

## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

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### Abstract

*In the present article, the author tries to comparatively study capacities of two Asian and European philosophical systems concerning a particular issue- i.e. the faculty of reason;- and, in this way, to contemplate the possibility of a dialogue among philosophical traditions as an inexorable priority of the present time. Though no limitation was recognized for reason in the space of Enlightenment (Aufklärung) and by the Newtonian physics, and in Kant's critical philosophy, unity and complementarity of understanding were provided by reason; limitation of reason and its realm is emphasized practically. "Fallacies", "Antinomies", and "Ideal" of the "Pure Reason" were proclamations of failure of the reason in three fields of knowledge of the truth of Soul, Nature, and God; and "transcendental dialectic" was introduced as a critical situation stemmed from transcendence of the reason.*

*The inevitable result of such approach was duality between subject and object, noumenon and phenomenon, understanding and reason; and Kant's successors had to overcome such duality.*

*In Islamic philosophy- and in particular in Sadrian philosophy- "Reason" contains, on the one hand, levels of knowledge and in fact levels of "Being", and on the other hand - unlike Aristotelian and Kantian traditions- there is no conflict between levels of knowledge; thus, "Reason" is introduced as a form of levels of Being and as corresponding to these levels. Though, lately in the 18th Century and*

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*early in the 19th Century, Kant's successors- and in particular Hegel- focused their attempts to remove duality between subject and object and noumenon and phenomenon, no philosophical system based on traditional metaphysics managed to overcome the difficulty of critical philosophy. (It was only in the mid-20th Century that a new window was opened by the help of Husserl's Phenomenology and Heidegger's Hermeneutics).*

*In the present article, through a comparative study between philosophical system of Kant and Mulla Sadra, the author is trying to open a road to dialogue and critical exchange of ideas between two great philosophical traditions in the West and East.*

**Keywords:** *transcendental dialectic, Kant, Mulla Sadra, ontology.*

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## Introduction

It has been said that in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* the part devoted to transcendental dialectic is the focus of his study of epistemic limitations of reason. For Kant, once transcended from phenomena to ideas, reason falls into fallacies and contradictions instead of attaining an authentication and objective knowledge; and instead of rational progress, it is captivated by illusions and doubts. As a matter of fact, it should be said that Kant's "dialectic" is, somehow, an expression of reason's critical situation; and thus its sense is fully other than what was understood by Plato, Aristotle, and the other medieval thinkers. In this way, reason stands actually against understanding and dialectic against objective knowledge. This conflation is removed when we appeal to practical reason and moral intuition to remove anxiety of speculative reason through peace of moral conscience. In the Islamic philosophy and in particular in Sadrian philosophy, however, the faculty of reason is not a pure perceptual faculty; but rather, it has been regarded as a level of existence which is in ontological relation to levels of sense and imagination. In this view, not only progress of knowledge from sensible to intelligible, from particular to universal does not end in theoretical dead ends, but rather it is exactly located in the context of the process of development of knowledge and reception of the truth of existence. And, thus, not only man's cognitive faculties do not stand against each other, but rather they actually help each other's perfection and integrity. The

## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

main reason of the unity of cognitive faculties lies in the unity of truth of existence including human existence. Thus, according to Mulla Sadra, levels of man's perception correspond to levels of existence, and there is some sort of true connection and unity between these levels.

### Epistemic Dualism and Crisis of Reason

The inevitable result of transcendental aesthetics and analysis in Kant's critical philosophy is a critical look at the faculty of reason under Transcendental Dialectic. Here, Kant mentions explicitly limitations of reason and difficulties of metaphysical knowledge. The main source of this is reason's inclination to transcend phenomena in order to acquire knowledge of substance, fact, and ideas; something which is not in the scope of faculties of theoretical knowledge.

Kant distinguishes between sensible intuition (and the pure intuitions of space and time) and understanding (the twelve categories or forms of the understanding). Mathematics and a pure science of nature are possible because of these **a priori** conditions of intuition and understanding. There is, however, a third faculty that Kant identifies in the human being, the faculty of reason. Kant deals with this faculty at length in the second part of *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled Transcendental Dialectic. As Kant uses the term, dialectic is the critical refutation of false reasoning; as modified by transcendental it is the refutation of false reasoning that is *a priori* or rationalistic, without empirical content.

