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The Position of Sense in Ibn Sina's Epistemology (The Empiricism of Avicenna)*



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Abstract

Philosophers consider sense as a means for true cognition. In spite of the fact that Islamic philosophy are generally regarded as rational philosophy, it does not mean that they do not assume epistemological value for sense. To some of them, including Ibn Sina, sense is extremely important. In the present article, I argue that the role of sense in Ibn Sina's epistemological system is very significant although the I would not consider Ibn Sina as an empiricist in the sense that Hume is in the Western philosophy. Rather, I consider Ibn Sina empiricism similar to the theory of Locke. It is due to the fact that Ibn Sina considers the human mind as a tabula rasa with no actual data at the birth. It is believed that with sense the knowledge begins. In addition, in this study, by taking into the account of both empirical and rational criteria (in Ibn Sina's epistemological system), it is ultimately accentuated that in the most cases, Ibn Sina's tendency is found to be more toward empiricism. In another part of the paper, the role of sense in the realm of the concepts and affirmation (sensory and rational) is explained. It is concluded that sensory conceptions are the outcomes of sense. Other ideas (concepts) are mediated by sense; sensory affirmations immediately come from sense and in rational affirmations, sense plays a role as an introduction. In sum, this is the explanation of Ibn Sina's statement: "Whoever has no sense will have no knowledge"

Keywords: affirmations, Avicenna or Ibn Sina, empiricism, concepts, knowledge, sense, sense perception

** The reason for the selection of the title is to follow Professor Dimitri Gutas who has an article with the same title(see: Dimitri Gutas, *Empiricism of Avicenna*, 2012, orient, vol. 40, p 391- 436)*

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Introduction

In the modern age, epistemology is considered as one of the branches of the philosophy that discusses a number of important issues. Concerning the discussion of knowledge and understanding, there are a number of underlying issues that have been suggested due to the fact that “understanding” is one of the first starting points of philosophy in explaining and interpreting the world. Because human beings perceive and interpret the universe with their perceptions the examination of their knowledge and their value is necessary, and no philosophical argument can be made unless the roots of humans’ knowledge and its values are clarified and grasped. From the modern period onwards, epistemology has been considered one of the important branches of philosophy that discusses the nature and extent of knowledge, the possibility of knowing, the ways of acquiring knowledge, the value of perceptions, as well as the reliability of epistemic claims (Hamlin, 1976: V.3, p8).

Among various topics discussed in terms of epistemology, the division of philosophies and philosophers with rationalist and empiricist conceptions is of high importance (Randal, 1957: Chapter 7). This division is based on the idea that which of the intellects or senses and experiences of human beings is more important in gaining knowledge. This importance has been discussed in various philosophical schools. Some have emphasized the importance of one as having neglected the other, and some have focused on one and not denying the other's role in the acquisition of knowledge. Rationalism and empiricism in general sense, are based on the importance of one's intellect and experience.

The question that is addressed in this paper asks about which of *Ibn Sina's* epistemological thoughts tends to be one of the aforementioned aspects, and it emphasizes the importance and place of sense in his thoughts. In this regard, the researcher seeks to show the importance of sense and sensory experience in *Ibn Sina's* epistemological system. Moreover, it tries to address it as we first express the criteria of empiricism and rationalism, and then we will judge each criterion according to *Ibn Sina's* terms.

First and foremost, it should be said that the concepts of "rationalism" and "empiricism" may function with different meanings in different fields and with different criteria. In fact, rationalism is concerned with at least three areas namely:

- 1- Philosophy, against Empiricism and Sensationalism (Foulquie, 1347H).
- 2- Theology, against "Fideism" (ibid: 188).
- 3- Rationalism in the "Age of Enlightenment"; this term is used to describe the worldviews and approaches of the eighteenth-century enlightenment philosophers. They believed in the ability and competence of reason in all areas of human life, including science, religion, ethics, politics, and so on (Bernard, Williams, p 69-75).

This research focuses on the first application of rationalism in the field of philosophy contrary to empiricism.

