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پدیدآورنده (ها) : Oumid, Mas'oud

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By: Mas'oud Oumid



Abstract

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The Master of Illumination (*Shaikh al-Ishraq*) and Allamah Tabataba`i, two of the great Islamic philosophers, are considered to belong to one intellectual philosophical school. The philosophical range and discourse of these two philosophers are both of a similar state and atmosphere. Of course this matter is not only specific to the intellectual philosophy of these two thinkers, it also applies to most of the Islamic philosophers in the history of philosophy. From another aspect Sohravardi and Allamah Tabataba`i are considered a part of the superior peak of philosophical thinking.

These two personalities are philosophers who can truly be given the name of founders (*mu`assis*). The situation of philosophical thought in the history of Islamic philosophy, after these two thinkers, underwent significant conversion and undulation, and the latter philosophical thinkers benefited exceedingly from the philosophical thinking trend of these two philosophers,

conversion and undulation, and the latter philosophical thinkers benefited exceedingly from the philosophical thinking trend of these two philosophers, and they established precise foundations. The presentation of the superb, creative methods of these two philosophers was greatly valued and proved to be fruitful for later philosophical thinkers.

This work aims at propounding and comparing certain parts of the philosophy and thought of these two philosophers in the area of epistemology. This is done in order to clarify both the closeness and the distance of their thoughts in epistemology, and to shed light on their epistemic principles.

1. The definition of knowledge

Islamic philosophers considered knowledge (*'ilm*), awareness, and cognition (*ma'rifah*) to be part of self-evident conceptions, and free from a logical genus and differentia. However they did not regard these terms to be needless of a philosophical description, therefore they philosophically and analytically explained them within the notion of knowledge. Sohrevardi in defining knowledge says:

Intellectualizing or knowledge is the presence of the thing itself within the self, free of materiality. Or, in other words, the non-absence of something within the self, free from materiality, and this definition is not considered to be the most complete. The reason for this is that it encompasses the perception of the self, and the perception of others.¹

With regard to this, Allamah Tabataba'i say's:

Knowledge is the acquiring of something free from materiality within another immaterial existence.²

It becomes clear from these definitions that they both include acquired knowledge, the knowledge by presence of the self, and the knowledge by presence of others, with the condition that these others are immaterial. However in Sohrevardi's definition of the knowledge by presence of others also includes material matters, because he used the general word 'thing' (*shai'*). However Allamah's definition of knowledge does not include this part of knowledge by presence, for in his opinion the known must be immaterial, and knowledge cannot pertain to something material.

Another point that must be mentioned is that Sohrevardi believes that the origin of existence and light of lights is the 'agent by agreement' (*fa'il bi al-ridha*). The light of lights (*nur al-anwar*), in relation to the world of purgatory, and the material realm, is also the agent by agreement, and amongst the features of the agent by agreement is that its effects are its being known, and it, in relation to others has knowledge by presence. It can be said then that in the viewpoint of Sohrevardi the material world, in relation to the light of lights, can be known by presence, and at the same time it can be material. The material world is, without an intermediary, present for the light of lights, and there is no veil between them.

Allamah Tabataba'i regards the agent of the Necessary existence to be the agent by self-manifestation. In this kind of agent the known is the very same as effects. However, taking into consideration the aforementioned definition of knowledge, the material effects (*ma'lulaat maadiyah*) and the Necessary existence (*wajib al-wujud*) cannot, within its material state and situation, be known by presence for the Necessary existence without an intermediary. In this state there is nothing else but to say that the form of the simple corporeal world must be known by the presence of the Necessary existence, and therefore we must accept knowledge by presence with an intermediary (*wasitah*).

2. The manner of the existence of knowledge

Islamic philosophers have also attentively reflected on the ontology of perception. In summary, it is that these scholars believe that perception is an immaterial matter. Islamic philosophers have demonstrated a great deal of evidence to prove or confirm the immateriality of some, or all, perceptions. As an example here are some of the proofs that have been mentioned:

1. The possibility of the division of material matters, but not perceptions.
2. Transformation and change occur in material matters, not in perception.
3. The refusal to accept compatibility in material matters, and not in perception.
4. The existence of particulars in material matters, and not in perception.
5. The existence of potentiality, and then materiality in material matters, and not in perception.
6. The existence of separation and disconnection in material matters, and not in perception.
7. The existence of time in material matters, and not in perception.

A part of the endeavors of Islamic philosophers was in increasing the proofs for the immateriality of perception. From here they offered inventive opinions on the issue of proving the immateriality of perception. Of these philosophers Sohrevardi and Allamah Tabataba'i have both endeavored to propound their own inventive ideas. As an example Sohrevardi, by leaning on the principle of 'the non-compatibility of the large within the small', i.e. that the

large is not capable of being in little things in material matters was able to prove the immateriality of imaginal forms. This principle was also used in proving the immateriality of sensual forms (*suwar hissiyah*). Of course the immateriality of imaginal and sensual forms is considered to be a type of ideal immateriality (*tajarrud mithali*).³

Allamah Tabataba'i has accepted this principle and he has also benefited from it in his own philosophical works. Furthermore, similar to Shaikh al-Ishraq, he has made an innovational effort in presenting unique evidence to proving the immateriality of perception. In addition to him mentioning the traditional evidence in proving the immateriality of perception he also invented unique and new ways in solving this issue. He brought these proofs and methods in order to respond to Marxism, which interprets perception as being "tezz" "anti tezz" and "san tezz", or 'the parts of materiality, brain, and perception'. Allamah Tabataba'i held that the assumption of perception is done only by means of the brain, and it being mere material, will bring nothing other than idealism, skepticism, and relativism. All these three are false, and therefore the idea of perception being material is also false. The summary of his argument can be given in the form of an exclusive syllogism (*qiyas istithna'i*):

If perception is material it will hence
lead to idealism, skepticism, and
relativism.