Kant explains that reason is the faculty of making syllogistic inferences:

Understanding may be regarded as a faculty which secures B359 the unity of appearances by means of rules, and reason as being the faculty which secures the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Accordingly, reason never applies itself directly to experience or to any object, but to understanding, in order to give to the manifold knowledge of the latter an a priori unity by means of concepts, a unity which may be called the unity of reason, and which is quite different in kind from any unity that can be accomplished by the understanding. This is the universal concept of the faculty of reason in so far as it has been possible to make it clear in the total absence of examples. These will be given in the course of our argument. (Kant, PR<sup>1</sup>, 303)

The faculty of reason has the function of taking the judgments of the understanding and giving these logical unity by using these as elements of a syllogism and a chain of interdependent syllogisms. As Kant says, "From this we see that in inference reason endeavours to reduce the varied and manifold knowledge obtained through the understanding to the smallest number of principles (universal conditions) and thereby to achieve in it the highest possible unity" (*Ibid*, 304). Without this unification of judgments under the smallest number of principles, i.e., more general truths, one would have merely a series of unrelated individual judgments of the understanding. Kant explains that reason seeks for its universal condition, by which he means the first and most general premise of a chain of interdependent syllogisms. He says,

Reason, in its logical employment, seeks to discover the universal condition of its judgment (the conclusion), and the syllogism is itself nothing but a judgment made by means of the subsumption of its condition under a universal rule (the major premiss). Now since this rule is itself subject to the same requirement of reason, and the condition of the condition must therefore be sought (by means of a prosyllogism) whenever practicable, obviously the principle peculiar to reason in general, in its logical employment, is: -- to find for the conditioned knowledge obtained through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion. But this logical maxim can only become a principle of pure reason through our assuming that if the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions, subordinated to one another -- a series which is therefore itself unconditioned -- is likewise given, that is, is contained in the object and its connection. (306)

A major premise is both the condition of the conclusion, which one could call the conditioned and the conclusion or conditioned of a prior syllogism, what Kant calls a pro-syllogism. Reason seeks the unconditioned which is the first condition of a chain of interdependent syllogisms, which has the judgment of the understanding as its content.

According to Kant, there are three types of syllogism;

In every syllogism I first think a rule (the major premiss) through the understanding. Secondly, I subsume something

## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

known under the condition of the rule by means of judgment (the minor premiss). Finally, what is thereby known I determine through the predicate of the rule, and so a priori through B361 reason (the conclusion). The relation, therefore, which the major premiss, as the rule, represents between what is known and its condition, is the ground of the different kinds of syllogism. Consequently, syllogisms, like judgments, are of three kinds, according to the different ways in which, in the understanding, they express the relation of what is known; they are categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive. (304)

Arising from Reason are what Kant calls transcendental ideas; the purpose of these ideas of pure reason is to give systematic unity to the judgments of the understanding (experience), so that they have a regulative function. The ideas of pure reason perform this regulative function by organizing the judgments of experience as component parts of interrelated syllogisms. He explains,

Similarly, we may presume that the form of syllogisms, when applied to the synthetic unity of intuitions under the direction of the categories, will contain the origin of special *a priori* concepts, which we may call pure concepts of reason, or transcendental ideas, and which will determine according to principles how understanding is to be employed in dealing with experience in its totality (315).

The purpose of the transcendental ideas is to unifying conditions under higher conditions until there is reached that which is unconditioned (even though no such unconditioned will ever be reached). The condition stated in the major premise is actually the conclusion of another syllogism, so that this conclusion now serving as a major premise is itself conditioned. Reason seeks for the totality of all the conditions for a given conditioned, not just the immediate condition, the major premise, but the ultimate condition in the chain of interdependent syllogisms that has no condition. There are as many transcendental ideas as there are types of syllogism. As Kant put it,

According to Kant, there are three transcendental illusions that naturally arise from the three transcendental ideas. The first is that of the absolute unity of the thinking subject (the soul), which itself is not a predicate, but to which all representations are predicated; it is that which thinks but is never thought, the original consciousness, and is a simple substance (among other attributes). Kant calls this the psychological idea and a paralogism, since it is a false proposition that

has only the appearance of truth. The only basis on which one could posit the existence of an absolute subject is pure apperception, consciousness as the condition for all understanding, which is to say the unification of the sensible manifold. This self is different from the empirical self, which we experience as the correlative of perception and thinking, for it is experienced not as an object, as the psychological idea assumes, but as that which makes possible the unity of the contents of consciousness and therefore makes all experience possible (pure apperception) (353).

