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The Paradigmatic Significance of Perception In Mullā Ṣadrā's Philosophy of Being*

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Abstract

Ṣadrā presents the usefulness of the faculties of perception governed by the intellect as the most fitting paradigm for understanding man's being in the world. Perception raises challenging questions which, while peripheral to philosophy proper, have contributed to the debate on knowing and being. Dating back to the Presocratics, this debate came to a head in Islamicate civilization, where perception played a paradigmatic role that also put human civilization at the forefront of the philosophical enterprise. Contemporary historians of thought obscure this role when their interpretations of past traditions are too heavily colored by a positivist conception of perception.

Key words: Islamic philosophy, Hikma, Mulla Sadra, Ibn Sina, Ibn Arabi, Qunawi, perception, Aristotle, Plato, civilization.

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Introduction

Perception raises challenging issues which, while peripheral to discursive philosophy, have contributed to the age-old question of knowing and being. Dating back to the Presocratics,¹ the debate surrounding this question came to a head in the first truly global civilization, the Islamicate, which put man's civilized existence at the forefront of concerns of a new, incomparably more complex philosophical enterprise. Far from just another discipline, philosophy was treasured as a thinking open to being in all its dimensions. It was not viewed exclusively through the prism of mental analysis or honed to questions connected to the empirical manifold of being's appearances, as it widely is today. We should like to gain a better understanding of how the reasoning behind Ṣadrā's² argument from perception helped him calibrate these two poles—to put it rather simplistically—since the same radical positivism that overturns their balance in our era also colors how contemporary historians of thought tend to interpret past explorations of perception. Ṣadrā adduces the utilities of the sensory organs governed by intellect as evidence for a paradigm (*unmūzaj*) he describes as the most fitting for man in the world—literally, “on earth” (*Al-Mabda'*, 204-14; *Mafātīḥ*, 504-20; *Al-Ḥikma*, III.86-99, 319-37; *Al-Shawāhid*, 285-99).³ This distinctly paradigmatic view of perception allows him to approach intellect and the divine purpose of man very much in keeping with his signature contributions to the philosophy of being.

We shall refer constantly to other philosophical figures besides Ṣadrā to help identify the broad implications of this paradigm. The discussion of perception often served as a point of entry to weightier philosophical issues. In fact, compared to Aristotle's *Physics*, the theme of *nafs* (self, soul) was integral to the *Ṭābi'īyyāt*—Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1037 CE) equivalent of the Aristotle's *Physics*, which itself served as a prolegomenon to the series of treatises under the title *Metaphysics*. Ibn Sīnā offers up the soul's change from the potential (material) to actual intellect as a special kind of movement.⁴ But neither he nor Ḥikma⁵ regarded the material world as the primary source of perception, which was causally connected to man instead by way of “spirit” (*rūḥ*). The human intellect happened to be a power of spirit (*quwwa rūḥāniyya*), as Ibn Sīnā put it (*Al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, 299; cf. Qūnawī, *I'jāz*, 30).⁶ Thanks to intellect, perceptions occur according to the ordered levels of the faculties of imagination, estimation, etc. (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.350), which in turn must preserve what Ṣadrā calls the active lordly command and giver of perception (*al-amr al-rabbānī al-darrāk al-fa'āl*)—otherwise in philosophy, the Active Intellect (*'Aql al-fa'āl*) (*Al-Mabda'*, 253)—down to the unity of the human perceiver and the perceived object, as we shall see.

Ontologically, Ṣadrā's conception implies two “worlds” (intelligible and perceptible) patterned on the twofold emergence of a single

existentiation signified by God's command *Kun (Be!)* (*Al-Ḥikma*, I.32; *Tafsīr*, II.153-4). Hence, the same single existentiation that created the world *as a whole* entails a single perceiving *nafs* (self, soul) in one essence for every act of perception, regardless of how many faculties this self possesses. How each self differs from another essentially depends on its "degree of existence," not just mechanically on its multiple attributes, properties, quantity, etc. This is why he describes the movement of the self through voluntary acts, perception, etc., as perfection-by-substance (*ḥaraka fī'l-istikmāl al-jawharī*), based on his theory of motion-in-substance (*al-ḥaraka al-jahariyya*), which went decisively beyond the Peripatetics' immovable constancy of the substance and the positions staked out earlier on by Ibn Sīnā (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.350).

We shall not attempt to cover this exacting area of research from every angle, of course, seeing that it is compounded further by the question of "civilization" as an expression of man's being. It should be noted that the philosophical interest in *'umrān* (civilization) and *madaniyya* (cited existence) contrasted with the "special science" of civilization and society for which academics have crowned Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) the father of social science. This interest may come as a surprise to some, but in the wake of al-Fārābī (d. 951) civilization was approached from the perspective of being.

The average historian of philosophy is unaccustomed to treating the abstract problems of philosophy with the thematic breadth Ṣadrā had in mind. Broadening our framework in this way, however, may allow for a better grasp of the reasoning behind traditional philosophy's less penetrable conceptual intricacies.

Intellect as the paragon of man's being

Despite its straightforwardness, his argument from the purposive utilities (*manāfi'*) of the perceptual faculties has a sweep that makes it anything but simple. These faculties range from the outer and inner senses, including the common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarik*), which gathers sensations into their first unity but which human beings still share with other animals. In at least two books, he caps his argument with the intellect's paramount role in a "paradigm" he finally describes in *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, from which we shall present the key quotation below, as making plain the ranking (*tartīb*) of everything to do with perception that God put in man, including language. According to this paradigm the destiny of perceiving, thinking man is to rise from the world of the flesh inside which he lives to the *plenary life* of the Hereafter.

Although his manner of arguing for a paradigm is too allusive to fall quite within the province of systematic philosophy typical of Ṣadrā, it gives indication of the very purpose of the inquiry into being. After all, it is intellect (not just philosophy as the discipline) that dominates the movement

from potentiality to actuality by opening up the private insularity of man to transcendent being and freeing his mind from its enslavement to the particulars of material being (Cf. *Al-Hikmā*, III.542). From this, however, it does not follow that man has to be denied his bodily existence, Ṣadrā indefatigably argues. One of his most important contributions is to have undermined this self-abnegating conclusion. Intellect raises man above all other forms of terrestrial life because it lies the other faculties. But man also lives as body and soul in a single being. His higher, nobler status is thus conditional upon oneness and unity—expressible as the unity of knower and known, a position defended by Aristotle. That intellect is open to being meant, in short, meant that knowing and being unfolded together for the sake of man and God. Every created being is thus said to exist both for itself *and* for another wherever this unity is exhibited in the unfolding.

This relationality is said to hold true at every level of actualization from potentiality. Ṣadrā argues, for example, that each sensation is an actualization of the intellect (*Al-Hikma*, III.523). Human perception would be impossible if not for the regulation of the outer and inner senses by the intellect in every instance of perception, which is defined as a movement from a potential to some active state. But, as we shall show, there is more to his perception-based paradigm than just perception or cogitation, since actualization also embarked man himself upon the path of “return” to his or her beginning in the divine. Technically, below the summit of the intellect, the common sense operates as the intermediate faculty that first turns the multiplicity of what is sensed about a thing into a single object-perception *in consonance* with the perceiver. That the object-perception has to be consonant with the perceiver even at this primitive level clearly illustrates the extent to which the *beingness* (*mawjūdiyya*) of the perceiver was thought to impinge upon knowledge. There is nothing peculiarly “modern” about this view. At the very least, it suggests that no person can know everything, let alone the unknowable, since it implies—albeit from another angle—that knowledge must somehow also be to the measure of man. This “measure” need not always have to do with the mortal’s capacity or material being, because the reality of Man was viewed archetypally, above all.

Perception (*idrāk*) figures as the first of thirty terms Ṣadrā lists under the rubric of knowledge (*Mafātīḥ*, 131ff). His list ends with intellect (*‘aql*), of which he names six senses ranging from the most basic—said of someone who is reasonable (*‘āqil*) and who grasps the usefulness and harmfulness of actions and worldly things—to that intellect which contemplates the divine knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*) and *meta*-physics (*lit.*, “what lies beyond nature,” *mā ba’d al-ṭabī‘a*) (*Ibid.*, 135-6). In *al-Mabda’ wa’l-ma‘ād*, that most basic kind of intellect just mentioned is where the sensory, imaginative and intellectual faculties are a “party of God’s angels” (their equivalents in theology) created to serve the orderliness of human affairs commensurately with perception (*Al-Mabda’*, 213). Without the

primordial, transcendental source of his being—suggested here by Ṣadrā’s theological reference to “angels”—man can neither foresee the totality of consequences of his actions nor his intellect grasp the realities of things. All the same, perception would be of idle use (*mu’atṭalan*) had God placed in him the highest intellectual attainments and perceptions, by which he perceives the things that conduct to his perfection, without also creating the natural predisposition and desire that impel man to *movement* (*Ibid.*). He describes the powers of movement as “another party of God’s angels.”