However idealism, skepticism, and relativism are all false and rejected, therefore, perception is not something material it is immaterial.⁴

3. Kinds of knowledge

The universal kinds of knowledge in the opinion of Sohrawardi are considered to be acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence. Acquired, or ideal knowledge is a kind of knowledge that in it the

perceiver obtains within himself the form and idea of the perceived.⁵ The second kind of knowledge is knowledge by presence. Knowledge by presence is the non-ideal perception of something when that something is present, not from the concept and form, but only by the essence and reality of itself in the immaterial knower.⁶

In the viewpoint of Allamah Tabataba'i knowledge is divided into two kinds: acquired knowledge, and knowledge by presence. Acquired knowledge is the presence of the quiddity of the known for the knower, or in other words it is a type of knowledge with which we obtain reality in the form of pictures. Knowledge by presence is the presence of the reality of the known within the knower.⁷

4. Knowledge by presence

A. Proving knowledge by presence.

Sohravardi in numerous stages has proceeded in researching the issue of proving and affirming knowledge by presence. This philosopher believes that every person has knowledge of his essence and self, and nobody's essence is hidden from himself. This kind of knowledge is not a kind of conceptual knowledge, nor is it from mental forms or similitudes. The most important matter in this phase is that from where can we know that this knowledge of the essence is not a conceptual knowledge and form, or in other words that it is not knowledge via an intermediary? Meaning someone might say 'my perception of my essence is the same as the perception of the form and similitude of my essence itself', or the very concept or form of 'me' myself. According to Sohrovardi the answer to this question can be presented as follows: Any perceived form or concept in itself that is taken into the mind is, with respect to itself, in such a way that its truth is applicable to many, or using its technical term it is 'universal'. It never, with respect to its essence, denies the entrance of other applicables.

From another aspect, we observe in perceiving our essence and selves that we see the self in such a way that it does not apply to many, and that it is not universal; rather it is personal and individual. The form and concept of 'I' that we perceive has the features of concepts, and is therefore universal. However the perception of the essence and the self does not have such a state. Therefore the human being has a knowledge that is not similitude (*mithali*) and not conceptual (*mafhumī*), which is thus knowledge by presence.⁸

In another proof Shaikh Sohrawardi used the evidence of 'otherness' (*ghairiyyah*), which is perceived by conscience and inner sense between 'my form' and 'I'. He also proves that the knowledge of the self is non-similitude. He believes that there where one finds himself he expresses himself as 'I', and nothing else is found other than 'I'. This matter is indisputable in that the similitude form of 'I' is different than 'I' myself. If the essence of my individual self is myself then my similitude form is something other than myself, and will be the external title of 'him'. Therefore the perception of my similitude form is not 'I', but is considered to be 'him'.⁹

He also believes that that which is self-subsistent and perceives the essence of itself, more generally than it being the self or the intellect, can never be found, by way of matters, added to the self. This is because matters that are extra to something will be regarded as being one of its features. It is certain that when a person perceives himself he considers his features to be extra to his self. Therefore before a person is aware of his features he is aware of his own self, because the awareness of the features of something will always be branching from the knowledge of that thing.¹⁰

Within one of the arguments of Allamah Tabataba'i, roots of which are based on the first proof of Sohrawardi, in proving a special kind of knowledge called knowledge by presence, he holds the opinion that Man's knowledge of his essence and self is individuation (*tashakhus*) itself and is personal, that it cannot be applied to many, or

to many other numerous matters (contrary to mental concepts and forms). From another side we know that individuation is concurrent with existence, and can be obtained through existence. Man, therefore, possesses a kind of knowledge that is from the category of knowledge of existence (the self, *al-nafs*), and not from knowledge of quiddity and mental forms.¹²

B. The criterion of knowledge by presence.

Shaikh al-Ishraq states numerous components for the criterion of knowledge by presence, such as: the appearance (*dhuhur*) to the knower, the encompassment and dominance of the knower over the known, the illuminative relation of the known for the knower, the absence of the veil of materiality between the knower and the known (in regards to human being).¹² In the opinion of Allamah the criterion of knowledge by presence is the actual presence of something for something, and this real presence is achieved in a place where the basis of collective existence is used, and the dimensions and divisions of time and space, which are its characteristics, are not employed. The explanation for this is that it is an existence that does not have an existence in time (*zaman*) and space (*makan*), and is free from dimensions, length, and divisions, which is the norm of difference and absence (known as the immaterial in philosophy). Therefore, existence is coercively not hidden from itself, and that which is essentially joint and connected to it is also not hidden. Existence is capable of perceiving itself and that which is essentially connected to it, and can be conceived by presence. In other words, the criterion of knowledge by presence is that the reality of the known is not veiled or hidden from the reality of the knower, and this will only occur when time and space dimensions and extensions are not applicably involved. There is either real unity between the reality of the knower and known, like the present knowledge of the self of itself, or the known is a branch, and existentially affiliated to the knower, like the self's present knowledge of its effects and conditions.¹³

It can be said here that there exists a mutual nearness between these two philosophers on the issue of the criterion of knowledge by presence, and its occurrence. As an example, the illuminative relation of the known in regards to the knower at the end will conclude to the known being branched out from, and existentially affiliated in relation to the knower. Another example is that a part of the encompassment and dominance of the knower over the known happens when the known benefits from the existential affiliation in relation to the knower. Of course, it is clear that encompassment (*ihatah*) and dominance (*tasallut*) is more general than existential affiliation.