The "I" or consciousness that accompanies and makes possible all intuition (both outer and inner intuition, i.e., appearances in space and the sequential determinations of time) is not itself an intuition, but only the "the mere form of consciousness." Its simplicity consists in the fact that one can represent to oneself the "I" without any of its contents. Likewise, one cannot call a substance that by which the sensible manifold is unified as the appearances of substances. The experience is that of an identical consciousness that accompanies all representations, but this is not to say that it is a substance, since the category of substance applies only to the synthesis of the sensible intuition. Likewise the representation of the simplicity of the "I" is the result of the fact that one has abstracted from the subject or consciousness of all its contents, but one cannot attribute to the "I" an objective simplicity, since this category also applies only to the synthesis of the sensible manifold, i.e., can apply only to objects constituted in experience. In other words, for Kant the error attendant on the psychological idea lies in making the condition of knowledge into an object of knowledge: that which is presupposed to know any object (by means of the application of the categories) cannot be known as an object, for it would then be required to use the same categories of itself, which is impossible (364-365).

In the Paralogisms of Pure Reason in the second edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant summarizes the natural arising of the dialectical illusion in rational psychology, what he calls paralogism (380).

The idea of reason of a pure intelligence, called a soul, is falsely derived from the concept of "the completely undetermined concept of a thinking being in general". It is possible for the "I" to think itself as an object by considering itself as a consciousness without any contents; this is an exercise in abstraction towards the transcendental subject (the subject considered as separate from appearances), because normally consciousness is aware of an object and not itself. According to Kant, however, to confuse this abstraction, the transcendental subject, with a

## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

soul, an immaterial substance or pure intelligence is philosophically irresponsible, because this abstraction is merely that of the "unity of consciousness, on which, as the mere form of knowledge, all determination is based."

The illusion attached to the second idea of pure reason, the unification of the understanding by seeking for the presupposition that has no presupposition, is the absolute or unconditioned unity of the sequence of the conditions of the appearance, i.e., the idea of nature or the world considered as a whole. Kant explains that the absolutely complete synthesis of conditions is only an idea; according to it, the synthesis of the manifold proceeds regressively, but this does not mean that this synthesis will ever be complete (391).

The unconditioned is a hypothetical, but unknown "thing," represented in the imagination, towards which reason regresses in giving unity to the judgments of the understanding. Whether one ever arrives at this hypothetical unconditioned, the first condition in a chain of hypothetical syllogisms can only be determined empirically. According to Kant, there are actually four specific cosmological ideas corresponding to the four category headings (Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Modality). He writes,

When we thus select out those categories which necessarily lead to a series in the synthesis of the manifold, we find that there are but four cosmological ideas, corresponding to the four titles of the categories: 1. Absolute completeness B443 of the Composition of the given whole of all appearances. 2. Absolute completeness in the Division of a given whole in the [field of] appearance. 3. Absolute completeness in the Origination of an appearance. 4. Absolute completeness as regards Dependence of Existence of the changeable in the [field of] appearance (390).

The only purpose of reason is to serve as a rule that prescribes that a sequence of conditions be extended as far as is empirically possible. The principle of reason is not a principle of the understanding by which the possibility of experience and empirical knowledge is established, nor is what Kant calls a "constitutive principle," meaning that by it one can establish the existence of a super-sensible reality. Rather, it serves only to direct the mind to the regress of conditions, which is why Kant calls it a regulative principle (450).

The illusion attached to the third idea is the idea of God as the most perfect and most real being. What Kant calls the transcendental ideal is that of the absolute unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general, the sum total of all possible predicates. In a disjunctive

syllogism, two or more mutually exclusive predicates are presented. If one ascends a series of disjunctive syllogisms, from the more specific to the less specific, one will eventually arrive at the highest possible unification of predicates, the sum total of all possibility (which would be Being Itself in all its diversity) (488-489).

