowledge on the one hand, and knowledge-by-presence, on the other. Ṣadrā's radical claim is that all knowledge is mediated through self-knowledge and, by the same token, all true knowledge is obtained through knowledge-by-presence. By placing knowledge of self in the intelligible world, Ṣadrā de-centers the self, and shifts the focus from the knowing subject as a disengaged agent presiding over the world to a self placed within a larger context of ontological intelligibility.

f. Self-Knowledge and Knowledge-by-Presence

What is known as 'knowledge-by-presence' or 'presential knowledge' (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) in Islamic philosophy was developed by Suhrawardī to overcome certain difficulties of the representational theory of knowledge. Ṣadrā agrees with Suhrawardī's assumption that self-knowledge cannot be a representation (*irtisām*) of the self in the mind because representation cannot overcome the subject-object dichotomy. When the self expresses its knowledge of itself in terms of first-order propositions such as 'I am in pain' or 'I feel hot,' subject and predicate are the same. As Ṣadrā puts it, 'if the perception of something were to consist of the presentation of its form in the perceiver, whoever perceives himself would be different from the locus [of perception, i.e., from himself]...this is a clear contradiction.'¹⁹⁶ In short, 'knowledge of self is nothing but the

self itself.’¹⁹⁷ In the case of second-order propositions, however, the judgment is translated into a statement *about* the self, leading to a distinction between the self and its judgment. Thus Ṣadrā says that ‘the perception of one’s identity (*huwiyyah*) and his reception of his own essence through presential unveiling (*al-kashf al-ḥudūrī*) is one thing; the perception of his essence (*māhiyyah*) is another.’¹⁹⁸ As Wittgenstein says, the difference between the propositions ‘I am in pain’ and ‘I know I am in pain’ can be stated as a difference between first- and second-order propositions. Insofar as the subject expressing his pain is concerned, the expression ‘I know I am in pain’ amounts to saying ‘I am in pain.’ In the case of first-order propositions, I state the fact that ‘I am in pain’ whereas in second-order propositions I make a statement *about* the fact that I know I am in pain.

As in many other key issues, Ibn Sīnā seems to have planted the first seed of the debate. Responding to a question in the *Mubāḥathāt* (question number 433), Ibn Sīnā makes a distinction between our knowledge of things outside the self and the knowledge of the self. The question is formulated as follows: ‘If intellection is the obtaining of the truth of what is known for the knower, when we intellect God and the active intellects, then their truth obtains in us. In this case, they have two truths. Why are we not allowed to say the same thing, i.e., that two [separate] truths obtain for us also?’ Ibn Sīnā answers by saying that ‘when we are able to intellect disembodied beings, their truth is represented in us. In this case, they have two truths: their own truth in and by themselves, by which they are disembodied beings, and the truth represented in us. But this does not apply to [our] intellects.’¹⁹⁹ Continuing the same argument, Ibn Sīnā adds that ‘it is part of our nature to know ourselves, whether through innate (*ṭabʿ*) or acquired (*kasb*) knowledge. Some things know their own essence and substance. Whoever knows something, the truth of that thing obtains for him. In the same way, the truth of ourselves obtains for us but not twice because the truth of something is only once.’²⁰⁰

This suggests that everything we know has two truths: its truth in itself and its representation in us. This conclusion, however, seems to go against Ibn Sīnā's previous assertion that the 'truth of something obtains only once.' Ibn Sīnā is aware of this contradiction and hastens to add that our knowledge of ourselves is not like the knowledge of other things. In the case of self-knowledge, we know ourselves directly. In other words, the 'truth of ourselves' is only one, and this applies not only to 'intellection (*ta'aqqul*) or consciousness (*shu'ūr*) but to all perception (*idrāk*) because we consider the truth of something not insofar as it is in the external world but insofar as it is in us. This consideration is not a third existence for it but its very imprint in us. Otherwise it would lead to infinite regression.' Stated rather abstrusely, Ibn Sīnā's point is to draw a distinction between the way we know things and the way we know ourselves.

The primacy of first-order experiences is also confirmed by the way we relate to our bodily organs. I do not refer to my seeing something as 'my eyes seeing' or hearing as 'my ears hearing.' The proper way of referring to these experiences is to say that 'I see this' or 'I hear that.'²⁰¹ Thus we cannot substitute second-order propositions for first-order experiences. Ṣadrā asserts this point for self-knowledge when he says that our 'self-knowledge' or self-awareness (*'ilmunā bi-dhātīnā*) is different from the 'knowledge of our self-knowledge' (*'ilmunā bi-'ilminā bi-dhātīnā*).²⁰² Furthermore, second-order concepts apply primarily to representational knowledge whereby the subject predicates certain properties to things in the extra-mental world. Although this is a theme shared by both Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī, there is a fundamental difference as to how the two philosophers justify knowledge-by-presence.

We have already discussed the major differences between Suhrawardīan 'essentialism' (*aṣālat al-mahīyyah*) and Sadrean 'existentialism' (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). As a general rule, Ṣadrā turns to the primacy of existence and draws attention to a contradiction in Suhrawardī's relegation of existence to a mental concept:

If someone is ignorant about the question of existence, he is of necessity ignorant about all of the principles and foundations of knowledge for it is through existence that everything is known, and it is the beginning of all description (*taṣawwur*) and more known than anything that provides description. When someone ignores it, he ignores everything besides it. As we have mentioned before, the true knowledge of existence comes about only through unveiling (*kashf*) and witnessing (*mushāhadah*). It has thus been said that ‘he who has no unveiling has no knowledge.’ It is strange that this great master [i.e., Suhrawardī], after establishing a number of arguments in the *Talwīḥāt* that existence is a mental concept (*i‘tibārī*) possessing no form and reality in the external world, explained towards the end of this book that the human souls and what is above them are simple beings without quiddity. Is this not a clear contradiction on his part? *Shawāhid*, p. 14

It is clear that Ṣadrā understands ‘simple beings without quiddity’ as a description of existence and wonders how Suhrawardī could have possibly missed this point. What this implies for knowledge is not difficult to see: definition of knowledge as a ‘mode of existence’ (*naḥw al-wujūd*) defines the *ultimate* object of knowledge not as facts, concepts, relations or even *a priori* judgments but as existence. In this regard, what is known even in the mind as a concept is nothing but existence, though in a different modality. Suhrawardī’s failure results from not seeing this point. Yet, despite this essential difference, Ṣadrā accepts much of what Suhrawardī has to say about knowledge-as-light and knowledge-by-presence. By avoiding the language of essences, Ṣadrā translates Suhrawardī’s essentialist language of light (*al-nūr*) into his language of existence: ‘The truth is what he has to say concerning the knowledge of the disengaged substance of itself in that it is a light for itself—and light is existence—, and this goes back to our previous view that knowledge is existence.’²⁰³

To see how Ṣadrā dovetails Suhrawardī’s self-knowledge with his own knowledge-as-existence, first we have to look at Suhrawardī’s discussion of self-knowledge as a case of unity

between self and knowledge. Suhrawardī broaches the subject as follows:

When we perceive our own selves, this perception does not come about through a [representational] form for several reasons. First of all, the form that is in the soul is not the same as the soul, and the perceiver perceives something that is identical with its 'I-ness' (*anā'iyyah*), not something that corresponds to it. Every form that the perceiver has is superadded to it and remains as an 'it' (*huwa*) in that it does not become an 'I' (*ana*) for it. Thus we conclude that perception is not through representational form. *al-Mashārī' wa'l-muṭarahāt*, p. 484²⁰⁴

The first part of the argument, which sums up much of what Ṣadrā has to say about the subject, considers self-knowledge as a perfect example of non-representational knowledge. To take self-knowledge as a representation of the self to itself is to deny the possibility of knowing oneself directly. The second part of Suhrawardī's argument pertains to the concrete and particular nature of self-awareness: we perceive ourselves not as a universal but as concrete individual beings. Suhrawardī continues:

Secondly, if the self's perception of itself were through representational form and since every form that obtains in the soul is universal, then it would correspond to many subjects. Even if we take all of the universals particularized through a single individual, they would not cease to be universals. But everybody perceives himself in a way that does not allow commonality (*shirkah*) [with others]. Thus his intellection of his particular self can never be a representational form. Furthermore, the self perceives its body, estimation (*wahm*) and imagination (*khayāl*). If it were to perceive these things through a representational form in itself—and these forms are universals—then the self would be moving a universal body and acting upon a universal potentiality and would not have a perception of its own body and its potentialities. This is definitely false. *al-Mashārī' wa'l-muṭarahāt*, p. 484²⁰⁵

Suhrawardī gives the example of pain as a paradigm case of sense perception and argues that *perception of pain is its very 'presence' (ḥuḍūr)* in the perceiver.

One of the points that support our claim that we have perceptions that do not need a form other than the very presence of what is perceived is the following: one is in pain of a cut in one of his organs and feels it. But this cut does not assume another form of representation in this organ or another. Rather, what is perceived is this very cut, and it is what is sensed and pain by itself, not by another form that issues from it. This proves that among the things perceived it is sufficient for their essence, in order for them to be perceived, to be in the soul or to have a relation of presence particular to the soul. *al-Mashāri' wa'l-muṭaraḥāt*, p. 485

It is interesting to note that pain as a form of sensation is also used by Wittgenstein to address the dichotomy between subject and object.²⁰⁶ Speaking of sensations as states of existence rather than mental or verbal representations, Wittgenstein argues for the identification of *being in pain* and *consciousness of pain*.²⁰⁷ In the case of pain, the I that is in pain and the I that says that it is in pain are one and the same thing. We cannot possibly claim to have a representation of pain to ourselves in the way we represent the form of a tree in our minds. This we can do only by reflecting about the fact that I am in pain.

Even though the example above establishes the essential unity of *being in pain* and *knowledge of pain*, it is confined to sense perception only. But sensation does not yield universal knowledge and thus cannot be considered a reliable basis for veritable knowledge. It is with this caveat in mind that Ṣadrā seeks to formulate knowledge-by-presence as a primary mode of knowing that can account for both sense-perception and conceptual knowledge.²⁰⁸ Unification of intellect and intelligible already implies this very premise: perfect cognition obtains when there is no epistemic rupture between knowledge and knower.

Ṣadrā makes his case as follows:

Knowledge does not simply consist of the concept of the disengaged form (*al-ṣūrat al-mujarradah*) of something in that when we represent this form [in our minds], we necessarily obtain its knowledge. Rather, knowledge is the mode of the existence of something that is disengaged from matter. Existence cannot be represented through a mental image in its entirety and thoroughly except through its own existing identity (*huwiyyah*).²⁰⁹ [...]

Our knowledge of ourselves is the same as our existence whereas the knowledge of our knowledge of ourselves is not our own existence but a mental form added to it. [This mental form] is not our personal identity, and has its own mental identity. By the same token, the knowledge that we have through this knowledge is a form added to the two former identities of knowledge, and this continues until mental consideration and representation come to an end. This does not necessitate the conjoining of the two [mental] images at the same level because, as it was repeated before, existence, whether *in concreto* or in the mind, does not have an epistemic image or form that corresponds to it through its essence and identity. When we know our individual existential identity (*huwiyyatunā al-shakṣiyyah al-wujūdiyyah*) through an extraneous knowledge ('*ilm zā'id*'), this knowledge is only an accident that subsists through and is different from our existence, not comparable to ourselves. The same [principle] holds true for all knowledge about knowledge because all knowledge is a mode of existence and can be obtained not through another [mental] form but by itself. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 295–296²¹⁰

It is against this background that Ṣadrā takes a further step and makes the bold claim that knowledge-by-presence applies not only to sensation and self-knowledge but to all intellection. Just as sense-perception is predicated upon the unity of the subject who says 'I am in pain' and the subject who actually is in pain, intellectual perception implies the presence of the intellectual form in the knower. As we have seen before, this signifies a higher mode of perception and a higher level of intelligibility whereby the 'mind' appropriates the true meaning of things, i.e., their intelligible reality by uniting with their essences in the world of the *intelligibilia*.

From the point of view of unification, the intellect does not become one with the corporeal tree or horse but unites with their intelligible form, thus overcoming the dichotomy between subject and object—the ultimate goal of knowledge-by-presence. It may be argued against Ṣadrā that this process of intellection takes place in the intellect and thus reduces knowledge eventually to the internal workings of the knowing mind. This criticism, however, does not hold up because Ṣadrā defines intellection as a ‘reaching-out’ of the intellect to the intelligible world which is already outside the individual intellect. This conclusion is also warranted by Ṣadrā’s oft-repeated view that the intelligible reality of things is more real and concrete than their physical embodiments. Ṣadrā says that

the intellective forms of substances that exist *in concreto* are the very meanings of these realities and their real essences. A substance or a physical body, for instance, has a meaning (*ma‘nā*) and a sensible form. Now, its sensible form is the sensate substance and its intellective form the meaning of substance. It is this intellective meaning that the intellect perceives by itself. *Aṣfār*, I, 3, pp. 307–308

As for Ṣadrā’s claim that self-knowledge is co-terminus with all types of cognition, it is based on the idea that self-consciousness as described above underlies all knowledge because I cannot be said to know something without knowing myself first in some fashion. Whether related to self or to objects in the external world, knowledge is mediated through self-knowledge and consciousness.²¹¹ In Ṣadrā’s words, ‘the self-perception of something is its very essence and its essence perceives itself continuously...man’s knowledge of himself and his essence precedes all knowledge and is always present to himself.’²¹² By the same token, ‘knowledge of self (obtained) through its faculties and specific effects such as its own self-knowledge takes place through presence (*ḥuḍūr*); but it may also take place through attainment (*ḥuṣūl*). Yet the former is necessary and continuous whereas the latter depends on appropriate time and

conditions'.²¹³ Furthermore, the soul, since it is free from matter, knows itself through its own existence, not through an abstract form.²¹⁴ We thus come full circle from the universality and generality of conceptual knowledge to the particularity of presential knowledge. This, it seems, is the synthesis that Ṣadrā seeks to achieve—a synthesis between the Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions on the one hand, and between knowledge as concept and knowledge as presence, on the other.

g. Knowledge-by-Presence and God's Knowledge of Things

In addition to self-knowledge, Ṣadrā applies knowledge-by-presence to one of the most disputed problems of Islamic philosophy and theology, i.e., God's knowledge of things. Ṣadrā's analysis is very elaborate and detailed as he tries at one stroke to dovetail the views of Plato, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī. I shall discuss this problem here only to the extent to which it is relevant to the problem of knowledge-by-presence.²¹⁵ The problem can be stated as follows: does God know things through representation as the Peripatetic philosophers seem to claim? Or does He have a mode of knowing different than ours, something like a direct vision? When we accept the first assumption, we run into a serious theological problem: representation entails the posterior presence of the form of things in the knowing mind and, when applied to God, amounts to claiming that God knows things as objects external to Himself. If the way God knows things is not essentially different from the way we know objects in the external world, then we define God's knowledge of things as following rather preceding their existence. But since the existence of things precedes our knowledge of them, this cannot apply to God who as the Creator grants them their existence.