Ṣadrā thus subscribes to the view—somewhat differently formulated in *Kalām*—that what is theoretically ascertainable about the reality of a thing has to find some level of completion in the willful *movements* of praxis. However, every movement—e.g., the intellect from potentiality to actuality—introduces division and, therefore, a conflict of opposites between the one and the many. This conflict typifies as much the perceptual faculties as the self’s relation to the *external* world and its interactions with the world’s denizens, the fellow human beings on whom every individual depends for survival. Interiority and exteriority are patterned, one, on the interiority of an intelligible world rooted in the divine ordering or providence (*ināyat Allāh*); and two, on the exteriority of the world of the flesh. Man stands frail in the latter world before the divine bounty, without which he could neither perceive nor act, prompting Ṣadrā rhetorically to ask: Without cognizing the divine ordering “inside” oneself and one’s body, how could one expect to descry the *effects* of God’s creative bounty “outside” of them (*Al-Hikma*, III.93)?

Ṣadrā paradigm from perception

Let us now turn to his argument for paradigm based on the utility of each sense and faculty. He notes that sight enables one to perceive only what is immediately present before the eyes; whereas speech allows human beings to know what lies hidden from the senses (*Al-Mabda’*, 212). All the same, we perceive speech through hearing. Indeed, our dependence on hearing is all the greater for it, given that our ability to understand speech distinguishes us from the animals. Were it not also for the sense of taste, though, we would not be able to “perceive” that something ingested may be *harmful*.

His argument up to this point is two-pronged. He wants to show, first, that the faculties are so uniquely interconnected as to enable man to perceive beyond what is immediately present; and second, that even when taken together as a whole the sensory organs are,

not enough in [the pursuit of] perfection, nor would human life be complete had there not been another perception at the forefront of your brain called the common sense, to which the five outer senses are conducted and in which

they are combined...God distinguished, enhanced and ennobled you by conferring upon you another attribute higher than the whole, this being the intellect through which you perceive the harmfulness of what harms and the usefulness of what avails you, and what is harmful in the future but beneficial in the present.

This is a paradigm for making plain the ranking of what God has put inside you and blessed you with [having] to do with perception, the order of the things of perception in you, including the sensory, imaginative and intellectual faculties, which in reality are a party of God's angels made subservient to the orderliness of your affairs commensurately with perception (Ibid., 212-3).

He would easily be misconstrued as speaking about some higher faculty and nothing else, had knowledge been merely a question of possessing an additional faculty called the intellect. The paradigm would make little sense without a source “higher than the whole.” What really ennobles man is, fundamentally, the identity of the actualized intellect with what is intellected—i.e., the return of all to *oneness* (*Mafātīh*, 518). He makes plain that this identity relation, moreover, so pervades all instances of perception that one is permitted to declare that the intellect is *all* things, if only *potentially* for mortal man. Neither solipsistic nor purely logical, knowledge through man himself (*bi-dhātihī*, essence) and according to what occurs in him belongs to the faculty that combines knowledge of himself with what is other than he. The degrees of attainment it contains are such that the more *actual* the intellectual faculty, the better the acquisition of knowledge and the more assured are its intellections in *existence*, not just in theory. He views all this, once again, in terms of degree of existence. When the intellect remains *potential*, as it must to some degree be in all mortal beings, what it intellects is also potential—i.e., indecisive and tainted by multiplicity. This implies that “so long as the self senses, its perceptions remain sensed things”; imagining (*mutakhayyila*) or estimating (*mutawahhima*) them keeps them imagined or estimative, no more (*Ibid.*). Every perception is a perception in its own right at its own level, for before becoming an intellect *in actu*, the intellectual faculty mixes with corporeal matter through its own bodily faculties and the bodies perceived.

Although most people stay in this station, as he says, the larger purpose is that the corporeal attachments of their potential intellect, which is not free of matter, also serve as “preparation for sanctified, intellectual existence (*al-wujūd al-‘aqlī al-qudsī*) upon the conjunction with the Sanctified Spirit and higher angels, and the separation from the passive faculties’ occupation with effected movement (*al-tahrīk al-infi‘ālī*) and [continually] renewed action (*al-fi‘l al-tajaddudī*)...” (*Ibid.*). But since the sensory organs carry

the taint of multiplicity (theirs and that of a thing's attributes), producing no more than a partial view of a thing, they cannot on their own conduct to the generality that intrinsically belongs to the form (*ṣūra*), which stands for what we need to perceive a thing prior to its matter. Philosophically, generality signifies that the form is above any hint of place, material quantity and other considerations. This being so, the power of sense is useful only insofar as it finds its origin in a higher faculty, thanks to which man comes to understand the "consequences of things" and what is good and harmful for him. Intellect is decisive in the paradigm of man's being in the world because, governing all the faculties, it also governs the life of man into which it has the authority to intervene. But there is more to this governance than just knowing right from wrong. This is not all, but let us see where this thread of thought leads.

According to al-Fārābī, it is in the nature of human beings to strive for the realization of the highest levels of perfection and felicity through association (*bi'l-ijtimā'*) within the spatial boundaries of his citted existence, or *al-madaniyya* (Al-Fārābī, 1408 AH, 32, 69). Nevertheless, it is the Active Intellect which—being to man as the sun is to sight—guides and oversees the actualization of mortal man's intellect from its potential state (*Ibid.*, 32, 35). To illustrate this, al-Fārābī employs the allegory of the City of Virtue (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) governed by the *Malik* (King), who corresponds symbolically to the Active Intellect. But while the Active Intellect is actualized for man in this intelligible polis, not a modern utopia or a reification of society, its articulation extends like the body and its parts, where the body is the locus—not true origin—of its own faculties. Since body is subject to division, Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240) elsewhere countered that as intrinsic to what he called man's "city of his body" (*madīnat badanihi*) as perception was, it must still be given originally as a whole rather than as a multiplicity of senses (Ibn 'Arabī 1911, I.159).

Clearly, perception cannot be separated from the beingness of the perceiver, whose body, soul and perception are one in one respect, multiple in another. The paradigm Ṣadrā speaks of encapsulates the full range of what is possible through the intellect to the measure of man in his oneness.⁷ He does not cast it as a practical platform for the issuance of specific edicts to physical individuals about what is or is not morally beneficial, as obvious as the importance of moral outcomes may be. On the contrary, he elucidates the rationale of his paradigm by reference to man is given through the intelligible order by *'ināya* (divine providence). As "divine ordering," *'ināya* refers to the First Being's knowledge, causativeness (*al-'illiyya*) and approval (*al-riḍā*) (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.43). He says these three elements signify that God, one, knows through Himself what has existence within the most complete order (*al-niẓām al-atamm*) and greatest good; two, causes through Himself the best and what is complete to the greatest possible degree; and third, is satisfied with it. Because *'ināya* stands for God's relation to His

creation by way of His selfsame sanctified essence (*‘ayn dhātihi al-muqaddasa*), it further implies that “above the simple intellect there is neither particular nor whole” (*Kitāb al-asrār*, 68).

The notions of whole and its parts were sometimes used to illustrate level relations, despite their admitted failure to depict the essential causal relationship. Just as God knows things by His essence (not through the instrumentality of any perceptual faculties or appearances), so this divine essence is the Final Cause and goal of their existence (*Al-Mabda’*, 205). Divine self-knowledge manifests itself according to this order as the root of all self-knowledge and, tellingly, in the manner of a mirror reflection upon the spirit (*rūh*) of man.