C. Types of knowledge by presence.

By regarding the standards and criteria that Sohrevardi has explained concerning the acquisition and the occurrence of knowledge by presence, he points to the different types of knowledge by presence, which are:

1. Knowledge by presence of the self, or 'I', because the human being is not veiled from himself.
2. Knowledge by presence of the self (*nafs*) in relation to its faculties, which are under the illuminative control of the self, and the faculties of the self in regards to the self has an illuminative relation (*idhafah ishraqiyah*).
3. Knowledge by presence of the body. Shaikh al-Ishraq considers the knowledge of the corporeal body to be knowledge by presence, of the self. This is because the self has control over the body, and is its planner.
4. Knowledge by presence of ideal forms, information, or knowledgeable forms.
5. Knowledge by presence of cause and effect.

6. Knowledge by presence of immaterial matters between themselves. Absolute immaterial beings, that are better than human beings in regards to their ontological rank, have knowledge by presence of their Creator, may His name be exalted, and incorporeal beings superior to themselves.

Suhrawardi believes that the knowledge of the superior immaterial matters (*mujarradaat*) of the lower immaterial matters is considered to be 'illumination', and the knowledge of low immaterial matters towards the high is 'intuition' (*shuhud*). In his opinion the impediment and veil of knowledge is materiality, and this veil does not exist in immateriality. Therefore, any immaterial being has knowledge by presence of all other immaterial beings (longitudinal and latitudinal), even though the low light cannot reach (perceive) the true nature of the high light; however the high superior light shines over the low.¹⁴

According to Allamah Tabataba'i the kinds of knowledge by presence are: the knowledge of any substance of itself; knowledge of things that occur within its existing realm; the self's knowledge of its faculties and instruments with which it performs; knowledge by presence of that which corresponds with our sensual faculties; the originating cause's knowledge of its effect; the effect's knowledge of its originating cause; the knowledge of one of two effects, that have one cause, of the other.¹⁵

The conclusions of the opinions of Allamah on the types of knowledge by presence are that: firstly, knowledge of the body is not by presence, rather he considers it to be acquired; and secondly, he added knowledge by presence of effects in regards to the originating cause to knowledge by presence.

D. The strong and weak levels of knowledge by presence.

Suhrawardi believes that knowledge by presence has strong and weak levels, and any self and immaterial being attains, according to its

extent of immateriality, perception of its essence and that, which is hidden from it. The perception of the essence (*dhat*) and that which is hidden from it (more general than the different aspects of essence or ontological existence) possesses strong and weak levels, and if the amount of the existing immaterial being's perception increases by any degree, its present awareness will also increase.¹⁶

With regard to the opinions of Allamah Tabataba'i it appears that no mention of the issue of the strength and weakness of knowledge by presence was made.

5. Acquired knowledge

A. The divisions of conceptions and their characteristics.

A part of acquired perception pertains to the conceptual intellectual perception, and one of the intellectual and scholastic efforts of Sohrawardi was the explanation of the divisions and characteristics of conceptual intellectual perception. Shaikh al-Ishraq points to a specific division in the issue of conceptual intellectual perception. He states in his book '*Talwihat*' (Intimations): "Things that are extra to quiddity, and are added to it, are either: both mental and objective; or only mental". In another place he writes: "considerations (*'itibaraat*) are either objective or mental".¹⁷

In '*Hikmat al-Ishraq*' (The Philosophy of Illumination) in the divisions of the conceptual intellectual perception he believes that: "Predicates and attributes are both divided into two parts: objective attributes and mental attributes."¹⁸ Sohrawardi considers mental considerations and mental attributes to be 'secondary intelligibles' (*ma'qulaat thany*).¹⁹

In the opinion of Sohrawardi objective attributes are predicates that, in addition to having an external existence, have a form in the intellect, like being black or white, or having movement. As for mental

attributes, they are attributes that do not have an external existence other than their existence in the mind, like contingency.²⁰ The philosopher mentioned in his various works the numerous features of mental considerations and secondary intelligibles that can be regarded as the criteria of diversity between these kinds of intelligibles and objective intelligibles or attributes. These specifications, despite the fact that they can be related or correlative to each other, are however explained here independently:

1. are only in the mind, additional to quiddity, and are added to it.²¹
2. do not have limits other than objective realities that result from them.²²
3. do not have objective realities in external existence.²³
4. are things that in their occurrence and external existence necessitate the repetition of their specie.²⁴
5. are conceptual, intellectual considerations, which are more general than other concepts.²⁵
6. are capable of predicating numerous things.²⁶
7. are only in the mind.²⁷
8. do not have an independent external existence.²⁸
9. are not parts of objective quiddity.²⁹
10. cannot be pointed to by senses.³⁰
11. are any attribute whose separation from its subject is impossible, upon consideration (*'itibari*), meaning that it is not possible for the subject of these attributes to exist without the attributes.³¹