Furthermore, if God knows things through representation, then we have to admit that forms appear in God's mind as object of knowledge only after God has thought them. But this, in turn,

assumes an epistemological distance between God and His creation, which goes against God's being omnipotent (*al-qādir*) and omniscient (*al-ʿālim*). If God knows what He creates, then His knowledge of things cannot be a derivative one. Moreover, the imprinting of representational forms in the mind of human beings or God takes place only through universal and abstract concepts whereas real knowledge is always particular and concrete. Finally, there is the problem of change that comes about as a result of knowing something. If God's knowledge of changing things leads to a change in His knowledge, then how can we maintain His unity? If it is admitted that 'knowledge of change is change of knowledge,' then all Divine knowledge leads to change in the Divine essence.

Ibn Sīnā had proposed the notion of God knowing in a 'universal' or 'general manner' (*naḥw kullī*) to avoid introducing change in the Divine.²¹⁶ Ibn Sīnā's rather unsatisfactory solution was to absolve God of the *need to know* certain things, i.e., the particulars (*juzʿiyyāt*). If God as the creator of things knows them in a universal manner, he will not be subject to the particular conditions of sensation or imagination. This, however, seems to suggest that the only proper knowledge available to God is His knowledge of Himself. But if God is said to know only Himself and everything else through this unchanging knowledge, then how can He be called *al-ʿālim*, i.e., the knower in a theological sense? Given these theological difficulties, Ṣadrā attempts to articulate a theory of knowledge in which God as both creator and knower can be legitimately said to know things.

Ṣadrā broaches the subject with a useful summary of the views of previous philosophers, and cites seven of them in some detail. The first view held by al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Bahmanyār and Abū'l-ʿAbbās al-Lawkarī argues that the forms of contingent beings are imprinted upon God's Essence through mental representation in a universal manner. The second view is that of Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination, which holds that 'the existence of the forms of things in the external world—whether

they are separate substances or composite or simple corporeal bodies—are the modes of His knowledge of things.’²¹⁷ The third view attributed to Porphyry asserts God’s unification with intelligible forms. The fourth view ascribed to Plato holds that the separate forms and intellective archetypes (*muthul*) are the Divine knowledge by which God knows things. The fifth view held by the Mu’tazilites, which Ṣadrā says is comparable to the view of certain Sufis, states that God knows contingent beings in eternity. This view has some affinity with that of the Sufis because they hold that things exist in God’s knowledge before they are actualized in the external world. This can be taken to be a reference to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s famous saying that ‘eternal archetypes have not smelled the perfume of [material] existence.’ The sixth view, shared by most of the later theologians (*al-muta’akhhirūn*), attributes two modes of knowledge to God: summary (*ijmālī*) and detailed (*tafṣīlī*). God’s universal and summary knowledge of things precedes their concrete existence whereas His detailed mode of knowledge is simultaneous with their existence *in concreto*. The last view, which is a variation of the previous theory, holds that God knows the first effect in detail and everything else in a universal and summary fashion, which can be interpreted as a middle position between the Peripatetic and Ash’arite views.²¹⁸

In giving his overall evaluation of the views above, Ṣadrā divides them into two main groups: those that consider God’s knowledge of things separate from His Essence and those that do not. The distinction is simple yet essential, and helps Ṣadrā place the problem within an ontological context. He develops his position as follows:

This is a detailed description of the views common among people. In affirming God’s knowledge of things, there are two possible ways: either we say that it is separate from His Essence or not. Those who hold the view of separation either argue for the affirmation of non-existents (*al-ma’dūmāt*) or not, i.e., whether they are attributed to external existence as in the case of the Mu’tazilites or to the mind as in the case of some Sufi masters like the master

sage and verifier (*al-muḥaqqiq*) Muḥy al-Dīn al-‘Arabī and the perfect master Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī from whose famous books benefits are derived. According to the second view, we either have to say that God’s knowledge of external beings is forms that subsist by themselves and is separate from Him and other things—and these are the Platonic Archetypes and separate forms—or we have to say that His knowledge of external beings is the things themselves...as for those who argue for the non-separation [of God’s knowledge from His Essence], they either have to say that it is other than His Essence, which is the view of the two Masters al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, or they have to say that it is the same as His Essence. In the second case, they either have to admit, like Porphyry and his followers among the Peripatetics, that His Essence is united with intellectual forms or to say that His Essence by Itself has the summary knowledge of everything other than Himself and other than the first effect [i.e., the first created being] in the manner to which we have already alluded. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 181–182

Keeping this historical background in mind, Ṣadrā develops two main arguments. The first is based on ontological causality according to which knowledge of cause is superior to knowledge of effect. Just as substance has ontological priority over accident, our knowledge of substance precedes that of accident in degrees of truth and intelligibility because, as a typical Aristotelian argument (*Posterior Analytics*, 71b 10), we can know an effect fully when we know its cause. Furthermore, according to Ṣadrā’s oft-repeated principle, knowledge of cause leads to knowledge of effect but not vice versa. In terms of ontological hierarchy, effect has no impact on its cause whereas cause is the *raison d’être* of the effect.²¹⁹ When we affirm the existence of a building, for instance, we intuitively conclude that ‘the knowledge of the building does not necessitate the knowledge of the builder but leads to the knowledge of the need of the building for its builder.’²²⁰ When applied to God’s relation to the world which He has created, the language of causality argues that God as the ultimate substance knows and sustains things through His existence. God is the ground of all beings but, more importantly, His knowledge is the source of all knowledge. If

everything is known fully when its cause is known, then God, as the cause of all things, knows things by knowing Himself.

If God's existence precedes all other existents and existence implies knowledge and consciousness, then there is no reason why *His* knowledge should not precede knowledge *per se*.