The active efficacy of the spirit thus mirrors that of the Active Intellect, at which man attains to the highest attainable *source* of knowledge and which compares with the sun that rises upon everything, including the forms generated by the human intellect and other faculties. Like Ibn Sīnā and, notably, Qūnawī (d. 1274), however, Ṣadrā deems it beyond the ken of most people to perceive the realities of things (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.82-3) as they are in themselves. When man unaided falls short in this respect, he can only think *synoptically* about the order of things; the connection between what is higher and lower in that order down to the special properties; the usefulness of movements; the functions of animal organs, plant parts, and other aspects of the elemental world (*Al-Mabda’*, 205). But this is only a knowledge *about* the essentials rather than a beholding of the realities themselves or a presential knowledge (*ḥūdūrī*), the latter which lies beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that, to Ṣadrā, thoughts are the modality (*kayfiyya naḥsāniyya*) that prepares the soul for the intellectual beholding (*li-mushāhada ‘aqliyya*) and the telling (*ḥikāya*) of a thing’s universal reality (*Al-Shawāhid*, 271). Thinking cannot on its own define the purpose of man in his peregrinations.

Concept and scope of perception

Clearly, then, if perception (*idrāk*) was to play the paradigmatic role it did in Ḥikma, it could not simply connote the passive reception of information through the sensory organs even in perfect unison. In Arabic, the word *dark* is likened to *al-wuṣūl ilā al-shay’* (the attaining of a thing), and *idrāk* to *luḥūq* (the reaching of it) (*Lisān*, X.419). Technically, these two derivations of *d-r-k* also mimic *wajada*—to find—which yields *wujūd* (existence). The primary Arabic significations Ṣadrā relies on is meeting (*al-liqā’*) and attaining (*al-wuṣūl*). They allow him to assert that when the intellectual faculty “reaches and obtains the quiddity of the object intellected,” this is the sense in which its perception must be taken (*Al-Ḥikma* I.854). Perceiving a table is a linguistically sound but figurative judgment, because corporeal meeting is not “real” (not to be confused with empirical). Perception is a “real” meeting (*al-liqā’ al-ḥaqīqī*) insofar

as “meeting” is a noetic perception (*al-idrāk al-‘ilmī*) and taking into account the intellect’s union (*ittiḥād*) with what it intellects.

Earlier on, al-Fanārī (d. 1431) revealed the full import of this view when he stated forthrightly that “perceiver” indicated a relation of conjoining (*nisba ijtīmā’iyya*) of things befitting the level and type of joining (Al-Fanārī 2010, 179). In other words, the high point of the perceiver (*al-dārik*) who has “risen” to the highest conjoining is that of perceiver, perception and perceived. This compelled al-Fānārī to add, “Rise to the perceiver who is not outside of you” (*Ibid.*, 182). The higher and more active the perception, the weaker becomes the multiplicity of relations that befall the mortal person, including those of the parts and terms of the syllogism that purports to represent what comes to be attained. This is why man, who lies between God and His creation as the summit of that creation, is enjoined to rise to the level of the giver of perception (*al-darrāk*), his source, rather than to remain at the level of a passive perceiver (*dārik*). This suggests the root level, contends Ṣadrā, where “every perception takes place by way of the unification of the perceiver and the perceived,” and why “and the intellect which perceives all things *is* all things” (*Al-Shawāhid*, 328). While the *darrāk* is not a foreign substance indifferent to the movement of the person, the noetic and existential order of perception occurs as a single existentiation that presages the perception associated with the *darrāk*.

As far as Ḥikma is concerned, the enigma of man is that he should be the selfsame being who knows, speaks, reasons, philosophizes, and articulates his own existence. Interpreting this state of affairs psychologically merely confounds the use of perception in matters of far greater concern in philosophy.

The perceptual and social being of man

By discussing the City of Virtue in the light of the Active Intellect in a philosophical vein, rather than developmentally in the manner of Ibn Khaldūn’s special science, al-Fārābī brought the social and political animal (*al-ḥayawān al-insī wa’l-ḥayawān al-madanī*), whose basic need was to live with others of his species, decisively to the fore (Al-Fārābī 1983, 62). His effort led to interesting philosophical explorations of man’s *natural* ability to speak (Al-Fārābī 1408 AH).

Ṣadrā declared God’s greatest wisdom with the creation of man was to have placed in him the elements for linguistic expression (*al-mawḍū‘āt al-laghawiyya*) (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.535). Man speaks out of a natural desire for collaboration in the conduct of his affairs, which require the power to convey things out of reach of his external senses. While internal to the self thinking paves the way for cooperative activity, without which in turn he could not fulfil his destiny in the world. Language is how man becomes a human being in the world because it gains him access to the intelligible world, *A priori* to the world of the flesh, the intelligible world is thus the

root of the earthly individual and the community (*ijtimā'*) embodied in the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-kāmil*), who elsewhere in the literature stood at the center of creation as God's *other* whom God knows as he is in his reality.

The question of language is too complex to discuss in full here, since it is also tied to the speech of God as the lettered act of the world's existentialization. What is important is that Ṣadrā sees in it the mystery of man played out in his oneness as a single agent in his own right against the ceaseless multiplicities of his terrestrial makeup, social relations, movement, change and time. In order to illustrate the mode of man's knowing and being, therefore, Ṣadrā begins at the bottom with the inchoate *wholeness* of the sound. When emitted from the mouth, sound multiplies into letters that can be put effortlessly and intelligibly together in myriad combinations to complete what is being communicated (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.536, 538). Rarer than the voiced letter and the symbol that are within the power of many to use are those human souls that coincide with the divine world (*al-ʿālam al-ilāhiyya*), whereby God becomes man's hearing, sight, hand and foot, referring to this the highest of stations as the *al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh* (*Ibid.*, III.538).⁸ This is what God's self-manifestation means for man. In support, Ṣadrā invokes the well-known principle that the reality of a thing consists of that existence which is put to order through the reality, its effects and precepts (*Kitāb al-mashā'ir*, 293). By this he means that the reality persists through all its states and phases as the selfsame thing, though it need not be self-identical in every respect, any more than a created being like man could generate himself. Ṣadrā justifies its persistence by recourse to "existence," which he says is the truest of all things (*aḥaqq al-ashyā'*), in that existence possesses the one reality through which every other being possesses a reality. Existence is the reality of every thing said to possess a reality.⁹

In the end, existence persists by way of an intelligible order whereby *'ināya* remains the source of all existing order, this order being the best and most complete (*Al-Mabda'*, 207). Here, he may be echoing Ibn Sīnā's description of *'ināya* as the encompassment of the whole by God's knowledge where the "whole" refers to what is "best" (Goichon, 253). But knowing the realities of things, as God does and as the faculties by themselves do not permit, transcends even the whole defined as that which is greater than the sum of its parts. The concept of wholeness trivializes what is at stake because it cannot capture the exclusive oneness in the divine hidden source that confers uniqueness as well as completeness upon every thing. Only God's knowledge of things and of the best order is complete with none of the deficiency of weak supposition, he says (*Al-Mabda'*, 205). Further, it actualizes things by virtue of the fact that it is always actual and the very reason for their existence (*fi 'liyyan sababan li-wujūd al-ashyā'*).

It is interesting to note Ibn ‘Arabī’s pithy statement, on God’s self-manifestation and the singularity of His existentiation, that God who alone knows His own secret “wanted to see the essences (*a’yānahā*) of His beautiful names, which are without count...Or, if you wish you may say: to see His own essence with a joining that encompasses the thing as a whole, which is the attribute of existence through which His own secret is disclosed to Him” (Ibn ‘Arabī 1980, 48). The “encompassing joining” is that of something with itself, or self-identity in the philosophic not logical sense. By beholding the essences of His names, God manifests what is hidden. Where beholding implies “making manifest” (*iḥhār*), *bāṭin* refers to the unseen root of the thing manifested (*ẓāhir*). What this means is, first, that God manifests His hidden secret, such that by beholding His own essence He also beholds everything. As far as man is concerned, consequently, every such manifestation appears as the root of a thing. It also means, second, that God’s seeing His essence is how each thing is actualized in existence *as-it-is-in-itself*, not as something else. Man knows God and, through the light of the knowledge he receives, is able to see the roots of all existent things only partly through his own faculties as an existent being. Clearly, God does not know Himself as He is in Himself only in respect of His hidden secret, but also as the beginning and end of everything. Everything man sees through the root, as God manifests that thing in His knowledge and completes it through existence, has to return to itself and ultimately to God. Every being thus returns through its manifestation in existence. Unlike God, man is incapable of closing the existential circle implied in this return on his path of self-perfection solely by his own devices.