What Kant calls the principle of complete determination of things is the totality of all its possible predicates, even though these possible predicates cannot exist simultaneously **in concrete**, since among these are pairs of contradictory predicates; the principle of complete determination of things is the principle of the synthesis of all predicates, everything that can be predicated of all subjects is combined in a series of disjunctive syllogisms. The result is that for any subject the totality of all possible predicates is given already in the synthesis. Each disjunctive syllogism presupposes the sum total of all predicates, so that the lowest disjunctive syllogism presuppose the highest; thus, the concrete or individual thing is defined as much by which it is as by what it is not, so that a concrete or individual thing presupposes a knowledge of the sum-total of all possible predicates, for a thing is what it is only as situated in relation to the totality (489).

The complete determination of all things is an idea of reason, the rule that a thing must be understood in terms of the totality of all predicates for it to be fully knowable.

When the transcendental ideal is hypostatized, being made into an object, the result is the transcendental idea of a most real being (*ens realissimum*), the primordial being (*ens originarium*) or the highest being (*ens summum*), which is to say that being from whose being all else derives (492).

Kant adds that the primordial being must also be simple, since it would be improper to say that what presupposes it constitutes its parts, since this would give ontological priority to the parts: "We cannot say that a primordial being consists of a number of derivative beings, for since the latter presuppose the former they cannot themselves constitute it. The idea of the primordial being must therefore be thought as simple" (492). Likewise, the derivation of all things from this primordial being cannot be understood as its division, for this implies that it is merely an aggregate. Kant says, "On the contrary, the supreme P 493 reality must condition the possibility of all things as their ground, not as their sum" (492). The error, however, in objectifying the transcendental ideal is to create an object of which experience is impossible, for the understanding never has the totality in view. This means that the idea of God so



## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

defined above has no empirical employment and therefore is meaningless (493).

The transcendental ideal as a pure idea of reason requires the complete determination of all things, as described above. One cannot make an object out of this idea, for this leads to transcendental illusion.

Kant considers that the ontological argument for the existence of God is flawed, not only because it assumes that the transcendental idea can be objectified as a most real being, but also insofar as it wrongly assumes that existence can be a predicate (504-505).

Similarly, the cosmological argument is also flawed, not only because it assumes that the category of causation can be applied to a transcendent object, an object the experience of which is impossible, i.e., God, but also because at a certain point in the argument, the cosmological argument assumes the validity of the ontological argument. According to Kant, the cosmological argument argues that contingency presupposes necessity, in particular a necessary being as the cause of all contingency. Reason then searches for an idea appropriate to the idea of a necessary being and settles on the most real being (*ens realissimum*), so that the idea of a necessary being and that of the most real being are convertible, in the sense that each implies the other. Kant concludes that the identity of a necessary being with the most real being is actually a covert appeal to the ontological argument, so that the cosmological argument is invalid without its presupposition of the validity of the ontological argument.

If the proposition, that every absolutely necessary being is likewise the most real of all beings, is correct (and this is the *nervus probandi* of the cosmological proof), it must, like all affirmative judgments, be convertible, at least *per accidens*. It therefore follows that some *entia realissima* are likewise absolutely necessary beings. But one *ens realissimum* is in no respect different from another, and what is true of some under this concept is true also of all. In this case, therefore, I can convert the proposition *simpliciter*, not only *per accidens*, and say that every *ens realissimum* is a necessary being. But P 511 since this proposition is determined from its a priori concepts alone, the mere concept of the *ens realissimum* must carry with it the absolute necessity of that being; and this is precisely what the ontological proof has asserted and what the cosmological proof has refused to admit, although the conclusions A609 B637 of the latter are indeed covertly based on it (510-511).

### Unity of Knowledge and Existence: A Way out of Crisis

In his ontological approach to analyze knowledge, Mulla Sadra has synthesized and gathered all previous philosophical elements together with his own innovations. According to this approach, man's existence is a ray of pure existence and simple truth. And as a matter of fact, man appropriates a level from among gradational levels of existence; and thus, he is in existential and potential unity with other levels.