The occurrence²²¹ of knowledge to its individual (carriers) is like the occurrence of existence to them through gradation, i.e., priority and non-priority, posteriority and non-posteriority, and intensity and weakness. God's knowledge is the most primary in being a knowledge [that comprehends everything] outside Himself. It is the most prior knowledge for it is the cause of all other knowledge and the most intense in clarity and most powerful in manifestation. As for its being veiled to us, it is, as you have learnt before, because of the excess of its manifestation and the weakness of our eyes in perceiving Him. Therefore the aspect of His veiling is His very clarity and manifestation. The same principle holds true for all of the knowledge of the reality of a cause vis-à-vis the knowledge of the reality of its effect. By the same token, the knowledge of the reality of every substance is more intense than the knowledge of the reality of every accident, and it is more prime and prior than the knowledge of the reality of the accident whose existence depends on this substance. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 383–384

Ṣadrā asserts the same point with a slightly different argument, using this time God's absolute existence and independence. Just as God's existence does not depend on things other than Himself, His omniscience holds a similar ontological superiority in encapsulating every possible object of knowledge:

...in reality, knowledge of something is its very existence but this is one of the most mysterious problems of metaphysics, which no one understands except those who have attained the station of perfection. We shall explain this for you when, God willing, we analyze God's knowledge. As for that which is not in need of a cause and sustainer, its knowledge is either primarily evident or hidden from its own knowledge or there is no way of affirming it except by demonstration through its effects and concomitants in which case the very essence of its truth and quiddity remains unknown. But the

Necessary Being has no proof, no definition and therefore no reason from a number of different points of view. It has no reason for existence like an active [agent] and ultimate goal, no reason for constitution (*al-qiwām*) like matter and form and no reason for quiddity like genus and differentia. In spite of this, nothing is hidden from It and It is the proof of everything and closest to everything as He the Exalted said: 'And we are closer to you than your jugular vein' (Qur'ān 50:16). And He said: 'And He is with you wherever you are' (Qur'ān 57:4). And He is the proof of His own Essence as He said: 'God testifies that there is no god but He' (Qur'ān 3:18). He also said: 'Is your Lord not sufficient [as a proof] that He is a witness to all things' (Qur'ān 41:53) and 'Say: What is greater as witness? Say: Allah' (Qur'ān 6:19). *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 399–400

The second argument that Ṣadrā advances is knowledge-by-presence, which he considers to be the only way to avoid the 'pernicious results' (*umūr shanī'ah*)²²² of the representational theory of knowledge. The gist of the argument is that God knows things through their 'presence' in His all-inclusive knowledge: 'God knows His Essence and all things from His Own Essence.'²²³ This, however, does not mean to say that they 'become' present in God's knowledge because their presence depends on God as the Necessary Being. Rather, God's *knowledge* of things is their very *existence* and presence. God's knowledge is an ontologically generative act by which God creates things by 'knowing' them. It is not the case that God first thinks things as *potentialities* and then grants them existence, for there is no potentiality in God. As mentioned before, such a claim would reverse the ontological relationship between God and His creation. Instead of denoting God as coming to know things, we should look at His knowledge as a generative act toward creation.

Whoever attempts to prove His knowledge of things through one of his creations (*maj'ūlātihi*) such as the intellect and the soul, or says that His detailed knowledge is posterior to his Essence, this is due to the imperfection of his vision and weakness of his knowledge. The person who is deep in philosophy in our opinion is the person

who proves His knowledge of all things with their multiplicity and detail in His Essence which is prior to all concomitants and external beings without there being any change in His Essence. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 248–249

Ṣadrā's argument that God's knowledge of things is their very existence is based on his ontology on the one hand, and knowledge-by-presence, on the other. The simple syllogism that Ṣadrā adopts reveals the weight of his gradational ontology: God knows things through His Essence and His Essence is never absent to Himself; therefore God knows things essentially, primarily and hence without time interval. That is why Ṣadrā does not find even Suhrawardī's 'illuminative relation' (*iḍāfah ishrāqiyyah*) convincing to explain God's relation to objects of His knowledge. The principle of illuminative relation, which Ṣadrā endorses for other types of relational knowledge, still assumes a relationship of some kind and allows separation whereas God can never be absent from Himself and from His knowledge.²²⁴ Ṣadrā reiterates the notion of presence and sums up his argument by returning to knowledge-by-presence.

There is nothing firmer and stronger than our knowledge of ourselves because our self-knowledge is our very essence. And nothing can be established for something more firmly than for itself. Therefore our knowledge of the source of ourselves and in fact the source of our existence goes back to the Necessary Being. As we have explained before, only the Necessary Being itself can have the knowledge of the reality of the Necessary Being. As He said: 'And they do not compass Him with their knowledge and all faces are humbled before the Living and the Self-Subsisting' (Qur'ān 20:110–111).

Some of the *fuqarā*²²⁵ have found a solution for this problem but the expressions fall short of stating it in a manner that it deserves because of the subtlety of its path and secrecy of its route. Nevertheless, we point to it by saying that our self-knowledge is the existence of ourselves, and therefore the knowledge of the source of ourselves, on which our self-knowledge depends, is the existence of this source. This does not refer to our own existence but to the

existence of the source, which is the source itself. Its reality, however, does not depend on us because the existence of the effect depends on the existence of the cause, not its own existence. The same holds true for two kinds of knowledge because they are like the two kinds of existence. When our self-knowledge comes from the knowledge of our source, our knowledge of our source is the existence of our source. When the relation of our source to us is a relation of creation (*al-ijād*) and activity (*al-fā'iliyyah*), our knowledge of our source consists of the existence of our source together with its relation of creation and activity to us. Our knowledge of our source thus precedes our self-knowledge for it is prior to us through its creative agency.

In short, the scale of knowledge is just like the scale of existence in terms of strength and weakness and cause and effect. Things have their existence in their caused essences but their existence in their source and cause is stronger than their own existence in themselves. Something exists in its creator more firmly than in itself because its self-existence is only contingent whereas its existence in the creator is necessary. Thus the relation of necessity is stronger than the relation of contingency and everything has an existence in [their] universal source in a manner more supreme and nobler than anything else. As it is said in the prayer of the Prophet, may the most perfect benedictions be upon him and his family: 'O He who was an existent and self-existing before all existence and self-existing after all existence! O He who existentiates all existence!' *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 400–403

In short, Şadrā follows Suhrawardi's insight that it is only by placing God before things and within an ontological hierarchy that we can save God's unity and omniscience *at the same time*. Couched in the language of existence, the question becomes one of relating the 'eternal' (*qadīm*), God, to the 'temporally created' (*ḥadīth*) which comprises everything other than God (*mā siw'Allāh*). Since God's knowing is a generative act, His knowledge of temporally created beings is the same as their existence. For Şadrā, this is enough of a proof for the absence of any duality in God's mode of knowing.

NOTES

1. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 27. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 29. Al-Fārābī uses the term *markūzah fi'l-dhīn*. al-Fārābī, 'Uyūn al-masā'il in *al-Majmū'*, p. 65.
2. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 83. Cf. also *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 66 and 101.
3. *The Metaphysics of Sabzawari*, tr. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), pp. 31–32.
4. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 25.
5. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 25.
6. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 26.
7. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 26. The meaning of Ṣadrā's statement that 'whatever has no definition has no proof' is that any reality defying definition needs no proof or demonstration for its 'why-ness' (*limma*) but itself is a proof for others. The idea goes back to the Muslim Peripatetics. Cf. al-Fārābī, 'Uyūn al-masā'il in *al-Majmū'*, p. 67 and Ibn Sīnā *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 29. It is also in this sense that Ṣadrā says that 'existence has no purpose beyond itself and it is the ultimate agent of all agents, the form of all forms, and the aim of all aims. Hence it is the ultimate aim and *khayr al-maḥḍ* in which all realities come to an end.' *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 54; also p. 340.
8. *Kitāb al-mashā'ir*, p. 24. *Shuhūd 'aynī* can also be translated as 'essential seeing' if we take 'ayn to mean to be the essence of something.
9. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 49.
10. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 37.
11. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 44–46. See also the short discussion of this point in Ṣadrā's *Qudsiyyah*, pp. 207–208.
12. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003 a, and Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 235.
13. *Asfār* I, 1, p. 24. For a similar statement, see *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 16 where Ṣadrā uses the term 'the science of disembodied beings' (*fann al-mufāraqāt*) to describe the study of existence as an absolute term.
14. Ṣadrā, *Asfār* I, 1, p. 24. Although Ṣadrā uses the word *mawjūd* which is 'existent' rather than existence, it gives the meaning of existence in this context because, as Zanjānī points out in his commentary on this phrase (*Asfār*, I, 1, p. 24, note 2), Ṣadrā employs the words *wujūd* and *mawjūd* interchangeably in some cases. Moreover, both words give the same meaning for the real existent, i.e., the 'thing that really exists' (*al-mawjūd al-ḥaqīqī*) is ultimately nothing but existence (*wujūd*): 'The existent is existence and its modes (*aṭwār*), affairs (*shu'ūn*) and modalities (*anhā*).'
Asfār, I, 2, p. 341. We find a similar usage in Bahmanyār who says that 'the subject-matter of this science is the general matter that includes all things, and it is the existent-qua-existent, i.e., existence (*al-wujūd*)'; *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, p. 279.