Consequently, man’s beginning *as a whole being* cannot be generated “internally” from the elements that make up the matter of that whole in the first place, any more than the world *in toto* could begin within the serial time-dimension of its own constituent elements. Creation is existentiated by God through His self-manifestation at that point where His relation with it begins, just not from within serial time or through His absolutely hidden mystery, which would be irrelevant to the creative act. The unique point of a *beginning* requires a special sense of oneness. This is why Ibn ‘Arabī stipulates that existentiation “begins” with the ontological singularity of the triplicity (*tathlīth*) represented by “3,” which was considered the first odd number in place of “1.” The word *fard* happens to refer to both a single individual and an odd number.¹⁰ The articulation of being can be represented algorithmically using triplicity as an explanatory device. Indeed, the triplicity connected with the concept of creation (*mafhūm al-ḥudūth*) enabled Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631), Ṣadrā’s teacher, to meditate long on certain suggestive passages in Ibn Sīnā’s *al-Ilāhiyyāt* concerning the *aysa* and *laysa*, the affirmation and negation of existence, in search of clarification to the question of origination (*ibdā’*) in relation to the Maker

and of that beginning which posits the nature of each thing (Esp. Ibn Sīnā, *al-ilāhiyyāt* n.d., 264-68, and Ibn Sīnā 2013).¹¹

The period between Ibn ‘Arabī and Mīr Dāmād transformed the concept of wisdom into a broader, multidimensional movement at the heart of which was *ṭalab* (request, search), taken in the investigative, personal and social senses indicated so far. This is the breadth of the paradigm Ṣadrā intended in the light of the intellect, man’s most distinctive attribute. Quoting a long passage from the *Pseudo-Theology of Aristotle*, he presents the firmament in the higher world of pure life (*‘ālam al-ḥayāt al-mahḍ*) which, unblemished by death, animates all things below. In his description of the earth as *inhabited*, or *‘āmirah*, which has the same root as *‘umrān* (settlement, social development, culture, civilization), he refers to all naturally living beings (*al-ḥayawānāt*). Man differs from other living beings not simply due to his social and communicative nature, but primarily his conscious ability to settle the earth according to his origin in the intelligible world of “pure life” (*Al-Shawāhid*, 271). No movement is possible without the original finality suggested by “intelligible world,” since even mental acuity cannot alone close the existential circle by which the singular oneness of the divine command to exist (*Be!*) is transmitted to every thing. Without the oneness of divine self-identity nothing the mind objectifies for thought may be said to have either a mental or concrete “beginning.”

Al-Fārābī explained that oneness may refer—among other meanings—to “that special existence by which every existence is distinguished from another” (Al-Fārābī 1408 AH, 44-5). Indeed, this origin of distinction was conceivable because, as Ṣadrā and his commentators make clear, the Real Existent was said to be Existence itself (*al-mawjūd al-ḥaqīqī huwa al-wujūd*). But for the inherent oneness of the divine reality of existence, which acts as the sun, any talk about a person or community of structured relations presumably would be unintelligible. For, only when man basks in the light of oneness that permeates him, by way of proximity to God, can any *thing*—including himself—be said either to begin or consciously to know.

Small wonder that perception, nature and the structural features of their parts held such interest to both philosophy and its travelling companion from Presocratic times, medical thinking. It is only when perception is overlaid with modern anachronisms that it becomes harder to discern the philosophical interest in these questions. Catchall labels like psychology and epistemology, which do justice to neither pre-modern nor contemporary thought, tend to pre-empt our comprehension of philosophical inquiry in the past by throwing the focus on peripheral issues dearer to certain contemporary thinking than to medieval thought. They distort what Ṣadrā has tried to capture with a concept of paradigm that connected *ḥikma* (wisdom) to aspects of beingness (*al-mawjūdiyya*,

existentiality the subject-matter of the First Philosophy) that proved propitious also—beyond philosophy—to the study of society and civilization in the novel way developed by Ibn Khaldūn. Such labels obscure the very origin of modern science.

In any event, philosophy has always linked the principles of politics, a secondary question but one of capital importance to man, to the realization of truth and being. Plato quoted Apollodorus paying homage to Love for being “so divine a poet that he can kindle in the souls of others the poetic fire, for no matter what dull clay we seemed to be before, we are every one of us a poet when we are in love” (Plato, *Symposium* 1989, 196^e). But for the *love* of wisdom (φιλο-σοφία, *philo-sophia*), he would not have been fired up to explore the principles of governance without which man could scarcely realize truth that is the essence of his humanity. That the philosophy which helps establish these principles should be “useful” within the polity was elementary to founding figures like Plato, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, inasmuch as its inquiry into the truths or realities of things was conducive to the realization of wisdom and, therefore, to the welfare of man. In this respect, Ṣadrā proved an unrivalled master at bringing to light the basic bond between knowing and being, an old question that harks back to Parmenides’ inconclusive response to the riddle of the origin of the one and the many.

With what “things” are philosophers concerned?

The purposiveness of perception in Ṣadrā’s paradigm implies a whole range of things connected with the inquiry into beingness. Al-Fārābī writes that man begins by studying the *things* that exist (*al-mawjūdāt*) before moving on to what lies *ba’d al-ṭabī’iyyāt* (i.e., beyond the things that take their natural course without human intervention) and explaining their manner of existing and their principles (Al-Fārābī 1983, 62). The *things* to which he refers are not of idle interest. They are whatever draws awareness, somewhat in the manner of “equipment,” which Heidegger used to illustrate the concept of “care” (Heidegger 2006, 69-71). Heidegger associated serviceability and involvement with things that are “ready-to-hand” (*Zuhandenheit*), as opposed to the merely present-at-hand, because they are oriented toward a specific comportment and concern (*auf bestimmtes Verhalten und Besorgen*), not toward entities, his aim being to illustrate how thought “returns” from the factual appearance of ontic objects back to its origin in the essence (Heidegger 1995, 148).

To be sure, *Falsafa*’s concern with things is far more inquisitive than interest in something the use-value of which suddenly comes into view, but Heidegger supplies at least a semantic clue. Al-Fārābī shows, more specifically, that things *human* (*al-ashyā’ al-insāniyya*) are the concern of philosophy because their realization makes for the felicity of nations and citted peoples both in their first, worldly life and in the Afterlife (Al-Fārābī

1983, 49). They are not mere objects or equipment of any kind. He classifies “things” into the four categories he calls *al-fadā'il al-naẓariyya* (theoretical excellences)—the theoretical, deliberative, moral excellences and the practical arts, the purpose of which is the necessary perfection of man (*Ibid.*, 49, 63). Man’s felicity in this and the next world is to pursue the highest possible state of perfection for any existent being to attain (Al-Fārābī 1408, 74). What remains after excelling in the pursuit of the theoretical sciences is, accordingly, that they be actualized (*bi'l-fi'l*) and *made to exist* in what they bring forth according to what the theoretical sciences determine. *Mawjūd* (existent, what exists, being) has this practical consequence, but its prominence figures only in connection with the idea of the City of Virtue (Al-Fārābī 1985, 56). He traces its etymology in several languages to illustrate how it served to link the information (*al-khabar*) with what was being informed about—in short, “the ascription and what is ascribed, absolutely, without consideration of time” (Al-Fārābī 1990, 111). Just as *mawjūd* links the name with what is named, so wisdom seeks through the *mawjūdāt* (existents) to connect knowledge with its true and most felicitous object. Instead of mere appearances, the object of wisdom is to contemplate what is noblest.

This conception can still be misread as casting the noblest knowledge in the role of a merely “useful” pursuit in the narrow sense of political principles relative to the good life, medicine to the health of an organism or, indeed the multiple anatomical parts to the single “nature” of that organism. Each of these examples displays a dynamic relationship with multiplicity. Ibn ‘Arabī contended that the items of knowledge (*ma'lūmāt*) are what the *outer* and inner sense (i.e., *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*) can perceive in unison (Ibn ‘Arabī 1911, I.45). They act in unison because the perception of a thing has to hold together as a conjunction of the senses, the imagination and representation but not at their respective levels. Sensations find their opposite in concept (*ma'nā*, *lit.*, meaning), to which they are always *outer*. Like Ṣadrā, he invokes the rule that “the thing cannot arise from within itself,” but for a purpose useful to man (Cf. *Ibid.*, I.657). Far from a mere question of practicality, though, the thing’s “usefulness” for man, as far as philosophy is concerned, must be conducive to his felicity in the Afterlife—i.e., at a higher “meeting” point. Ultimately it is God—not the abstractions of the intellectual faculty—who is the *real* teacher of human beings.