Islamic philosophers have an idea regarding the object of knowledge and its relation to subject. This idea in its highest form belongs to Mulla Sadra. According to his idea the highest stages of knowledge is achieved when the subject of knowledge is perfectly united with the object and their identities become one. Mulla Sadra who places "unity of the reality of existence" as the foundation of his "metaphysical system of thought" recognizes "existence" (*wujud*) as the highest object of knowledge. In his opinion, real knowledge of "existence" is achieved only through a special form of intuition, but because he concerns in his philosophy with both "existent" (*mujud*) and "existence". He constantly emphasizes on this idea that knowledge of "existence" is either acquired through "knowledge by presence" or attained by reasoning for it through its implications.

At the first glance, what he says about the recognition of "existence" through rational analysis, might be bold and strange, because he does not accept Ibn Sina and al-Farabi's ideas on "accidental existence" and claims that the reality which is the content and denotation of the "man exists" is completely different from the content of other propositions. In his opinion, the "man" which in this proposition is the logical and grammatical subject of proposition, objectively is not subject, but is a predicate. The real subject is "the truth of existence" and all quiddities are only accidents which limit and constrain a single reality as innumerable objects. To intuit this reality until human consciousness remains based on daily experiences is not achievable. Humanity should be woken up by a completely other consciousness so to be able to understand this world under these conditions.

Mulla Sadra do not mean to say simply that the world of reality as we perceive it in our experience is in itself unreal. Nor do they want to assert that the proposition: "The table is existent" does not refer to any kind of external reality. The only point they want to make is that the structure of external reality which corresponds to this proposition is totally different from what is normally suggested by the form of the proposition. "Table" is but an inner modification of this reality, one of its self-determinations.

### Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

Thus in the realm of external reality, the subject and the predicate must exchange their places. The "table" which is the logical or grammatical subject of the proposition: "The table is existent", is in this domain not a subject; rather, it is a predicate. The real subject is "existence", while "table" is but an "accident" determining the subject into a particular thing. In fact all the so-called "essences", like being-a-table, being-a-flower, etc. are in external reality nothing but "accidents" that modify and delimit the one single reality called "existence" into innumerable things" (Mulla Sadra, 1967, p. 14).

Such a vision of reality, however, is not accessible to human consciousness as long as it remains at the level of ordinary everyday experience. In order to have access to it, according to Mulla Sadra the mind must experience a total transformation of itself. The consciousness must transcend the dimension of ordinary cognition where the world of being is experienced as consisting of solid, self-subsistent things, each having as its ontological core what is called essence. There must arise in the mind a totally different kind of awareness in which the world is revealed in an entirely different light. It is at this point that this kind of philosophy turns conspicuously toward mysticism. So much so that a philosopher like Mulla Sadra comes to declare that any philosophy which is not based upon the mystical vision of reality is but a vain intellectual pastime. In more concrete terms, the basic idea here is that an integral metaphysical worldview is possible only on the basis of a unique form of subject-object relationship. It is to be remarked in this connection that, in this variety of Islamic philosophy as well as in other major philosophies of the East, metaphysics or ontology is inseparably connected with the subjective state of man, so that the selfsame Reality is said to be perceived differently in accordance with the different degrees of consciousness.

In this problem i.e. the "unification of the knower and the known", whatever may happen to be the object of knowledge, the highest degree of knowledge is always achieved when the knower, the human subject, becomes completely unified and identified with the object so much so that there remains no differentiation between the two. For differentiation or distinction means distance, and distance in cognitive relationship means ignorance. To this we must add another observation, namely that the highest object of cognition for Mulla Sadra is "existence". And according to Him the real knowledge of "existence" is obtainable not by rational reasoning but only through a very peculiar kind of intuition. This latter mode of cognition, in the view of Mulla Sadra,

consists precisely in knowing "existence" through the "unification of the knower and the known", i.e. knowing "existence" not from the outside as an "object" of knowledge, but from the inside, by man's *becoming* or rather *being* "existence" itself, that is, by man's self-realization (Ibid, 1969, p. 625).

It is evident that such "unification of the knower and the known" cannot be realized at the level of everyday human experience where the subject stands eternally opposed to the object. The subject in such a state grasps "existence" only as an object. It objectifies "existence" as it objectifies all other things, while "existence" in its reality as *actus essendi* definitely and persistently refuses to be an "object". An objectified "existence" is but a distortion of the reality of "existence".