15. W. V. Quine, 'On What There Is' *Review of Metaphysics*, 2 (1948), reprinted in E. D. Klemke (ed.), *Contemporary Analytic and Linguistic Philosophies* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1983), p. 385. For Rorty's pragmatist vindication of the same point, see his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. xiv-xxi.
16. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 54.
17. Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1003a.
18. Kenny, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 6.
19. Charles H. Kahn, 'Why Existence Does not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy', in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p. 15.
20. *Metaphysics*, 1028 a.
21. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 258.
22. Kahn, 'Why Existence....', p. 7.
23. For Ibn Sīnā, see *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, Vol. II, pp. 344 and 347.
24. At this point, the two meanings of the word *māhiyyah* should be explained. '*Māhiyyah* in the particular sense' (*māhiyyah bi'l-ma'nā al-akhaṣṣ*) is the answer to the question 'what is it?' (*mā hiya?*). In Ibn Sīnā's terms (*Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 31), this meaning of quiddity denotes the particular reality of something. '*Māhiyyah* in the general sense' (*māhiyyah bi'l-ma'nā al-'āmm*) is that by which a thing is what it is (*mā bihi al-shay huwa huwa*). The second meaning of *māhiyyah* is eventually nothing other than the existence of something. The first meaning, which concerns the logical essence, is usually translated as 'quiddity' to distinguish it from 'essence' in the general and ontological sense. Cf. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971), p. 75.
25. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 55-56, 61.
26. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 46.
27. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 54.
28. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 53; cf. also, p. 55 and 61.
29. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 259.
30. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 59.
31. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 61.
32. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 65.
33. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 65.
34. *Aṣālah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 190.
35. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 38-39.
36. *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 38. Cf. also David B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sīnā, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 24-25.

37. As a representative of the school of Ibn Sīnā, consider the following remarks by Bahmanyār: 'The particularization of every existent is through its attribution to its subject. In other words, it subsists through its attribution to its subject and cause; not that the attribution is attached to it from outside. The *existence* of the caused (*al-ma'lūl*) is an *accident* ('*araḍ*) and every accident subsists through its existence in its subject. The same holds true for existence as the *existence* of man, for instance, subsists through its *attribution to* man and the *existence* of Zayd subsists through its *attribution to* Zayd'. *al-Taḥṣīl*, p. 282. (Emphases added). Ṣadrā quotes a paraphrased version of Bahmanyār's statement in *Qudsiyyah*, p. 207.
38. Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥathāt*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdāfar (Qom, Iran: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, AH 1413), p. 154.
39. For Ibn Rushd's objections against Ibn Sīnā, see his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā', (Cairo, Egypt: 1964), vol. II, p. 80; English tr. Van den Bergh *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, (London: Luzac, 1978), p. 118. St. Thomas followed Ibn Rushd and criticized Ibn Sīnā through the eyes of this misreading. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, tr. A. Maurer, (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983). Etienne Gilson follows the Thomistic interpretation of Ibn Sīnā on this particular point in his *Being and Some Philosophers*, (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), p. 52 and *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1989), pp. 190–191. See also F. Rahman, 'Essence and Existence in Avicenna,' *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, IV (1958), 1–16 and P. Morewedge, 'Philosophical Analysis and Ibn Sīnā's 'Essence-Existence' Distinction' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 92.3 (1972), pp. 425–435.
40. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 48. In another place, however, Ṣadrā attributes the view of existence as an accident to Ibn Sīnā and his followers, and rejects it as being 'utterly far from the truth.' Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 258
41. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 49.
42. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 252.
43. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 54–55.
44. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 40, 48. Cf. also Mehdi Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination*, 33–35.
45. After saying that existence realizes itself by itself, Ṣadrā makes some cautionary remarks. The potentially dangerous idea is the following: If the realization of existence depends on itself, then one may object that existence assumes a status similar to the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*). Ṣadrā replies by saying that 'the meaning of the Necessary Being is that it necessitates its own existence and reality by itself without being in need of any active agent and performer whereas the meaning of the realization of existence by itself is that when it is realized, it is either by

itself like the Necessary Being or through an active agent whose realization is not in need of another existence by which it subsists. This realization takes place only after the effect of the agent with its existence and its qualification with existence.' *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 40–41

46. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 40.
47. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 250–251.
48. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 59.
49. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 61. See also Ṭabaṭabā'i's footnote on page 49.
50. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 41; also p. 120.
51. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 66; also p. 57.
52. This principle finds an interesting expression in Sabzawārī's *Sharḥ al-manẓūmah* (Qom, Iran: Nāb Publications, 1995), Vol. II, p. 60, where he says that 'existence is the source of all explanations in which all descriptions come to an end. And it is the source of all sources and descriptions. When the Prophet, may peace and blessing be upon him, was asked 'by what did you know your Lord?' he replied that 'I knew everything by Him.'
53. The same position is held in modern philosophy. Cf. John E. Smith, 'Is Existence a Valid Philosophical Concept?' in his *Reason and God* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 122.
54. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, p. 3.
55. al-Fārābī, *al-Masā'il al-mutafarriqah*, ed. F. Dieterici, (Leiden, 1890), p. 90 and *Jawābāt in Risālatān falsafīyyātān*, p. 91. See also N. Rescher, 'al-Fārābī on the Question: Is Existence a Predicate?' in *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), pp. 39–42 and 'The Concept of Existence in Arabic Logic and Philosophy' in *Studies in Arabic Philosophy*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), pp. 69–80.
56. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 36–37.
57. Fazlur Rahman translates *tashkīk* as 'systematic ambiguity' (*The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 11), which I find to be ambiguous. The meaning of *tashkīk* is quite clear in Ṣadrā's writings: it refers to any order of hierarchy and gradation in terms of priority and posteriority, cause and effect, intensification and diminution, and so on. In the case of existence, it refers to the various degrees, states, modes and levels of existence. Hence my choice of gradation for *tashkīk*.
58. Compare the following paragraph: 'Know that existence is predicated of what is under it equivocally, not univocally. This means that an existence that has no cause precedes by nature an existence that has a cause. By the same token, the existence of substances precedes the existence of accidents. Similarly, some beings are stronger and some weaker. One cannot say that existence is a generic term predicated, for instance, of the existence of man, donkey, and stars univocally like the colors yellow and red. As you shall learn, some things are prior to others, and the meaning of this is that the existence (*wujūd*) of those things is prior to

the existence of other things; not that thing-ness (*al-jismiyyah*) itself is prior to thing-ness. Therefore when we say that cause is prior to effect, it means that its existence is prior to the existence of the effect.' Bahmanyār, *al-Taḥṣīl*, p. 281.