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s distinction between the *‘ālam al-ghayb* (the world of everything hidden from the senses) and *‘ālam al-shahāda wa'l-qahr* (the world proper to the senses), all that is manifested by the “secret” (*sirr*) of the divine determining power (*al-iqtidār al-ilāhī*) remains “outside” it, even as His command (*Be!*) is the preponderant factor that creates the world (*Ibid.*, I.79-80). As Qūnawī also explained, this divine command or factor (*amr ilāhī*) conjoins and determines everything without itself, by essence,

being tinged by the world that God commands to be created in the first place. It is not itself assimilated into the exteriority or interiority of anything besides God; it is God who gives existence (*al-Muwjīd*) to whatever forms of His created beings are manifested in the world (*Ibid.*, I.551). No effect can be reduced to its cause. Instead, something similar to the singularity of the preponderant factor of the command imprints itself upon the soul in the form of a knowledge of the realities of things and occurs at several levels of unity. So, even if the common sense imparts unity upon the five sensory organs, the perceptions find their unity only in the theoretical intellect (*al-'aql al-nazarī*) (*Al-Hikma*, III.315).

Whether or not man is capable of knowing the realities of things was a bone of contention because theory, far from having the last word, referred the knowledge back to the theoretical faculty, not the reality. In their thirteenth-century correspondence, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274) focused on something mentioned in Ibn Sīnā's *Ta'liqāt* denying that man could cognize the realities of things (*al-wuqūf 'alā ḥaqā'iq al-ashyā'*), either deductively or inductively, solely by dint of his limited faculty under the aegis of the categories of thought (Ibn Sīnā 2013, 71ff). Ṣadrā quotes a key passage to this effect from *al-Ta'liqāt* (*Al-Hikma*, I.269; cf. Qūnawī 1995, 51-3). To some, Ibn Sīnā's denial appeared inconsistent with what he plainly stated in the *Logic* section of *al-Shifā'*, namely, the *raison d'être* of philosophy (*al-falsafa*) that man be apprised (*yūqaf*) of the realities of things (Ibn Sīnā n.d., *Al-Manṭiq*, IV.12). In *al-Ta'liqāt*, Ibn Sīnā further argued that, accustomed as human beings are to perceiving through their senses, they succumb to the belief that what is not perceived in this way cannot have a reality (Ibn Sīnā 2013, 62, 202). All they can determine through the senses and their deductive and inductive powers is what properties, concomitants and accidents of the object of enquiry are given about things, not what constitutes each reality (*Ibid.*, 62, 71). This cannot, however, yield a plenary knowledge of the thing-as-it-is-in-itself.

The philosophic dimensions of paradigm

Let us distinguish the philosophic concept of paradigm as Ṣadrā understood it from the explanatory device familiar in modern social science. The best-known exponent of the latter understanding of paradigm is Thomas Kuhn. He fashioned it to ends which, while having nothing to do with philosophical inquiry or the "love of wisdom," helped shed light on the development of scientific theories. He assigned paradigms "a status prior to that of shared rules and assumptions" according to which they "guide research by direct modelling" (Kuhn 1970, 47-8).

Scientists...never learn concepts, laws, and theories in the abstract and by themselves. Instead, these intellectual tools

are from the start encountered in a historically and pedagogically prior unit that displays them with and through their applications (Ibid., 46).

His contextual approach led to considerations which, though normally disregarded on logical grounds in the determination of particular truth-values, nevertheless impinged on the formulation of ideas. It also buttressed arguments for the subjectivist view of knowledge, though this outcome is not quite why we shall straightaway rule out the Kuhnian sense of “paradigm” in our discussion of Ṣadrā. His sense happens to fall squarely within epistemology and sociology, not philosophy, leading to anachronisms that truncate the scope of our theme. This is what makes the guidance of Ṣadrā, who stood on the shoulders of so many generations, so compelling. Availing ourselves of his and others’ efforts at self-understanding, which his own presentation of a paradigm also aims to do, should lead to more parsimonious analyses of difficult problems of philosophy. How theories themselves are generated and maintained is an interesting question, but this has nothing to do with the kind of paradigm he presented except in the most peripheral sense. His paradigm is about man opening up to being by grace of what God bestows upon him. This what lends the question of perception its proper significance in philosophy.

Several meanings came to be attached to the concept of *unmūzaj*. Al-Jīlī (d. *circa* 1424), the master of archetypes, explicitly relates perception and the human faculties to *anmūdhaj* (differently spelled in a technical language especially familiar to Qūnawī and the Akbarī tradition) by way of the Perfect Man, who is also usually identified with the Active Intellect. He accounts for *anmūdhaj* in a distinctly personalized style, which is typically Ṣūfī, based on an encounter he had with a “stranger of the East.” In this stranger he sees “a judicatory and wise *anmūdhaj*” that he finds fitting to contemplate for the purpose of appraising himself (*fī mi’yārī*), an individual, against what is higher than individuality (Al-Jīlī 1997, 13). Reflecting upon this stranger of “perfect tongue” enables him to judge his own lot according to norms that issue from the lofty things true of God (*al-ma’ālī*) and to the standard of verification (*‘iyār al-tahqīq*). This path lies open to him only because, in the end, the source of the *unmūzaj* is God for whom the existence of an essence (*dhāt*) is not separate from the knowledge of it (*Ibid.*, 17-8). Here again, the root connection of knowing and being is emphasized.

By *anmūdhaj*, then, he means “the pole of every mystery” and the very reason for the title of his book,¹² he says, because it is imprinted upon all being through God. He describes this imprinting as the identity (*huwiyya*, he-ness as the *other* and distinct from “I-ness”) of the personified (or particularized) *anmūdhaj*. Identity is a substance with two accidents; or alternatively, an essence with two properties. As a substance, it is

knowledge and the faculties, and which of these two gives rise to the other as its root depends on the beholder: either God or man (*Ibid.*, 15). The two properties of identity qua essence, the stranger tells al-Jīlī, are indicated by the “you and me,” such that “our God for me is through you and for you through us” (*Ibid.*, 16). The *anmūdhaj* thus functions to join (*jāmi*‘) and any shortcoming is only because it is merely a name for the attributes of perfection (*Ibid.*, 19). What is higher exists in the lower, and God is in every appearance. For this specific reason, al-Jīlī denies that the knower’s incapacity to perceive the “thing as it is” might be attributed to his cognizance of it through its attributes, because acknowledging this incapacity would already assume a cognizance of the thing’s attributes, such that the very perception of this incapacity was itself a perception (*Ibid.*, 19). The essence survives as the unity in all its attributes.

Qūnawī explains the dynamic connection of speaking, thinking, collaborative man with the end of his perfection along a similar noninductive pattern of reasoning, but in an entirely different context. He explores the onenesses interlaced with the manifold characterizing any form of construction (Qūnawī 1423 AH, 75). The simplest line-formation of persons standing next to each other, for example, has the precept of a form referred to generically as an *ijtimā*‘ (conjunction, society or group). Because *ijtimā*‘ describes only the most rudimentary characteristics that belong to any assembly, he further outlines the “transformation” that conducts to higher intelligible structures according to the active-passive movements of each member within the whole (*al-jumla*). Where one member is comparable to or resembles the other, these movements occur in a comparative mode (*kayfiyya mutashābiha*) toward a mode “commixture” (*kayfiyya mizājiyya*), where the “commixture” of any two realities receives, upon consolidation (*al-istiqrār*), what it prepares for more generally in species forms (*al-ṣuwar al-naw’iyya*) (*Ibid.*, 74). Like a relative syntactic position in a sentence, a “comparative” position indicates that one reality is comparable to another within the cause-and-effect movements of the whole group. But these movements exhibit more than one form of perfection, because while two realities are well capable of realizing together an end of perfection, this narrow end is not their highest. Nor is perfection an abstraction which the members of society may simply generate willy-nilly or for narrowly practical purposes; in Qūnawī’s thinking, that would impose something extraneous because it is rooted in the multiplicity of the contingent world. The precept of the secret of divine ordering (*taswiya ilāhiyya*) has to permeate every form, which indicates the stable element, and everything connected to form. This ordering is what consolidates the group consequent upon the movements of perfection (*Ibid.*, 74-5).