It is certain that the qualities and characteristics of objective concepts or objective attributes will be contrary to the characteristics mentioned above. In order to clarify the viewpoint of Sohrevardi on the issue of the qualities of mental conceptions, these characteristics, in the case of a particular attribute or consideration, i.e. possibility, have been taken into consideration and will now be elaborated:

1. The predicate, depicted by possibility, or possible existence, is acquired in the mind from the analysis of quiddity (*mahiyyah*), and is additional to the concept of quiddity, and added to it. If we take into consideration a particular quiddity, like a human being, we will reach, from analyzing it, to the non-necessity of its existence or non-existence, which is equal to the depiction of possibility. This depiction is not additional to the essence (*dhat*) of the external quiddity, rather, it is additional to the quiddity in the mind, and added to it, like when we say: human being is a possible existence.
2. The depiction of possibility does not have a genus (*jins*) and differentia (*fasl*), and its content is its own external and objective subject. 'Non-necessity' is a quality that is a depiction of the external being itself, caused by it, and, as a definition and not a term, is possible.
3. In lieu of the concept of possibility (*imkan*) the essence of the appointed external being, such as 'what is the opposite to the concept of human being', 'whiteness', etc. does not exist.
4. The concept of 'possibility' is such that if for the objective becoming of it is regarded, in the form of an externally appointed essence and objectively appointed depiction; it will result in the infinite regress of these objective qualities. They must also eventuate into consecutive infinite realities, meaning that if the possibility of appointed depiction and existence is both in one external thing - a depiction that is beside the being and additional to it - then the depiction itself will be one of the existing quiddities of the world, and

it can hence be asked, concerning this existing quiddity, about its necessity, possibility, and impossibility (the three matters). This existing quiddity will therefore certainly be possible. Now, because the supposition is that possibility is an objective depiction it must be accepted that this second possibility is one of the existing quiddities, and is certainly a possible existence (*mumkin al-wujud*). We now come to the third possibility, and another objective existence and possibility must be assumed, and this state must be repeated consecutively. Therefore the proposition of the occurrence of possibility necessitates the consecutive infinite repetition of the realities of its kind, i.e. possibility.

5. The universality and encompassment of possibility is more general than concepts like human being, tree, and so forth. Possibility is a concept that includes human being, tree, mountain, rock, etc., however a concept like human being only includes individuals like Hasan, Hussein and others of the same kind. A point should be mentioned here, and that is, that even though at the end generality, universality, and encompassment of both the concepts of possibility and human being tends, in potency, towards infinity, however if the 'actual' generality of these two concepts are compared to each other and the aim is the existing individuals of one of these concepts it can be said that the generality of the concept of possibility is more. From another side it can be said that possibility is applied upon numerous kinds (*anwaa'*), and then on the numerous individual kinds; however human being is only applied onto one kind, along with its individuals.

6. The concept and predicate of 'possibility' is applied to numerous matters. For example, possibility can be applied to human being, tree, rock and so on. These matters are such that, in regards to their quiddity, they are different and contrary to each other; however they are all, in an equal form, the subject (*mawdhu'*) of the predicate of possibility.

7. The concept of possibility does not have a place other than in the mind because it does not have a specific external existence.

8. 'Possibility' does not have a specific independent external existence. 'Human being' has an independent external existence, however 'possibility' does not have such a characteristic.

9. 'Possibility' does not form any part or section of the existing external quiddity. Color or shape forms a part or section of the objective quiddity, however 'possibility' does not do so.

10. The depiction of 'possibility' cannot be perceived by senses. We relate this depiction to quiddities, but we cannot discover them with our senses because they do not have a sensed external and objective reality.

11. 'Possibility' is a depiction that cannot be separated from its subject, and a quiddity cannot be achieved without the depiction of possibility.

In his numerous works Shaikh al-Ishraq, by analyzing concepts, has mentioned some of the intellectual considerations (*I'tibaraat 'aqli*), and secondary intelligibles (*ma'qoulat thani*). These concepts are: existence, unity, tangibility, reality, possibility, quantity, necessity, finiteness, infinity, quiddity, form, accident, universality, particularity, generality and peculiarity, genus and differentia, substance, simple matters, numbers, additionals, stillness, prime matter, etc.³²

Sohravardi, in his *al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat* (The Paths and the Conversations), propounds numerous opinions concerning these concepts. He then, according to his own points of view already mentioned, gives his belief in which one is the right opinion, also being accordant with his view.

He says:

Intellectual aspects and considerations have created a great deal of confusion in people and have led them astray. Some of them

have regarded these considered concepts, like existence, possibility, unity, etc. as matters that are additional to things, believing they exist in the external world. Another group believe that this set of matters and concepts, with regards to its own concept, are additional to quiddity. But these concepts do not have a form and essence in the external world. There also exists another group of common people who say that these intellectually considered concepts are not additional, neither in the mind nor objectively, to quiddities that are added to these quiddities.