This Islamic approach of Mulla Sadra to the problem of the reality and unreality of the phenomenal world will rightly remind us of this position that the phenomenal world is real in so far as it is the absolute truth or Reality as perceived by the relative human mind in accordance with its natural structure. But it is false and unreal if taken as something ultimate and self-subsistent. A true metaphysician worthy of the name is one who is capable of witnessing in every single thing in the world the underlying Reality of which the phenomenal form is but a self-manifestation and self-determination. But the problem now is: How can such a vision of Reality be obtainable as a matter of actual experience? To this crucial question the Islamic philosophy of "existence" answers by saying that it is obtainable only through an "inner witnessing" (*shubud*), "tasting" (*dhawq*), "presence" (*budur*), or "illumination" (*isbraq*) (Ibid, 1967, p. 448).

Whatever these technical terms exactly mean, and to whatever degree they may differ from one another, it will be evident in any case that such an experience of Reality is not actualize-able as long as there remains the subject of cognition as a "subject", that is to say, as long as there remains in man the ego-consciousness. The empirical ego is the most serious hindrance in the way of the experience of "seeing by self-realization". For the reality of existence is immediately grasped only when the empirical selfhood is annihilated, when the ego-consciousness is completely dissolved into the Consciousness of Reality, or rather, Consciousness which *is* Reality. Hence the supreme importance attached in this type of philosophy to the experience called *fana'*, meaning literally annihilation, that is, the total nullification of the; ego-consciousness.

The phenomenal world is the world of Multiplicity. Although Multiplicity is ultimately nothing other than the self-revealing aspect of the absolute Reality itself, he who knows Reality only in the form of

## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

Multiplicity knows Reality only through its variously articulated forms, and fails to perceive the underlying Unity of Reality. The immediate experience of Reality through "self-realization" consists precisely in the immediate cognition of absolute Reality before it is articulated into different things. In order to see Reality in its absolute indetermination, the ego also must go beyond its own essential determination.

After having passed through above crucial principle i.e. "*Unification of the knower and the known*" Mulla Sadra affirms this principle, in all knowledge. But the nature of this identity must be defined carefully. It is not the case that external objects, as they are, become objects of knowledge. Indeed, the forms of external objects cannot move into the mind and become known, since mental forms and external forms are different in several essential respects (*Ibid*, pp. 300-304). It will be shown presently that the status of mental existence is radically different from the status of external existence. When something becomes an object of knowledge, therefore, it acquires an altogether new *genre* of existence (*nash'a 'ilmiya*) where several of its characteristics of external existence are removed and it acquires certain new characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

This position is supported by a consideration of sense perception. It is not true that in sense perception the object of knowledge is the quality coming to inhere in the sense organ and producing a qualitative change in that organ (*Ibid*, p. 282). This consideration shows that perceptible forms are not externally existent forms; nor are they form present in the sense organs at the time of perception. Perceptible forms are, therefore, operations of or emanations from the soul itself and the presentation of an object to a sense organ only provides the occasion for the projection of the form from the soul. All forms in knowledge are produced by the soul in this way and Sadra says that the relationship of cognitive forms to the soul is analogous to the relationship of the contingent to the Necessary Being, God.

As for the reality of knowledge, philosophers have given several views about it. The first view to be considered is that which defines knowledge in terms of abstraction or separation from matter. Abstraction is taken to mean abstraction from matter and elimination of material attachments. That is to say, abstraction is taken as something negative (*Ibid*, p. 306). The second approach to the reality of knowledge is to say that knowledge consists in the imprinting of the form of the object in the subject. It is obvious that this is not true of self-knowledge, since it is admitted by all that self-knowledge does not come about by the imprinting of one's form into oneself. Secondly, the imprinting of forms in matter does not

become knowledge for material bodies. Nor is it true to say that, in matter, the presence of quantity, space, position, etc. prevents it from knowing, for when the soul knows things, it knows them along with quantity, quality, position, etc.