The purpose of our digression is to bring out facets in the reasoning behind the paradigm that are also mirrored in the perfecting of man for Ṣadrā. *Unmūzaj* is usually translated as sample, model, paradigm, copy and

exemplar. Alternative spellings are *anmūdhaj* (used by al-Jīlī) and *anmūdaj* in Farsi, where it originates and is derived from *numūdan* (to show, demonstrate, cause to appear, exhibit; to seem, be like). Interestingly, *namīzaj* means throne or seat, and points to a subtle semantic linkage in Šadrā's use of *unmūzaj* between guiding and exhibiting. At any rate, *unmūzaj* enables him to present the utilities of the senses—in the preparation for man's otherworldly origin and destiny—as *instantiations* or *realizations* of the intellect.

This reasoning is variously illustrated not only imperfectly by universal and particular, but also in the ancient Greek concept of *paradeigma*, which had a semantic range very similar to *unmūzaj*. Plato and, more extensively, Proclus made use of it in discussions about “likeness.” The Maker's patterning of the world according to what is unchangeable connected being with the coming-to-be. But talking about the beginning of the universe also entailed the beginning of thought, as we have indicated. Plato's way out of the obvious confusion afflicting causal arguments for the temporal beginning of the world consists in ascribing both to the reasoned accounting they purport to present and to the coming-to-be a likeness with eternal being. The Maker created the world which, as a whole, has a cause consistent with the paradigm (παράδειγμα) of the unchangeable (Plato 1988, 28c). With the aid of a reasoned accounting (νοήσει μετὰ λόγου), the world thus appears in the likeness (εικόνα) of something unchangeable (*Ibid.*, 29b) and thought (*Ibid.*, 28a). But whereas the Maker created the world *just* (*Ibid.*, 29b), the created pattern is neither just nor perfect by origin (*Ibid.*, 28b).¹³ Creation is the realm of opinion and arbitrariness. Therefore, Timaeus—the main interlocutor in the dialogue—considers it “of the greatest importance” that the beginning of everything (namely, the beginning of the world as a whole and of everything in it) be in keeping with its nature (φύσιν) (*Ibid.*, 29b). The relation between beginning and end in this respect was of equal concern to Šadrā's philosophy of existence, even if the terms of his argument differed.

With “being” foremost on his mind, Timaeus regards the words patterned on the relation between the original model and the likening as kindred to the *things* they purport to expound. When they pertain to what is permanent and everlasting in the original, they too are abiding and indubitable according to their proper natures (*Ibid.*, 29b). But insofar as they express only a likeness, not what is everlasting, they need only be *likely* and true by correspondence. Based on the notion of likeness introduced by Timaeus, being is to coming-to-be as truth is to mere belief, since likeness also implies likelihood in Greek. Likelihoods or probabilities are proffered in the absence of exactitude and consistency, in which case we mortals can do no more than accept the *likely story* (εικότα μῦθον) (*Ibid.*, 29c-d) that, for example, depicts the beginning. Εἰκός means “like truth,” likely or probable, much like opinion. Its sense is not far from εἰκώς (similitude or

an image in a mirror). So, the question arises as to how his account ought to be taken—as myth, poetry or literal explanation? Nor is it certain how effectively man could escape the realm of probabilities to achieve the certainty and everlastingness of truth.

Şadrā's *unmūzaj* calibrates, in incomparably more systematic fashion, the uncertain world of perception to the certain intelligible world upon which it has to be patterned, where the latter is the perceptual world's *causal* origin. The picture becomes especially complicated when one tries to separate the relation of man to his true being from his relation to the permanent being, which relations are distinguished on the basis that every being exists both *for itself* and *for another*. Since no being by itself can generate its own permanent self, man cannot quite escape the relationality of his being and knowing within the world, even though Hikma did not consider relation something that could *exist* in any real sense. Ultimately, God stands alone in His utter hiddenness with “no associate” (*lā sharīk lahu*) beyond His self-manifestation as His Other. Otherwise, all beings are said to be created according to the twofold relational “emergence” of existence from God's self-identical oneness—or alternatively, as Şadrā specifies, in respect of the rational, speaking soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*) according to the precept that governs the mental distinction between two emergences in a single quiddity (*ḥukm tafāwut al-nash'āt fī māhiyya wāḥida*) (Şadrā 2003 or 2004, 276ff, 398).

As far as perception is concerned, his paradigm has to do not with perception per se, but with man and everything that comes to his knowledge and enables him to articulate his existence as a single reality, over and above that pervasive relationality. Mirroring the inclusiveness of this reality, the quest for wisdom is useful to man in a basic, nonutilitarian sense which has to balance, technically speaking, the one against the many.

Hardly coincidental, then, that his writings evince a running dialogue with ancient thought as far back as the Presocratics, whose names recur there repeatedly. One ancient precedent important to Hikma is the controversy, not unconnected to reasoning behind the “paradigm,” concerning whether one or more principles of nature, as Aristotle puts it, best accounts for everything (Aristotle 1968, 1.2.184^b15-25). It preoccupied philosophers and Hippocratic physicians alike.¹⁴ As a problem, it lends itself to abstract analysis into one and many. Aristotle saw no point in searching for a single, motionless principle of Nature (φύσις) for all things; and Ibn Sīnā accepted on principle that it was “fruitless” to think about what existed only in respect of the *oneness* and the *motionlessness* (*al-mawjūd wāḥid ghayr mutaḥarrīk*, ἐν καὶ ἀκίνητον τὸ ὄν) of being, as some Presocratics were taken to mean (Aristotle 1968, 1.2.185^a1-15; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ṭābi'yyāt* n.d., IV.26). A single principle of nature seems useless because it explains nothing in particular or what direct observation confirms. The monist position refuted by both men, for example, failed to

account both for the variety of uses displayed by the body's parts and, in philosophy, for each reality in the grand scheme of things.

Ṣadrā's view of paradigm is admittedly designed to show that true knowledge has to be *useful*, just not exclusively in the "utilitarian" sense where utility becomes the arbiter of every aspect of intellectual realization and human existence. The decisive framing of this difference traces back to al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, for whom the soul moved toward actuality by way of the immaterial things. Although immateriality lay "outside" the soul, it was beyond place and time. The actualization meant here assumes some version of the old rule that every request begins with what is known, since something has always to be pre-given (e.g., the premises), though the nature of what is given can differ widely. One such given may be a perception. Generally speaking, though, Aristotle asserted that "the path of investigation must lie from what is more immediately cognizable and clear to us, to what is clearer and more intimately cognizable in its own nature; for it is not the same thing to be directly accessible to our cognition and to be intrinsically intelligible (Aristotle 1968, I.184^a17-22)." That something of the thing must be posited before that thing can be investigated is true of every inquiry. This is how it begins and its end is foreshadowed. It was only reasonable to Aristotle, therefore, that the most obvious and immediately cognizable things be concrete and particular, not abstract, general or otherwise intelligible. This is chiefly why the universal could never from abstraction lead back to the particular, precisely the barrier that Ibn Sīnā understood man could not cross alone through his mental faculties. The cognitive experience on which these arguments were based, however, offered no more than clues as to the purpose that transcended every particular instance of knowledge of being.

Two worlds, one person

Although as a problem of one and many, the structural features of perception had to be resolved as a singular unity of the perceiver with what is perceived, this unity manifests itself with every perception. Ṣadrā shows that the outer and inner senses require an initial "something in common" (i.e., the common sense) to organize them and to allow the faculties to cooperate and rival each other (*Al-Hikma*, III.523). In order to gather the faculties together in this first unity, the soul too has to be one, incorporeal and not itself the body it oversees as its instrument (*Ibid.*, III.520). These are some of the reasons why he points out that "human being" is said to be one and many, active and potential, universal and particular, etc. (*Ibid.*, I.33). Man is composed of matter, which is receptive to change and therefore quantifiably smaller or bigger, moving or stationary, even if the multiplication of his aspects does not expunge his core singularity. But here, Ṣadrā explains, "one" and "many" refer not to numbers, but to an existent

where “to exist” implies primarily that what exists is one (*Ibid.*, I.33), as we saw earlier.