59. This reference to Bahmanyār is indicative of Ṣadrā's familiarity with his work, especially *al-Taḥṣīl*. Bahmanyār was certainly more lucid than his master Ibn Sīnā in articulating key Peripatetic positions, and Ṣadrā quotes freely and at some length from his work. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 39 and 48 where Ṣadrā presents Bahmanyār's view of the 'actuality of existence' as concurring with the primacy of existence.
60. A reference to Suhrawardī as it is repeated also in *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 181. It is in more than one place that Ṣadrā refers to Suhrawardī as a 'Stoic' (*riwāqī*). Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 291. For a discussion of Suhrawardī's 'Stoicism,' see Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, pp. 187–190.
61. I translate *wijdān* as an existential state of consciousness to bring out the etymological connection between *wujūd* and *wijdān*, both of which come from the Arabic root *w-j-d* meaning to 'find' and 'to be found.' It is sometimes translated into Persian by the classical authors as *yāftan*, 'finding,' a word which is also used to translate *wujūd*. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 214. The word *wajd*, which can be translated as 'ecstasy,' comes from the same root. The implied meaning is that 'finding' existence results in a state of ecstasy. Together with Ibn al-'Arabi, we can also say that existence is found in a state of ecstasy.
62. Cf. Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 48–49.
63. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 114.
64. *Aṣālah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 182.
65. Cf. *Shawāhid*, p. 14.
66. Cf. *Hudūth*, pp. 177–8 where Ṣadrā the Platonist gives a short defense of the Platonic Forms. As Sabzawārī points out, the word 'form' (*al-ṣūrah*) has two meanings. One is the form in the Aristotelian sense, i.e., that to which abstracted concepts correspond in the representational theory of knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*). The second meaning is 'essence' but not in the sense of quiddity (*māhiyyah*) as an abstraction of the mind but in the sense of concrete essences that belong to the intelligible world. See *Asfār*, III, p. 284, note 3. See also Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 214.
67. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 304.
68. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 36.
69. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 321.
70. 'The mental form of something could be nobler than its external reality,' *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 131.
71. Cf. Aristotle's discussion of substantial forms as universal (*Metaphysics*, XII, 1034–1035). See also Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt* pp. 207–209 where he

discusses perception (*idrāk*) in relation to the 'classes of disembodiment' (*aṣnāf al-tajrīd*). The same theme is taken up in the *Shifā'*; see Avicenna's *De Anima*, pp. 58–60.

72. Ṣadrā applies the same principle to the knower: one has to be detached from the limitations of material existence in order to perceive intelligible forms. This is where Ṣadrā gracefully blends philosophical speculation with the purification of the soul. As he states in various aphorisms, one cannot unite with the intelligible world, the ultimate goal of philosophy, without disengaging oneself from the gross states of existence. Matter is an obstacle for the soul to unite with the intelligible world through the agency of the active intellect. Cf. Ṣadrā's remarks in *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 369. I shall discuss this issue in greater detail in the next chapter.
73. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 81.
74. *Metaphysics*, 1087b where he says that 'the statement that all knowledge is universal, so that the principles of things must also be universal and not separate substances, presents indeed, of all the points we have mentioned, the greatest difficulty.' Cf. Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 5–6.
75. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 210.
76. Cf. L. E. Goodman, *Avicenna*, pp. 129–131.
77. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 286.
78. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 343–344. See also Bāqillānī who places the potential in the category of non-existence. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, pp. 34–44, quoted in Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, p. 216. Perfection as actuality is the common wisdom of medieval philosophy. Thus Thomas Aquinas says that '...a thing is said to be perfect in proportion to its actuality.' Cf. *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 4, Article, 1.
79. St. Anselm's argument that God as the Most Perfect Being must exist rather than not because perfection implies existence is based on the same intuition of the Neoplatonists about the 'metaphysics of actuality.'
80. *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 67. The other term Ṣadrā uses more frequently is *al-qābiliyyah*; *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 70.
81. William Charlton has argued against the notion of prime matter in Aristotle. Charlton's criticism of the conventional readings of Aristotle on this issue merits serious consideration for prime matter signifies 'an ultimate indeterminate matter, to be discovered by conceptual analysis,' which goes against the central concern of Aristotle's quest for metaphysics of actual substances. For Charlton's discussion, see his 'Did Aristotle Believe in Prime Matter?' in *Aristotle's Physics Books I and II* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 129–145.
82. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 434.
83. Cf. also *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 40.

84. Ṣadrā says that a substance whose form is not disengaged from matter cannot be known since matter means 'darkness' and thus ignorance as opposed to 'light' and 'presence,' which signifies knowledge. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 387 and IV, 1, p. 69.
85. *Maẓāhir*, p. 88.
86. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 340.
87. Cf. *Shawāhid*, p. 205.
88. See also *Shawāhid*, pp. 156–162 for Ṣadrā's detailed discussion of Platonic Forms. Ṣadrā's Platonic Forms are real individuals: '...for every existent, he (Plato) established an individual (*shakhṣan*) in the divine world and called these individuals the Platonic Forms.' *Hudūth*, p. 177.
89. *Shawāhid*, p. 239.
90. Plotinus offers a rigorous analysis of this point. Cf. Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism*, p. 104. For a fuller exposition and defense of 'axiarchism,' see John Leslie, *Value and Existence*, (New Jersey, 1979).
91. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 324–325 and *Ittiḥād in Majmū'ah*, pp. 93–94. See also *Asfār*, I, 2, p. 368; I, 3, p. 338; II, 2, pp. 216–218 where Ṣadrā traces the idea back to Plato; and III, 1, p. 110 where the principle is applied to God's knowledge of things.
92. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 373.
93. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 377.
94. Like Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā uses disembodiment as a criterion for the division of the subject-matter of metaphysics. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol I, pp. 69–70.
95. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362 and also 416.
96. *Muqarrabūn* refers to Angels, Prophets and saints, who are described in the Qur'ān as being closest to the Divine. Cf. the Qur'ān 4:172, 7:114, 26: 42, 56:11, and 83:21.
97. Ibn Sīnā attributes this saying to an unknown figure whereas Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī attributes it to Aristotle. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*, *Manṭiq*, p. 22 and Ṭūsī, *Asās al-iqtibās*, ed. Taqī Mudarris Raḍwah (Tehran, Iran: Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1988), p. 375.
98. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 335–336. Cf. also *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 163–164.
99. The same criticism of Suhrawardī is repeated in *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 26.
100. *Tajarrud* is a notoriously difficult term to translate. The root verb *j-r-d* means to denude, strip and divest. As a technical term, it refers to a state where things are 'freed from the limitations of material existence.' The English word 'abstraction' works only in some contexts where *tajarrud* means to isolate something from some other things such as its accidental properties. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 205–210; Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 35–42. Ghazālī also uses the term in this sense. Cf. Farid Jabre, *Essai sur le lexique de Ghazālī* (Beyrouth, Lebanon: Publications de L'Université Libanaise, 1970), p. 52. But 'abstraction' falls short of conveying the intended meaning of 'immaterial reality' especially if it is understood as the opposite of 'concrete.' A *mujarrad* being is not