The Shaikh then says that the view of the second group of these people is valid.³³

B. The opinion of Allamah Tabataba'i

In the opinion of Allamah Tabataba'i there must be within the four groups of universal concepts difference and distinction: real, or essential, concepts; philosophical and logical considerations. The features of each of these conceptual perceptions are as follows: ³⁴

a. Real, or essential concepts:

Concepts that exist both in the mind and outside, like the human being and the tree.

b. Philosophical concepts or intelligibles:

1. Its denotation stature is either external, like existence or its real characteristics, or does not exist externally, like non-existence (*'adm*).

2. They are concepts that are predicated onto both the necessary existence, and possible existence, like knowledge, life, etc.
3. They are concepts that are predicated on more than one category, like motion.
4. They are concepts that do not have a logical term (genus and differentia), and is not appointed as a genus for quiddities.

c. Logical concepts:

They are concepts the denotation stature of which is in the mind, like genus, differentia, and syllogism.

d. Concepts of social and scientific consideration:

1. They are the product of the figurative activity of the perceptions, which is the borrowing of a real concept and making use of it in the field of work.
2. They have been borrowed and achieved for scientific and living goals.
3. They do not have logical terms, and demonstrative proof (*burhan*) cannot be applied to them.
4. Contrary to essential concepts they do not have a coinciding external existence.
5. Expressions that are derived from these concepts are not capable of being true or false; rather, in these expressions acceptance (with the securing of the goals)

and rejection of them (with the non-securing of the goals) can be stated.

Some comparative points

1. Both philosophers acknowledge the point that conceptual perceptions and the concepts within the perceiving organ of human beings is varied and different, and it can be said that they can be divided into two levels. But Shaikh al-Ishraq puts all the concepts of the second level into one group, and does not consider any difference or distinction between them. In other words he does not separate between the secondary philosophical and logical intelligibles. Moreover, in the works of Shaikh al-Ishraq no specific kind of perceptions by the name of consideration perceptions has been mentioned. However in the opinion of Allamah the secondary intelligibles have been divided into two kinds: philosophical and logical, and are both different to each other, having their own features. Allamah, in his discussions, has specifically pointed out and paid significant attention to the issue of consideration perceptions (*idrakaat i'tibari*).

2. Some of the characteristics of secondary concepts these two philosophers have mentioned are concordant and compatible, like their generality, the non-existence of external objective notables, that they are not parts of external quiddity, etcetera.

3. Some 'concepts' in the viewpoint of both two philosophers are secondary concepts like existence, necessity, unity, and so forth. However they have different opinions regarding concepts:

The first is that 'movement' in the opinion of Sohrawardi is an objective concept and of the first level; however Allamah considers it to be a 'secondary intelligible'. The second is that some concepts like quantity (*miqdar*), prime matter (*hayula*), and amount ('*adad*) are considered to be secondary concepts by Sohrawardi, but Allamah considers them to be essential (*mahawi*) and real (*haqiqi*). The third is

that of the concept of existence: whilst both philosophers consider it to be a secondary intelligible, Sohrevardi believes that this concept includes the specification that in its occurrence it will necessitate its repetition. Allamah Tabataba'i, at least concerning the issue of existence, does not accept this, and believes that the occurrence of existence is essential, and hence there is no necessitation of the connected occurrence of existences. He says that existence is essentially existent in itself, and not with an existence additional to it; rather, existence is the very existence itself.³⁵

One of the questions propounded by Islamic philosophers is the issue of the parts of propositions (*qadhiyah*). In reality, the question that is put forward here is our acquired knowledge, which is found manifested in the form of a proposition, or propositions, composed of a number of parts. Sohrevardi writes in relation to this issue:

Know that it is the right of every categorical proposition to have a subject, a predicate, and a relation between them, suitable to be true or deniable. Upon considering this relation the proposition becomes a proposition.³⁶

From this base Shaikh al-Ishraq believes that this is a proposition on the condition of it being categorical and positive, and composed of three parts: subject, predicate, and the relation between the subject and the predicate.

It can be said that in the opinion of Sohrevardi, in regards to categorical propositions in their positive state, the proposition is comprised of three parts; subject, predicate, and the judgment (*hukm*), or 'judgment relation'. The concept of the subject and predicate is enough for the mind to be ready to judge, and will also judge the unity of them both in the external. Examples of this are like the literal proposition, in which the stage of the expression of their meanings is

'mental' (e.g. Zaid is standing up), does not having more than three parts. Coinciding with this theory is the idea that the judgment and judgment relation are not two different things; rather they are both the same as each other.³⁷

On the issue of the 'negative' Sohrawardi states: "And the negative is that concept whose negation cuts the copula (*al-rabitah*)".³⁸ In this sentence the Shaikh considers the negative to be the cutter of the copula and its negation. It might be understood that in the negative it necessitates four parts: the conception of the subject, predicate, judgment relation, and the judgment that there is no relation in the outside. In explaining this, the mind, in the negative proposition, needs the concept of the subject and the predicate, and the concept of the relation between the subject and predicate, and the judgment of the non-union relation in reality and the essence of its self. Therefore the real purport of the negative proposition is neither the copula of the negative nor the copulation of the negative, rather it will become the negation of the copula.³⁹ Allamah Tabataba'i has researched and analyzed the issue of the parts of propositions in the two topics of simple and composite 'whether-ness' (*haliyaat basitah wa murakabbah*). In his opinion any acknowledgement or logical proposition whenever it is in the mould of composite 'whether-ness' (meaning a proposition whose predicate is something different to the existence of the subject, for example: Man is knowledgeable) in the positive state is comprised of only three parts which are: the subject, predicate, and judgment. It must be added that the 'judgment relation', meaning the relation of the predicate to the subject, is not part of the proposition, and the need for it in the proposition is only because the judgment, in the aspect to it being a mental action, needs the relation in order to happen, and not in the aspect that the judgment relation is part of the proposition. However in establishing a proposition the presence of a judgment relation (*nisbah hukmiyah*) is a must.