This sense of existent is but one derivative of the *mawjūdiyya* (being-as-it-is-in-itself) investigated in the divine science (*al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*), from which flow all the principles of being (*Ibid.*, I.33-4). According to that higher science, the one yields only the one, and from there the many can be accounted for only on the basis of the root relation that emerges with the first intellection according to God’s knowledge of Himself as He is in Himself. This is the divine knowledge that patterns the relational nature of everything other than God and, by extension, the paradigm of man in the world. Ṣadrā had to ponder how, in his paradigm, perception was guided back to the dominant command (the source of all knowing and being) that issued from the oneness of divine self-knowledge and which made the self in turn one, as the self must be beyond the manifold of its own attributes and changing phases. In the unfolding of knowing and being, Man stands at the summit of God’s act of existentiation as the point of intersection—or isthmus (*barzakh*)—between two worlds: the divine (*ilāhiyya*) that commands and the created (*kawniyya*) (Qūnawī 2010, 100).

This conception obviously has nothing to do with the mechanics of explanation associated with the thing that passively appears to an observer. Finding his key in the theory of motion-in-substance as to how the selfsame self survives (*biqā’*) every moment of its own shifting (*tabaddul dhātīhi*),¹⁵ Ṣadrā believes that Ibn Sīnā could not solve the problem because the theoretical approach (*naẓar*)—for which the latter is best known—rests on the sensory, imaginative, representational and theoretical arbiter (*ḥākim*) inside man, while carrying on as if the self that possesses these faculties somehow counted among them (*Ibid.*, III.539-40). Theorization alone falls short of the necessary completion according to the commanding factor (*al-amr*) because it is basically a facultative knowledge.

He asserts that the self’s multiplicity is a function of its actions and affections only at the level of the sensory and natural world, which displays “division”; otherwise, the self is conjoined (*mujtami‘a*) as the same self in the oneness and completion (*tamām*) of its faculties (*Ibid.*, III.540) as it shifts its very substance from one phase to another. Given the scope of the quest for wisdom, however, this paradox requires “discipline and efforts”—not just theorization—toward an interior unveiling, secret beholding and existential inspection (*mukāshafāt bāṭina wa mushāhadāt sirriyya wa mu‘āyanāt wujūdiyya*), away from both worldly goals and the vain desires on which they are based (*Ibid.*, III.557). For, although man the thinker is one, he himself has to rely on the very facultative thinking and matter from which he has to free himself. He will always be “kneaded” from two elements, the supersensible *form* of the divine command (*ṣūra ma‘nawiyya amriyya*) and the sensory *matter* of creation (*Ibid.*, I.31). Far from independent of each other, these elements correspond to two dimensions

(*jihatān*) distinguishable by the attachment to or detachment from matter. Man's soul seeks to attach itself to the form of the divine command by detaching itself from the taint of matter (*ta'alluq wa tajarrud*) (*Ibid.*, I.31).

One cannot overestimate the importance of Ṣadrā's careful avoidance either of reducing man to his physiological functions or of representing him as a disembodied abstract being indifferent to his lot in the world instead of what binds two fundamental aspects. Citing the Qur'ān (95.4), he highlights the *structural relation* in the "edifice of two emergences" (*'imārat al-nash'atayn*), according to which the two aspects of wisdom (*fannay al-ḥikma*) come to light: one is theoretical and associated with detachment (from matter); the other pertains to the activity associated with the attachment (*'amaliyya ta'alluqiyya*) to something—as opposed to the immediacy of pure actuality (*fi'liyya*)—and self-creation (*takhalluq*, or self-molding) (*Ibid.*, I.32). They remain two aspects of the same property of wisdom—in fact, like the two scales of a balance. His conception is clearly one of relationality, but the idea is for man to balance two faculties or powers in relation to one another within the same "edifice" (*bi-ḥasab 'imārat al-nash'atayn bi-iṣlāḥ al-quwwatayn*) (*Ibid.*, I.31).

Ṣadrā refers to the Qur'ān to illustrate what he means: "Verily, We have *created* Man with the best constitution" (Q. 95.4) —I have translated *taqwīm* (from *qawwama*, to raise) as "constitution," but in this context it implies proportionality. Given the association of the word *ḥikma* with justice, it is not surprising that he should associate *taqwīm* with the idea of man as the balance (*mīzān*), as he is indeed also described in the Qur'ān. *Mīzān* is used to weigh things according to proportion, and is synonymous with criterion (*mi'yār*), rule (*dābiṭ*) and even principle (*mabda'*). We are clearly dealing with more than just a rational *animal*, the standard definition of man. This "balance" consists of two scales that also symbolize the equity of justice through the restoration of the proper order. In his view, the two aspects of wisdom together represent the *form* of man, where the form of an object is normally what gives shape to the matter out of which the object is made. Here, form it is supersensible and not directly sensed.

Each of these concepts—balance, wisdom and man who is taken as the *exemplar* of the world of divine command (*tirāz 'ālam al-amr*), not just as a physically living being—has two aspects. For example, one aspect is man's matter, which consists of the "opaque and coarse bodies" that he reads into the phrase, "Then We cast him back to the lowest of the low" (Q. 95.5) (*Ibid.*, I.32). Matter is said to predominate among human beings "except those who are faithful," which indicates the goal of theoretical wisdom (*ghāyat al-ḥikma al-nazariyya*). The continuation of the verse, "and who do good works" (Q. 95.6), stands for the goal of *completion* that guides practical wisdom (*tamām al-ḥikma al-'amaliyya*). While the term exemplar (*tirāz*) just above is not equivalent to the paradigm (*unmūzaj*), it allows him to emphasize all the more that the dimensions of man's

“cognizance” of the realities, far from indifferent to people, correspond to the whole of creation of which man is both a part and the balance.

Completing each other, the two aspects show how man is able to articulate the being that is properly his within the scope of a same single, hearing, seeing, sensing human organism as the *living individual*, where nonetheless something given naturally—*ṭabī‘iyya*, *lit.*, naturality—lies at the essence of his manifold (*Ibid.*, III.524). Let us not forget the inherent opposition between the highest attainable knowledge and living within the world. If knowledge is to be a knowledge of true existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*), he states, it must accord with the higher concerns connected with the divine (*shu‘ūnihi al-ilāhiyya*) by way of the science of divine names that God has taught Adam (Q. 2.31), the human prototype. The divine names are the guides to human perfection in the unfolding of knowing and being. He states conclusively, in response to what Ibn Sīnā says in *al-Ta‘līqāt*,

...that philosophy is the perfecting of the human soul through the cognizance of the realities of existents as they are in themselves, and judgment as to their existence verified through [logical] demonstrations—not accepted through conjecture and transmission [based on authority]—by dint of human capacity. Or, if you like, the order of the world is an intellective order (naẓman ‘aqliyyan) to the extent of human aptitude, that imitation with the Maker (August in His mention) may take place (Ibid., I.31).

He describes the last sentence above, which basically retates the task of philosophy as a thinking about beingness, precisely as a rectification (*islāḥ*) to the *measure of man and his capacity*. Knowledge is neither indifferent to man nor an idle pastime even at its most abstract. And just as knowledge implies the three “worlds”—the intellect, the animal soul and nature—so the human soul has three stations (*maqāmāt*): the intellect and the sanctified (*al-quds*), the soul and the imagination, and sensation and nature (*Ibid.*, III.525). “To the measure of man,” therefore, is specifically about how one level of human perception is related to the other, and the whole (*al-jamī‘*) to the station of the intellect, in the unfolding of knowing and being. The intellect comes into association with what is sanctified (*al-quds*) of all taint of multiplicity and specification, corporeality and the particularizing imagination (*khayāliyya juz‘iyya*) of the senses (*Ibid.*, III.525). At this station, the man of the intellect (*al-insān al-‘aqlī*) is spiritual (*rūḥānī*); all his limbs are intellective and belong to him through an existence which is inclusively *one* in essence but *many* in respect of the distinction between concept and reality (*wāḥid al-dhāt kathīr al-ma‘nā wa’l-ḥaqīqa*).

This is unlike the multiple world of the senses that may or may not correspond to the concrete world. The one essence of the soul serves as the principle and beginning (*mabda'*) for the totality of the activities that emanate from the faculties spread out in the body (*Ibid.*, III.526). Likewise the intellective essence (*al-dhāt al-'aqliyya*) which, by virtue of its oneness, gathers all the perfections and concepts (meanings) from all the faculties, both sensory and natural, under a “higher and nobler aspect” that then agrees with their intellective existence. It is the attributes and perfections proper to the intellect that descend to the external matters by way of emanation and existentionation (*al-ifāda wa'l-ijād*), rather than the reverse, but without being affected by them.