Islamic philosophers have been considered as rational thinkers who design and explain issues based on reason, and it is important that in discussions of the knowledge, process, and means of acquiring knowledge of *Ibn Sina*, his tendency to empiricism, as an overlooked idea, should be taken into consideration.

Therefore, it would be possible to sum up these two views (rationalism and empiricism) in Ibn Sina's thoughts.⁵ In this study, we follow this hypothesis and provide evidence to support and confirm it. We first define what we mean by empiricism and rationalism, then we will state the criteria, and then we will judge each one against Ibn Sina's thoughts and notions.

Criteria for Rationalism and Empiricism

1. Having or not having innate perceptions (in terms of conceptions); If we have innate or pre-experience ideas we are rationalists while not having such ideas marks us as empiricists. This was the meaning of rationalism in *Descartes'* thought; He believed in innate perceptions and believed that *God, thought* and *extension* are innate in us (Copleston, 1986, Vol. 4, p. 83 – 84); Against this notion, empiricism denies the innate conceptions that *John Locke* put forth and completely denied the innate perception and considered the soul as a *tabula rasa* that is composed of the experiences rather than any other thing; he regarded experience as the source of all conceptions (Locke, 1978: 26, 28).

According to this criterion, philosophers such as *Plato, Descartes* and *Leibniz* are rationalists, and those like *Aristotle* and all *Prepatetic* philosophers such as *Ibn Sina* and *Ibn Rushd* and others are considered to be empiricists.

2. Knowledge acquisition tools: what are the tools humans can use for the acquisition of knowledge? The (extremist) rationalists believe that the only way to acquire knowledge is through using reason and experience plays no role in the acquisition of knowledge. In contrast, empiricists believe that the sense and sensory experience are the only ways of knowing and gaining knowledge, and discredit non-sensory perception; Accordingly, *Plato* is regarded as a rationalist philosopher (Ajdukiewicz: 2536: 58-59) while *David Hume* is regarded to be an empirical philosopher (Copleston: Chapters 14, 15).

3. The Origin of Affirmation: Empiricists, sensitivists, and positivists believe that all humans' propositions and affirmations are stemming from sense and experience and derive their value and validity from experience; there is also no credible proposition to report the truth, unless it comes back to sense and experience. On the other hand, rationalists believe that we have propositions that do not derive their value and validity from experience and sense, and precede our experience (Foulquei, *ibid*: 135-130). Unlike the previous one that includes both propositions and conceptions, this criterion is about propositions. In this criterion, the conflict is not about 'nothing' and 'whole' but about 'whole' and 'some'.

4. Prior Composite propositions: Modern empiricists have argued that there is an equilibrium between a priori theorem and analytical theorem, and it is impossible for us to have a theorem that gives new information about objective reality, while being a priori. Philosophers who believe that "we have some a priori principles that are not analytic", or in other words humans have some "synthetic a priori principles or propositions", are called Rationalists.

Anyone who absolutely denies "the existence of a priori proposition" is called an empiricist. This criterion appeared after *Kant's* careful discussion of analytic and

synthetic propositions, especially in the later periods, after a priori theorists were heavily challenged by both experimentalists and positivists (Copleston, 1360H).

Therefore, a philosopher could be considered simultaneously rationalist and empiricist based on different criteria. In this regard, we consider *Ibn Sina's* statement in terms of each of the above criteria and examine whether empiricism or rationalism are the most prominent frameworks in his thought.

A) the first criterion in Ibn Sina's phrases

According to this criterion, philosophers who believe in innate perceptions are rationalist. *Descartes* was known, for his contribution to this category, as the father of modern rationalism. What is derived from *Ibn Sina's* phrases is that he denies innate knowledge. This is confirmed by two arguments mentioned below:

1. Rejection of innate knowledge: *Ibn Sina* did not believe in any innate knowledge and he believed that all our knowledge is somehow obtained from sense. One of the statements of *Ibn Sina* on the rejection of innate knowledge is mentioned in the last chapter of *Al-Burhan*. He has extensively elaborated on this idea in that chapter (Ibn Sina, 1956:331).