In composite 'whether-nesses', in its negative state, the proposition is only composed of two parts; subject and predicate. The mind does not make judgments in negative propositions, and it

envisions that non-created judgments are like the mind's created judgments in positive propositions. An imaginary relation is made by the name of 'not' which is opposite to the real relation, which is 'is'.

In simple 'whether-nesses' (meaning propositions whose predicate is existent or existence) in its positive state, like the proposition 'Man exists', the proposition is composed of the three parts: subject, predicate, and judgment. In these propositions the judgment relation does not exist, because the relation of an existence is a copula, and there is no meaning that a non-independent existence and copula, which is always based on two sides, is a separation between the thing and its self (its existence) which is in a state of absolute unity, without dissimilarity. Therefore in these propositions there is no necessity for a judgment relation, even as a necessary (not original) part. In negative simple 'whether-ness' propositions the proposition is only composed of two subject and predicate parts, and does not usually have a judgment or a judgment relation.⁴⁰

The position and place of reality and error in perception

In which position and place, or when, do the stages of (acquired) perception in the matter of reality and error have a meaning, and when can perception be depicted as reality or error?

In the opinion of Shaikh al-Ishraq until the time we take in mind an intelligible or intelligibles without a 'judgment' we can never, in this status, confirm or negate something, nor can we say that these concepts are positive or negative. In other words the confirming or negation of the predicate for the subject, and the reality or falsity of our intelligibles (*ma'qoulat*) will be established and will have a meaning when we dwell on the status of 'judgment'. It must then be said that the rightness or wrongness of perceptions is related to the judgments, and not to concepts. It is from judgments that knowledge finds its way to the outside, and it is there that knowledge makes its claim, and this claim can be correspondent or non-correspondent with reality.⁴¹

Allamah Tabataba'i also holds the opinion that the rightness and wrongness of perceptions occur in the stage of judgments, to which we ascribe a certain relation to the outside. In clarifying his opinion he has stated four stages in perception, and the reality and error of perception are considered to be related to the fourth. These are:

1. The natural actions of the sensual organs stage, such as the entering of light rays into the eye and their reflection, and so on. In this stage reality and error is not involved, and it is merely the outcome of the sensual organ and an effect occurring there.
2. The accomplishment of sensual perceptions: the particular perception of physical and geometrical matters, which is the single sensual perception, like the sensual perception of a chair or table.
3. The stage of judgment in the content of sensual perception before the correspondence with the outside, in the meaning that we make a judgment that is merely related to the form of the perception, and not regarding the correspondence or non-correspondence of it with the outside. For example it is said in the content of the sensual perception of a chair that its arms are shorter than its legs.
4. The correspondence of the relation and the judgment with the external. We ascribe the relation in perception that we have acquired to the outside, and we compare our perceptions with reality and admit whether this external relation is achieved or not. Reality and error only occur in this stage.⁴²

6. The type and manner of the occurrence of the parts of acquired perceptions in the human being

Sohravardi's views on the issue of how acquired knowledge and acquired perception is formed and occurs can be explained in an orderly fashion as follows:

A. Sense perception

Shaikh al-Ishraq, in the discussion of sense perception has essentially contemplated on the issue of vision and sight. He has, in the beginning of the theory of the exiting of the ray from the eye, the theory of correspondence (*intibaq*), and the sketching of things in the eye, criticized them and hence propounded his own opinion.⁴³

The summing up of this philosopher's discussion can be explained as follows: Forms that enter into the eye, mirror, and imagination (especially large forms) all have the same status, in the meaning that none of these forms are imprinted in the very eye, mirror, or imagination (by the proof of the non-imprinting of the large within the small). From another angle the Shaikh also believes that these forms are not actualized in the brain, air, etc. Moreover, mirror forms and imagination, according to him, are the frames and objective ideal forms themselves. From here a conclusion must be made that the visual forms are not actualized in the eye, brain, air, and so on, and they, like the mirror and imaginary forms, are nothing but the suspended objective ideal forms. The definition of the term vision (*ibsar*), according to the Shaikh, is: "the present illumination of the self of the faculty of sight, and from this faculty the self can achieve the vision of objective ideal forms". The real seer in the action of seeing is the light of the body (*isfahbad*), or the human self. In the action of seeing, other than the present illumination of the self, which is the main factor of vision, it has necessary conditions in order to be acquired, like encountering things and confrontation, the absence of a veil between the seer and the thing, the existence of light and brightness, etc. Therefore, it can be said that in the opinion of Sohrawardi, vision (*ibsar*) means the seeing of ideal forms (*suwar mithali*), with the readiness and proper laying down of the conditions of vision. This process can also be generalized in regard to other sensual perceptions, saying that in the opinion of Sohrawardi sense perception is the achievement of present perception and witnessing ideal forms in the 'World of Ideas'.⁴⁴ The reason for this is that the other senses of

human beings do not have an essential (*mahawi*) difference with the sight sense.