necessarily something that exists as an abstraction in the mind. It can be a concrete reality as in the case of God, the angels or the intellect. For Ṣadrā, such a being is more real and concrete than physical substances. For this meaning of *tajarrud* in Ṣadrā, see *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 360–366. The Latin translations of Ibn Sīnā's works use two words for *tajarrud*: *abstractio* and *denudata*. Goichon rightly translates *tajarrud* as 'l'état de non-mélange avec la matière'. Cf. Goichon, *Lexique*, p. 38. Ibn Sīnā uses it in this sense when he says that *mujarradāt* are intrinsically intelligible because they are freed from the limitations of material existence. Cf. *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, pp. 15 and 96. In contemporary scholarship, the word *tajarrud* and its derivations have been translated variously. Abstraction is the most common term. See Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 211 and 233–234. Given the problems with the word 'abstraction' as something that is less than real, I think the word *denudata* comes closer to *tajarrud* especially in the sense in which Ṣadrā uses it. I have kept abstraction when *tajarrud* is used in the Peripatetic sense. Where appropriate, I have used disengagement when *tajarrud* means denuding and separating something from others. In general, I have translated it as disembodiment especially when Ṣadrā uses it in accordance with the gradation (*tashkīk*) of existence.

101. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 284–285.
102. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 286–287.
103. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 618–619.
104. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 278, 297, and 317.
105. This Qur'ānic verse, as interpreted by Ṣadrā and other philosophers, is also an allusion to the generative power of God's knowledge of things: Divine knowledge of things is their very existence. Cf. Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-mashārī' wa'l-muṭārahāt*, Vol. I, p. 488.
106. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 451 and 465.
107. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 292.
108. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1968), par. 246.
109. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 186; also p. 79.
110. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 450.
111. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 569.
112. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 291.
113. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 345.
114. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 346.
115. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 309.
116. 'The higher genres are actual essences (*dhātiyyāt*) for their species and individuals. Actual essences cannot change their mode of existence otherwise an actual essence would not be itself.' *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 311
117. al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 458.
118. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 571.

119. The paragraph is taken verbatim from al-Rāzī's *Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, p. 459 without any reference. On the same theme, see *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 287, 289, 311; Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 215–216.
120. Rahman gives a minimalist interpretation of Ṣadrā when he says that the soul '...creates forms from within itself or, rather, *is* these forms. This is the meaning of the identity of thought and being.' *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, p. 213. He seems to correct (or contradict?) himself two pages later (p. 215) when he describes the forms the soul knows as 'exist(ing) in their own right in a Platonic sense.'
121. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 596.
122. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360; *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 613.
123. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 617.
124. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 463. For a similar example, see *Shawāhid*, p. 246.
125. Ṣadrā mentions 'eight aspects' to state the difference between the 'presence of perceptual forms in the soul and their actual reality in matter.' Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 300–304. The first five are taken almost verbatim from al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith*, Vol. I, pp. 453–454.
126. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 601.
127. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 307.
128. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 585.
129. *Taṣawwūr*, p. 59. The same theme is developed in *Asfār*, 8, 221 and 9, 56.
130. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 605.
131. Reading *taf'alu* as *ta'aqqalu*, which makes more sense in this context.
132. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 575–576.
133. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 581. This is an obvious reference to al-Rāzī who uses the word *ḥulūl* for the presence of intelligible forms in the mind and in the external world. Cf. *al-Mabāḥith*, p. 453. By contrast, Ṣadrā uses the words *ḥudūr* and *ḥuṣūl*.
134. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 382.
135. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 346.
136. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 297.
137. Cf. *Mashā'ir*, pp. 54–58 where Ṣadrā reiterates his view that God's names and qualities are not attributes *added* to His essence *a posteriori* but different modes and states of His Essence which is not affected by His self-conscious and voluntary delimitation through His own names, qualities, and acts.
138. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 207–210.
139. The hierarchical view of perception leads Ṣadrā to divide knowing subjects into three classes: the 'sensate man' (*al-insān al-ḥissī*) perceives only sensible objects; the 'imaginal man' (*al-insān al-khayālī*) perceives sensible objects and imaginal forms; and finally the 'intellective man' (*al-insān al-'aqlī*) perceives the first two as well as intelligible forms as disembodied substances. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 614–615

140. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360.
141. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 208–209 where Ibn Sīnā emphasizes that the imaginal faculty does not need matter to retain forms. For Rahman's English translation, see *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 39–40. See also Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 59–60 and A. M. Goichon, *Lexique*, pp. 442–444.
142. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 360 and IV, 1, pp. 211–212. In the *Mafātiḥ*, Vol. I, p. 181, Ṣadrā rejects the suggestion of some Peripatetic philosophers that all of the imaginal forms conjured up by the soul belong to the '*ālam al-khayāl*'. Evil and satanic feelings, images and thoughts are creations of the soul, not illuminations from the world of imagination.
143. Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the word *barzakh* in a wider sense and applies it to any intermediary state. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 117–118.
144. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 362.
145. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 361. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 208–209.
146. See also *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 258.
147. Cf. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, pp. 617–618.
148. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 368.
149. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 369.
150. See *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 374–375 where Ṣadrā quotes from Suhrawardī's *al-Mashārʿi wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*.
151. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 376.
152. *Sharḥ*, Vol. I, p. 615.
153. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 498.
154. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 380.
155. *De Anima*, 405b.
156. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1087.
157. Cf. Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 136.
158. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 210.
159. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 296, 316–317, and 385.
160. Suhrawardī, *al-Mashārʿi wa'l-muṭāraḥāt*, p. 485.
161. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 162.
162. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 144.
163. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 365.
164. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 418–427.
165. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 434.
166. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 462.
167. *Asfār*, I, 3, 461. Cf. Ṣadrā's treatment of the active intellect as an active agent for the soul, *Asfār*, IV, 2, pp. 140–144.
168. *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* in Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition*, p. 104.
169. *Shawāhid*, p. 245.