Apart from the fact that this view still does not cover the phenomenon of self-knowledge, it necessitates the conclusion that those things, which do not actually exist, cannot be known in any sense, for there can be no relationship between the mind and the non-existent. It is also difficult on this view to explain ignorance in the sense of mis-knowledge, since, if this relationship is present, there is true knowledge; and if it is absent, there is no knowledge at all. If one holds that knowledge is not a mere relation but a relational quality (*kaifiya dhat idafa*), one is vulnerable to similar objections. It would also follow that God's knowledge is an extrinsic quality to His being and not essential to Him.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the view that knowledge is an accidental quality of the mind; was also held by Ibn Sina in certain contexts. But Ibn Sina notes the well-known difficulty as to how, if the mental form is to correspond to the external reality, a substance in external reality can become an accident in the mind. Ibn Sina's answer is that this mental form, which is an accident to the mind, is of such a nature that, if it were to exist externally, it would be a substance and not an accident. That this is not a genuine solution of the difficulty is obvious. For it is meaningless to say that something, which is a substance in-itself, turns into an accident, in the mind (*Ibid*, pp. 305-308). Al-Suhrawardi sought to translate the phenomenon of cognition into the terminology of Light. He posited the categories of Light as that which is Light to itself, and that which is Light to something else. The first is the self-existing, self-knowing substance, which is correct insofar as it identifies true being with knowledge (pp. 291-292).

Mulla Sadra then proceeds to state his own view of knowledge: Knowledge is neither a privation like abstraction from matter, nor a relation but a being (*wujud*). (It is) not every being but that which is an actual being, not potential. (It is) not even every actual being, but a pure being, unmixed with non-being. It becomes determinate by receiving a bodily form. But body itself cannot become knowledge, since it is not pure being: parts of a body, being mutually exclusive, are never present to each other and hence body can never attain a real unity which is requisite for true being and knowledge. Now "attainment and possession" (*al-nayl wa'l-dark*) are of the essence of knowledge. Therefore, body and its physical relations can never be a proper object of

### Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

knowledge, except through a form other than this bodily form. This other form is an altogether new form having a spiritual character, a form arising from within the soul.

Knowledge, then, is pure existence, free from matter (pp. 292, 294). Such existence is the soul when it has fully developed into an acquired intellect. The soul then does not need forms inhering in it as its accidents but creates forms from within itself or, rather, *is* these forms. This is the meaning of the identity of thought and being. This also explains the dictum referred to previously, viz., that all knowledge is related to the soul as the contingent world is related to God. For just as God is Pure and Simple Existence, the Absolute Mind and all other existents are related to Him, thanks to the "unfolding existence (*wujud munbasit*)," at different levels-which constitute a systematically ambiguous world of existence of identity-in-differences, at the same time generating a semi-real realm of essences-so the soul gives rise, thanks to the unfolding knowledge (which is a perfect analogue of the "unfolding existence" of God) to different levels of knowables-of perception, imagination, estimation, and intellection-as systematically ambiguous knowables which are, in a sense, different and in a sense identical.

It is important to note clearly the sense in which the phrase "pure existence free from matter" has been used; otherwise, it is liable to be gravely misunderstood. Something, which is free from matter, is also called a form or pure and abstract form. Form, in this sense, can also mean essence. This is precisely what is *not* meant here, else we will revert to the doctrine of abstraction of forms whose relationship to the soul will again become one of accidental quality. On the contrary, when a form is free from matter, it becomes a pure existent, not an essence, and an existent cannot be known through a form but through an intuitive self-identity or direct knowledge. Without this existential dimension to the form and the consequent identity of knowledge and existence, it would, indeed, be possible to object that from the *concept* "form free from matter," it is not possible to deduce "knowledge," for the two are not the same. That is why even when we know that God, for example, is free from matter; we have still to *prove* His self-knowledge by a further argument. The answer is that we are not here talking of an *abstract concept* "form free from matter," but of the *fact* that existence cannot be known except through self-identity and direct intuition, and this is possible only in a being free from matter (p. 294).

Mulla Sadra's statements that knowledge requires a new status of being for the known object, raises the question of the nature of mental

existence *al-wujud al-dhibni*, and the relationship of this existence to the known object. The first task is to *prove* that there is such a thing as "mental existence" as distinguished from real existence; this Sadra claims to have accomplished by showing that since, in sense-perception, the external material object in itself cannot be presented to the mind and hence known, the soul must create a corresponding form, of its own nature. This is much truer in the case of images which the soul creates from within itself. As for the intellective form, Sadra's position is that these forms exist in their own right in a Platonic sense and that when the soul fully knows them, it does so by an Illuminationist direct knowledge whereby it becomes identical with them (p. 287).