B. Imaginary perception

Imaginary forms are not imprinted in the imagination, rather these forms, in reality, are the suspended frames and bodies in the 'World of Ideas' (*'alam al-mithal*) which do not include the realm of material bodies. These suspended bodies and objective ideal forms have manifestations, even though they are not in these manifestations. The manifestation of the imaginary forms is the imagination of the human being. In reality, imagination is the mirror of the self (*nafs*), which by its ideal forms, can be witnessed.⁴⁵

Therefore, the imagination of the human being is nothing but the witnessing and present perception of imaginary forms in the World of Ideas. In brief, imaginary perception is the present illumination (*isrhaq hudhuri*) and the mentality of the self (*nafsani al-nafs*) of the faculty of imagination, from which the witnessing of objective ideal forms can be achieved. This point must be added, and that is that the factors of the human being, and with it the imaginal factor, are the causes of the laying down and preparing for the manifestation of ideal forms.

In achieving this kind of perception the Shaikh put forward some proofs, which can be presented in the following manner:

1. We contain very large imaginary forms, like mountains, skies, etc.
2. These imaginary forms do not exceed one of the following states: either they are imprinted in the eye, or corresponded within the material brain, or imprinted in the imagination, which is allocated in the brain (inside the middle of the brain). All these three states are invalid, because they will necessitate the imprinting of the large within the small, which is impossible.

3. These imaginary forms are not in the corporeal and sensual world, because if so all people must be able to perceive and sense these forms: however it is not so.

4. These forms are not absolute nothingness, for they have objective effects, like shape, color, size, and so on. Moreover, they can be perceived; therefore they exist, and are not non-existent.

5. Neither do imaginary forms exist in the world of the intellect (more general than the longitudinal and latitudinal intellects), because the high intellects (*'uqul*) and lights (*anwar*) are free of corporeal features, therefore these forms exist in a special world by the name of "ideas" (*mithal*).⁴⁶

It must be said that this argument on one side clarifies the quality of imaginary perception, and on another affirms the existence of a particular world by the name of 'ideas'. Something else must be added, and that is that this proof can be used in other perceptive senses in such a way that, in the opinion of the Shaikh, seeing and witnessing will be acquired by the 'self', and the form that is in the self cannot be witnessed anywhere else, nor can it exist in the corporeal and natural world.

Sensual forms can only be present within the realm of the "lordly" light (*al-nur al-isfahbadi*).

C. Intellectual perception

In Sohrawardi's opinion intellectual perception can be acquired by dependence on the ideas of light (*muthul nuri*), or the masters of images/idols (*arbab asnam*) and immaterial intellects.

The subject of knowing in intellectual perception is not derived from matters already sensed from which the intellect is

able to disengage (*tajareed*) forms, rather, it is from contemplation of objects of sense and.... is the reason for the readiness of the self for witnessing (*mushahadah*), and present and mental illumination (*ishraq hudhuri wa nafsani*) in regards to the masters of species. The intellectual perception of human beings is acquired with the support of the self (*nafs*) and its present illumination in relation to the perception of the intellect.⁴⁷

However, in the issue of how the shape of acquired knowledge is achieved, two viewpoints can be found in the works of Allamah Tabataba'i:

a. The first viewpoint states that the senses are firstly attached to the body, and thus the soul (*nafs*) is united and joined with the body; therefore, the soul is also united with them (objects of senses), and they are found by knowledge of presence. After this stage, a particular faculty by the name of "imagination" (*khayal*) changes this found presence and the objects of senses into acquired and formed knowledge, and then given to the memory. Again, after this stage, i.e. the shaping of sensual and imaginary forms, the mind, with specific operations like comparing, disengaging, etc. makes universal and intellectual forms.⁴⁸

b. In the second viewpoint the activity of the body, in contact with things and sensed objects, prepares the self (*nafs*) for weak perception by presence in relation to the world of ideas (*'alam al-mithal*) and the world of intellect (*'alam al-'aql*). After this the self, out of urgency and necessity, changes (for theoretical and knowledge activities) this found presence (for theoretical and knowledge activities) into acquired knowledge, and shapes them into sensual, imaginal, and intellectual facts.⁴⁹

In general, in the opinion of Allamah Tabataba`i, the general process of the shaping of acquired knowledge can be divided into three stages:

1. The existence of a series of external factors.
2. The occurrence of specific activities in the nervous system and other systems in the body.
3. The occurrence of a series of spiritual (*ruhi*) and mental (*nafساني*) laws and actions. 50

Comparative reading

As can be seen in the thoughts of Sohrevardi and Allamah Tabataba`i, the viewpoint of Sohrevardi on the issue of the manner of the occurrence of acquired knowledge is concordant with and the same as the second viewpoint of Tabataba`i. Both philosophers say here that acquired knowledge is obtained because of interference from and relations with the worlds of ideas and intellect. In other words, this kind of knowledge - perception, imaginary, intellectual - is the production of the connection of the human self with higher existential worlds, meaning the world of ideas, and the world of intellect. Of course it must be mentioned that first of all, Allamah states, because it is necessary to do so, the proof of the conversion of knowledge by presence to the worlds of ideas and intellect, and to acquired knowledge; however Sohrevardi does not mention this issue. Secondly, Allamah propounded another what is in effect two viewpoints concerning the clarification of the shaping of acquired perceptions; however, Sohrevardi disregards these two issues.