170. Cf. Ṣadrā's quote from Ibn Sīnā, *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 419. Along the same lines, Ibn Sīnā defines the active intellect as 'a formal substance.' Cf. *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* in Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition*, p. 103.
171. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 510.
172. *Asfār*, II, 2, p. 204.
173. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 326; see also p. 461. This view belongs in essence to Ibn Sīnā. Cf. *Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 414; and *Najāt*, p. 231. See also Herbert A. Davidson, *AlFārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, pp. 78 and 91.
174. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 276.
175. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 278.
176. *Asfār*, IV, 1, p. 398 where Ṣadrā cites three reasons why the active intellect has been called 'active.'
177. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 339.
178. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 127. The verse is from Qur'ān 74: 31. In another place, Ṣadrā says that what the philosophers call the active intellect in the language of theoretical wisdom is called the 'sacred spirit' in the language of the Sharī'ah. *Asfār*, III, 2, p. 24.
179. *Asfār*, IV, 2, p. 130. See also *Ḥudūth*, p. 139 where the Platonic Forms are treated as the contents of the Divine mind.
180. Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥaṭhāt*, p. 107.
181. Cf. also *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 443–446.
182. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 516.
183. Lit. 'bringing out.' A reference to a branch of the science of *ḥadīth* where one investigates the sources of a particular narration.
184. Cf. *Avicenna's De Anima*, p. 239.
185. Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥaṭhāt*, p. 107.
186. *Najāt*, p. 206. Cf. *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 249–250. See also Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 87–89. For the translation of relevant material on intuition in the Avicennan corpus, see Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 159–176. See also Gutas, 'Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology' in Robert Wisnowsky (ed.), *Aspects of Avicenna*, (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), pp. 1–38.
187. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 322–324 where Ṣadrā quotes the relevant sections of the *Shifā'*. Interestingly enough, the expression 'poetic metaphors' has been used by Aristotle to refer to the Platonic *eidōs*. Cf. Taylor, *Aristotle*, p. 32. al-Rāzī concurs with Aristotle in *Mabāḥiṭh*, Vol. I, p. 459.
188. Quoted in Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition*, p. 23.
189. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 89–90. Cf. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, pp. 99–100. I have dealt with this particular problem in Ṣadrā's natural philosophy in my 'Between Physics and Metaphysics: Mullā Ṣadrā on Nature and Motion' *Islam and Science* Vol. I, 2003, pp. 65–93.

190. Essential primary predication refers to predication where the predicate is an essential part of the definition of the subject. In this kind of predication, subject and predicate are one and the same both in concept and in reality. Existential propositions such as 'man is man' are of this kind. Although existential propositions are tautological and yield no new knowledge about the predicate, they play an important role in logic. Having said that, essential primary predications are also applied to such propositions as 'man is a rational animal' whereby 'rational animal' is essential for the definition of 'man.' The second kind of predication called 'common predication' (*ḥaml shā'i' šinā'ī*) or simply secondary predication (*ḥaml thānī*) refers to predication where the predicate is not an essential property of the subject. The proposition 'man is a writer' is of this kind in that being a writer is a quality shared by some human beings but not an essential part of the definition of man.
191. This is how Ṣadrā explains the multiple states of existence and consciousness in man: the human self is a simple substance that has the qualities of knowledge, volition, movement, hearing, sight, life, etc., all at once, and for Ṣadrā this is the best example of how a single being can take on multiple 'meanings,' i.e., modes and states of existence in a simple manner. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 326.
192. Ibn Sīnā's famous example is how water becomes air by 'shedding from its matter (*hayūlā*) the form of water-ness (*ṣūrat al-mā'iyyah*) and there comes about the form of air-ness (*ṣūrat al-hawā'iyyah*).' See the quote from the *Shifā'* in the *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 327 and 329.
193. Unless specified by the context, the word *nafs* in Arabic means both self and soul. In his *Ma'ārij al-quds fī madārij ma'rifat al-nafs*, (Baghdād, Iraq: al-Maktabat al-'Ālamiyyah, 1988), pp. 18–19, Ghazālī points out that the word *nafs* is used in the Qur'ān to refer to the human self as the heart (*al-qalb*), the spirit (*al-rūḥ*), and the intellect (*al-'aql*).
194. In commenting on the gradual perfection of the human self from infancy to adulthood, Ṣadrā states that 'the souls of the prophets, peace be upon them, and the souls of the insane and the infants are of the same degree in the wombs of [their] mothers insofar as the human self and its reality is concerned. The difference is in the proximate accidents that are attached to their existence.' *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 328.
195. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 327 and 328.
196. *Shawāhid*, p. 211.
197. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 127.
198. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 128.
199. *Mubāḥathāt*, pp. 157–158.
200. *Mubāḥathāt*, pp. 155–156.
201. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth, UK, 1966), p. 160.
202. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 295.
203. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 291; and p. 378.

204. See also Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination*, pp. 103–105.
205. Cf. also *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, p. 111 and *Partawnāma*, ed. and tr. Hossein Ziai as *The Book of Radiance* (Costa Mesa, CA: 1998), p. 39 where Suhrawardī says that ‘any thing whose essence is absent from you, so you cannot perceive its essence, then you cannot [also] perceive its form.’
206. Wittgenstein’s remarks on ‘pain language’ have led to the notorious ‘private language argument’ debate. The debate itself does not concern us here. It should be mentioned, however, that Wittgenstein’s rejection of a private language knowable only to its speaker was an attack on Cartesian dualism on the one hand, and a reaffirmation of the primacy of language-games, on the other. On both ends, Wittgenstein’s main concern is to show that even sense experience as our ‘primitive’ and natural encounter with the world is shaped by the rules of language. Accordingly, language is constitutive, not a mere instrument, of sensations. That is why Wittgenstein rejects the proposition ‘Sensations are private’ (*Philosophical Investigations*, par. 248) and insists that ‘only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains’ (*Philosophical Investigations*, par. 283). If there is no such thing as a private language, then there is no such thing as private sensation either.
207. ‘In what sense are my sensations *private*?—Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it.—In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense. If we are using the word ‘to know’ as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain.—Yes, but all the same not with the certainty with which I know it myself!—It can’t be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean—except perhaps that I *am* in pain?’ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, par. 246.
208. Cf. Mahdi Ha’iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 61–64.
209. Commenting on this paragraph, Sabzawārī has the following to say: ‘That is, only through knowledge by presence. And this is possible only when we have the knowledge of the essence of something and its cause. Thus man’s knowledge of the reality of existence (*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*) can primarily be in his extinction in it (*bi’l-fanā’ fīhi*).’ *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 294, note 3. It is pertinent here to draw attention to Sabzawārī’s use of the Sufi term *fanā’*, spiritual extinction, to explain the knowledge of existence through knowledge-by-presence.
210. The same theme is developed in Ṣadrā’s ‘*Awṣāḥ*’, pp. 26–28.
211. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 242–243.
212. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 469.

213. *Kāshāniyyah* in *Majmū'ah*, p. 130.
214. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 451.
215. For Ṣadrā's detailed criticism of the representational view of God's knowledge and his revision of the views of previous philosophers, see *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 189–237.
216. *Najāt*, p. 283.
217. *Asfār*, III, 1, p. 181. For Ṣadrā's critique of Suhrawardī's position, see *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 249–263.
218. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 180–181.
219. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 387–395.
220. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 397.
221. Here I deliberately adopted a literal translation to stress Ṣadrā's ontological concern: knowledge 'happens to someone' (*wuqū' al-'ilm*) rather than is mentally acquired by the knowing subject. This unique vocabulary, which is at times admittedly difficult to follow, is a result of Ṣadrā's relentless effort to ground all knowledge in existence. Cf. also Ṣadrā's definition of perception as 'meeting' (*liqā'*) and 'arrival' (*wuṣūl*), *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 507.
222. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 317.
223. *Mashā'ir*, p. 50.
224. *Asfār*, III, 1, pp. 256–261.
225. Ṣadrā's use of the word *fuqarā'*, plural of *faqīr* meaning poor and taken from the Qur'ān (35: 15), is not simply for stylistic reasons. It clearly alludes to a subtle point Ṣadrā wants to bring up within a Sufi context.

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IBRAHIM KALIN

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