This means that the soul need not be free of change and affection before it becomes a “pure intellect,” which suffers neither lack nor anticipated perfection (*Ibid.*, III.526-7). “Before” means that it can subsist at different stages: at a station of sense and nature at one time; at a station of the soul and imagination at another; then at the stage of the intellect and what is intellected together (*Ibid.*, III.527). This general picture prevails as long as the essence remains attached to the natural body. It is when the soul separates from the world of sense and nature that its station belongs to the immaterial intellect (*al-maqām al-'aqlī al-mujarrad*), perfected in both knowledge *and* activity. Short of this, then, it lies at the second station of images and of finality (the Hereafter) (*al-maqām al-thānī al-mithālī al-ukhrawī*) according to the different kinds of ends associated with religious practice, habitus, conditions, etc., regardless of how intellect’s indispensable at every stage.

The completion of knowledge

In his recent book, Khaled El-Rouayheb traces the growing emphasis on *tahqīq* in the understudied later intellectual history of the Ottoman and Maghreb worlds (El-Rouayheb 2017, 4). The term *tahqīq*, which he aptly construes as the verification technique associated with the “science of dialectics” (*ādāb al-baḥth*), stood in opposition to *taqlīd* (following a recognized authority in the absence of first-hand knowledge), just as it did in Iran, with certain variations. Determining truth requires *tahqīq* wherever rational argument takes the lead. However, logical truth-determination is never a yardstick for measuring being, where knowledge has to resolve itself as a knowing-being. Although one should not be too dogmatic about the term’s semantic difference from *tahaqquq* (also derived from *h-q-q*), nevertheless *tahaqquq* signifies a completion of sorts of what the human intellect only imperfectly perceives. Short of divine knowledge, completion here *realizes* something true in its specific career as a mode of being, subject to modulation. Overemphasizing “verification,” whose connection to logic El-Rouayheb documents well, only muddles another line of questioning defended since al-Fārābī whereby man is the agent of truth’s

realization by grace of his own reality, which God knows through His knowledge of Himself.

Besides truth, another meaning of *ḥaqq* is “right.” To acknowledge philosophically the right of man (*ḥaqq al-khalq*), as Ibn ‘Arabī demarcated it in relation to the right of God (Ibn ‘Arabī 1911, I.33), is to concede that the proper task of philosophy, the quest for wisdom, is nothing less than perfection (*istikmāl*) to the measure of man’s abilities. Yet, philosophy teaches neither how to manufacture tools nor build houses. Therefore, that perfection of the soul’s theoretical faculty is an actualization of the Active Intellect, as Ibn Sīnā put it, has wider implications than just for the theoretical faculty, as this paper has sought to show (Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ilāhiyyāt* I.3). In his commentary on *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, Ṣadrā states frankly that the theoretical wisdom he calls a perfection of the mind is somehow “completed” by practical wisdom, though here again we must not misunderstand his meaning (*Sharḥ* 2011, 10-1). While the inquiry into being-as-such (*al-mawjūdiyya*), in the First Philosophy (*al-falsafa al-ūlā*), demands no particular practical outcome, without action neither the human intellect nor the soul can be perfected.¹⁶ This is part-and-parcel of the paradigm. He distinguishes between, first, theoretical knowledge into things the existence of which is not in principle attached to corporeal matters and movement; and second, knowledge into those which are (*Sharḥ*, 11).

To Ibn Sīnā, the practical sciences lead to the perfection of the theoretical faculty as the conceptual and assenting knowledge of things that are of a practical nature, as well as the perfecting of the practical and moral faculty (Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ilāhiyyāt* n.s., I.4). But Ṣadrā stresses that there is no inconsistency in saying that theoretical knowledge can be attached to the *modality* of action, since such an attachment does not imply an attachment to any particular *action* (*‘amal*) (*Sharḥ*, 18). While valuing *‘amal* as the completion (*kamāl*) of the theoretical faculty implicates no particular action, he sees in it a compensating factor for the inherent limitations of man, whose mind cannot afford him a complete view of the full consequences of his own choices.

Conclusion

Consigning perception to “epistemology” or “psychology” and leaving it at that, as many modern scholars do, detracts from its original posing as a question of *paradigmatic* interest to philosophy. It creates the illusion that to know anything, one has only to bracket out the knowing subject in favor of observable objects, or alternatively in Kuhn’s case, to focus on circumstantial evidence for the generation and maintenance of ideas inside the subject. However, neither perspective can do justice to the aims of the medieval and classical philosophical traditions.

Instead of setting out to examine the import of perception for philosophy in all its dimensions, this paper portrays what Ṣadrā saw in the purposiveness of perception: an opportunity to elucidate man as the creature who self-consciously articulates his own being in the world by grace of the higher, intelligible world of his origin. His paradigm for man has to be understood according to the framing of philosophy qua thinking, open to thinking, and which—since al-Fārābī—meant nothing less than the building of civilization (*‘umrān*). Nowhere in Ḥikma is the “objectivity” of knowledge portrayed as inherently indifferent to man nor is knowledge conversely surrendered to the subjective whims.

Notes:

1. Heidegger identified the “origin” of the separation of “being and thinking” in “Western thought” (Heidegger 1998, 88ff), arguing that this is what ushered in the “scientific worldview” of the modern age. However, he completely overlooked that neither this age nor its sciences originate in the westernmost corner of subcontinental Europe, which remained isolated, historically marginal until relatively recently. Islamic civilization covered most of the known world and laid the foundations of nearly every major branch of knowledge we take for granted today, including the algorithmic reasoning we need to run our precious computers.

² Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1635/6 CE)—henceforth Ṣadrā.

³ After his discussion of the divine ordering in the earth’s creation observable “outside the body and the soul,” he writes: “Having learned a sample [*unmūzaj*] of the benefits on earth, now raise your head to the heaven and see and ponder the modality of the heavens’ creation...” (*Al-Ḥikma* 2011, III.99).

⁴ Aristotle divided movement into types above all to prove that the Prime Mover had no magnitude and was indivisible (*Physics*, VIII.10.259^a25-259^b10, 10.287^b).

⁵ *Ḥikma* will refer to the systematic quest for wisdom, which it also means, and include *‘Ilm al-ḥikma* (the science of philosophy), *al-Ḥikma al-ilāhiyya*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, *al-Falsafa al-ūlā*, *al-‘Irfān*, *al-Taṣawwuf*, etc. (cf. Shaker 2017, 10-5, 224).

⁶ Qūnawī recalled it in his magnum opus (*I‘jāz* 1423 AH, 30).

⁷ Inspired by the maxim attributed to Protagoras of Abdera (ca. 490–20 BCE) and first popularized by the *Falāsifa*: “Man measures every thing and is the measure of every thing.”

⁸ Given the semantic roots of the word *takhalluq*, “self-creation” becomes self-molding through the ethics of God (*bi-akhlāq Allāh*).

⁹ Although he frequently uses the physical growth of persons to illustrate the survival of the same person through time, he dismisses it in certain contexts as a false analogy, on the grounds that the organism’s growth has to stop at a certain age, whereas the *philosophical* (*ḥikmī*) sense he “intends” is the converse (*Al-Ḥikma*, III.529).

¹⁰ The standard reference source for “triplicity” is a long passage in Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 115-6. For an English translation, cf. Shaker, 435 and ch. 20.

¹¹. The word *tathlīth* figures in the very first sentence of Mīr Dāmād's *Qabāsāt*, reflecting both the centrality of the concept and the longevity of the problem of "beginning."

¹². "The Perfect Man in the Knowledge of the Ends and Beginnings" (Al-Jīlī 1997, 22).

¹³. Justice figured prominently in Islamic learning tradition, particularly in the wake of the Mu'tazila.

¹⁴. Medicine helped clarify matters relating to causation, the utility of the parts relative to the whole, etc. On aspects of Ṣadrā's views about medicine, see *Al-Mabda'*, 250-6. Abū Bakr b. Zakariyyā Rāzī (d. 925) demonstrated why the activity or function of a body part alone could not explain its movement, the primary source of which was the motor function of the brain, the locus of the imaginative, thinking and memory faculties (cf. Rāzī 1986, 2-8).

¹⁵. In *Al-Hikma*, III.556, he mentions some of the issues involved.

¹⁶. Aristotle asserted that actions (πράξεις) and productions (γενέσεις) were concerned with the *individual* (Aristotle 1924, 981a17), not the universal, through which the particulars cannot be determined. For example, the physician seeks to cure Callias or Socrates, and man only incidentally.

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