The attentiveness and observance of the self (*nafs*) is the main factor in the shaping of knowledge. With regard to the shaping and occurrence of acquired knowledge, Sohrevardi states that if Man - the human self - does not become aware in an acquired way, then acquired

knowledge will not be obtained. In other words knowledge is not simply the forming of self and mental forms, but is rather the awareness of the self in regards to the forms in the condition of acquiring and actualizing knowledge. The Shaikh writes about this issue:

Sometimes in vision a form is acquired of which, because the seer is deep in thought, he will remain unaware. However, once he comes out of this state of unawareness, and becomes aware of the acquired form, he will witness the form clearly.

Therefore, perception will be acquired only by the awareness and attentiveness of the self.⁵¹ On the basis of such a thought any perceived form, whether it be sensual, imaginary, or intellectual, can be in such a situation, meaning that although at the same time the mental and self's form has been shaped, knowledge has not been acquired, and we need the awareness and attention of the self so knowledge and thought in its exact meaning will be obtained. Therefore the axis of knowledge and thought is the human self itself.

Awareness can be acquired when, first of all, the known is present in the self, and secondly the self is aware and attentive in relation to it.

Allamah Tabataba'i has not mentioned such a condition or supplement concerning the issue of acquired perception.

Notes:

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2. Tabataba'i, Allamah Muhammad Hussein, *Nihayatul Hikmah*. Qum: Islamic Publications Center, 1983, 24.

3. Shirazi, Qutb al-Din Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq. Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1951, 47.
4. Tabataba'i, Allamah Muhammad Hussein, Usul-I falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, Shahid Murtaza Mutahhari. Qum: Islamic Publications Center, 61, footnotes of pages 63,143.
5. Sohrevardi, Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, 2, 15.
6. Ibid, 77-71, 111, 484.
7. Tabataba'i, Allamah Muhammad Hussein, Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, Shahid Murtaza Mutahhari, 97, footnotes of pages 63, 190.
8. Sohrevardi, Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, 2, 70-71, 484.
9. Ibid, 111, 1, 484.
10. Dinani, Ghulam Hussein Ibrahim, Shu'a'i andisheh wa shuhud dar falsafa-ye Sohrevardi. Tehran: Hikmat Pub. 1985, 550-551.
11. Nihayatul Hikmah, 250-260, and: Allamah Muhammad Hussein Tabataba'i, A Collection of Treatises. Islamic Culture Publications Center, 1991, 280.
12. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 485, 488-489. al-Talwihat, 72-73. Volume 3, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 140-152. Shark Hukmat al-Ishraq, 355. Shirazi, Sadr al-Din, al-Asfar al-Arba'ah, Vol. 6, al-Mustafawi, 1368 (solar year), 68, 251. Fana'i, Muhammad, Article: Knowledge by Presence. Islamic thought awareness, Year 3, Numbers 7-10.
13. Usul-I falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 195-198.
14. The same sources mentioned in 13.
15. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 194, 195, 197. Nihayatul Hikmah, 260. Collection of Treatises, 277, 287, 288.
16. Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, 1, al-Talwihat, 72.
17. Ibid., 25.
18. Ibid., 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 71.
19. Ibid., 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 361.
20. Ibid., 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 71.
21. Ibid., 1, al-Talwihat, 21.
22. Ibid., 25.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 364.
25. Ibid., 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 64.
26. Ibid., 64.
27. Ibid., 71.
28. Ibid., 72.

29. Ibid., 30.
30. Vol. 3, Bustan al-Qulub, 358.
31. Dinani, Ghulam Hussein Ibrahimi, Qawa'id kulli falsafi, Vol. 2. Islamic Sciences and Cultures Research Center, Principle 98.
32. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Talwihat, 18-22, 25. al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 363, 364, 369, 370, 413. Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq, 298. Hikmat al-Ishraq (Vol. 2), 64-74, 109-110.
33. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 343.
34. Nihayatul Hikmah, 243, 256-259. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 194, 195, 197.
35. Nihayatul Hikmah, 10.
36. Opera Metaphysica, 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 25.
37. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 202.
38. Hikmat al-Ishraq, 26.
39. Ibid., 204-205.
40. Nihayatul Hikmah, 251-252. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 202-205.
41. Opera Metaphysica, 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 30.
42. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 147-149, 151-162.
43. Opera Metaphysica, 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 99-101. Shu'a'i andisheh wa shuhud dar falsafa-yeSohravardi, 357-358.
44. Opera Metaphysica, 2, 153-211, 216. Misbah Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi, Amuzesh-e falsafeh, vol. 2. Qum: Islamic propagation center, 1365 (solar year), 165.
45. Opera Metaphysica, 2, 212-215.
46. Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq, 470.
47. Shu'a'i andisheh wa shuhud dar falsafa-ye Sohravardi, 631. Abu Rayyan, Muhammad Ali, Mabani falsafeh-ye Ishraq az didgah Sohravardi. Persian translation: Muhammad Ali Shaikh, Beheshti University, 1993.
48. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 199-201. Collection of Treatises, 278-279.
49. Nihayatul Hikmah, 239.
50. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri'alism, 74.
51. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 485.