Because of its vision of the form, the mind is then enabled to form "essences," which come to behave as "universals" applicable to different species. In doing so, the mind necessarily does violence to the nature of reality, since reality is not essence but a spectrum of existences. Hence all forms, whether sensible, imaginative, or intellective, exist in the mind. They are rather attached to the mind as acts or creations are attached or present to their actor or creator (*Ibid*). The use of the particle "in" differs with different types of existents. When something is said to be "*in* the mind," the mind cannot in this use be conceived of as a "container," but it simply means that the mind has a set of properties or essences which it is able to apply to the external reality and to classify things. Of course, the mind, as an external existent and as a piece of the furniture of objective reality, is qualified (*multasij*) by the known essences which can, in this sense, be said to qualify the mind (*kaif nafsani*). However, intrinsically speaking, the mind looks upon the external world and operates upon it with notions, concepts, or essences (*ma'ani, mafahim, mahiyyat*).

The question of the relationship of this mental form to the external reality has troubled most Muslim philosophers since Ibn Sina, and has produced elaborate discussions. At the root of these discussions is the consideration that if the mental form is to reflect the reality faithfully, then the former must preserve the latter's characteristics. From this arises the demand that if something is a substance in the external reality, the mental form must be a substance as well. But Ibn Sina has described the mental form as a quality or accident of the soul. For an idea or form in the mind does not move out of itself and exist externally so that when it is outside the mind, it has certain characteristics while, when in the mind, it has certain other characteristics.

Mulla Sadra believes that existence or the ultimate reality is luminous in



## Transcendental Dialectic and Sadrian Ontology

(دیالکتیکی استعلایی و هستی‌شناسی صدرایی)

nature and that it shines upon other things and, as something that transcends the faculties of mind or logic, it can only be understood and proven through inner illumination and intuitive knowledge. This is a kind of knowledge which is known directly of the essence (*dhāt*) of the known object, in which the real and genuine existence of the object of knowledge is disclosed to the knowing subject or the percipient. According to what is understood from the sayings of Muslim philosophers, knowledge in the general sense of the term as the presence of the known for the knower, is divided into two kinds: acquired and by presence. The first kind is called 'acquired knowledge' (*ilm husūlī*), that is, knowledge acquired by conceptual representation in which the external existence of its object is not observed and witnessed by the knower; rather he becomes aware of it by the mediation of something which represents it, which is termed its 'form' (*sūrat*) or 'mental concept' (*maḥbūm dhībni*), and the second kind is called 'presentational knowledge' or 'knowledge by presence' (*ilm hudūrī*).

### Conclusion

From what is said we may conclude that despite all Kant's innovations in critique of reason and expressing difficulties of metaphysical knowledge, in his critical philosophy- which is somehow engaged with the issue of "methodology" in the tradition of modern philosophy- actually there remains some sort of duality between subject and object. And if no solution is introduced for the problem of "crisis of reason" within the scope of theoretical knowledge, subject will remain in suspension. Critique of metaphysics will lead to appearance of another, still more powerful and extensive, metaphysics, for example in Hegel's philosophy all dualities of Kant's philosophy are resolved in the concept of spirit (*Geist*). In Islamic philosophy and in particular in Sadrian philosophy, however, such dualism cannot appear at all. For unity of knowing subject and existence has been presumed since beginning, and there is no distance between knowledge and pure existence. In this philosophy, becoming and elevation of knowing subject is, as a matter of fact, the same as becoming in existence. And as said, man's existence is, in fact, a depiction of the whole external existence; and between the two there is established not only correspondence but also a true unity.

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### Endnotes

1. *Critique of Pure Reason*.
2. In this regard a mental form ceases to be material and becomes a universal-a genus or a species, etc. Sadra, therefore, declares absolutely that neither of the external and mental existences can change into each other and thereby moves away from the position of naive realism adopted by Aristotle into a form of idealism with Plotinus. C.f. *al-Asfar*, 1, 3, p. 281.
3. Knowledge as form is discussed in *ibid.*, p. 288; knowledge as relation, p. 290.

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