The explanation is that, in the discussion of the principles of argument (*Burhan*), our knowledge of the basics must be more emphatic than our knowledge of its results, so our knowledge of the basics of the argument must be stronger. Thus, the question that asks about how we know about these principles is posed. Due to the fact that we didn't have them at the beginning of our childhood how can we know them by argument? Having the fact that any argument is based on these principles, and our knowledge of those principles is through argument, then the principles of proof must not be principle, and this is contradiction that exists to the premise. Therefore, what is our knowledge of them and with what means? Did our knowledge of them accompany our creation? (The same view held by rationalists like *Descartes*). If our knowledge of them is innate, because they are principles, their knowledge must be stronger, so how can anyone know about them but be unaware of it? And if we knew at the beginning of creation and then forgot about it, then this question arises that what was the time of knowing and the time of forgetting. *Ibn Sina* argues that we could not say we knew them in our childhood and then we forgot and remembered them when we found perfection after a while.

The reason we were not aware of these principles at first was the lack of conception of the subject and its predicate. However, after we have conceived the concept of subject and its predicate by the senses, we will become aware of them (ibid).

Ibn Sina believes that we have a predisposition for awareness, this predisposition is actualized with the help of external and internal senses. They help soul to preserve partial concepts and meanings. Then the faculty that understands the primary (*awwalyyat*) extract from the analysis as well as the comparison of these meanings and concepts, the essentials and the accidentals. Therefore, he first acquires the simplest concepts then he combines the simple concept and meanings with the thought faculty (*mufakkirah*), and he uses senses and experience.

The perceiver (*mudrek*) of "primary" (*awwalyyat*) does not need anything other than these concepts, but in acknowledging many other principles, we need sense and

experience. Therefore, the senses actualize the potential for awareness and the sensory conceptions are the origins of the other conceptions and acknowledgments (ibid:330). Thus, *Ibn Sina* denies any pre-experience conception (innate perception).

The degrees of intellect: Another example of the rejection of innate knowledge in *Ibn Sina's* thought is his belief in the degrees of intellect. These degrees are: potential intellect (*al-ʿaql hayūlānī*) that is absolutely potential; dispositional or habitual intellect (*al-ʿaql bi-l-maleka*); active intellect (*al-ʿaql bil-fēl*) and intellectus acquisitus (*al-ʿaql bi-l-mostafad*) (Ibn Sina, 1400: 56 - 57; Ibn Sina, 1375H: 67, 68; Ibn Sina, 1363H: 97 - 98; Ibn Sina, 1379: 354)

1. What is important here and reinforces our claim is the first degree, the so-called potential intellect, that is similar to “the predisposition (*isti dād*) of prime matter which in itself has no actual form but is a substrate for every form.” According to this hierarchy, and especially the potential intellect, there is no place left for innate perceptions prior to experience. Because Ibn Sina declares that every kind of knowledge - even primary - is somehow based on sense we have no innate knowledge, according to the degrees of intellect, and there is no actual knowledge in the degree of potential intellect and it is nothing but the preposition for accepting knowledge.

According to the evidence mentioned above, *Ibn Sina* is an empiricist philosopher, because he denies innate knowledge; As Locke, as an empiricist philosopher, insisted on the rejection of innate perceptions similarly.

B) **Second criterion in Ibn Sina's phrases:** According to this criterion, the empiricist is the one who considers sense and sensory experience as the only way of acquiring knowledge, contrary to the fact that the rationalist considers intellect as the only way knowledge acquisition. Accordingly, whether call *Ibn Sina* an empiricist or a rationalist is to fall into the epistemological reductionism. To explain that, it should be considered that, despite the fact he is known as a rationalist philosopher, he has emphasized the importance of experience and sense in his work so the further explanation and discussion would shed light on the issue.

1) Epistemological position of sense in Ibn Sina's view: Aristotle and his followers placed great emphasis on the sense as a recognition tool (Mahdavi, 1976: 75). Unlike *Plato* who does not believe that knowledge is gained from sense (ibid) and does not consider sense to have epistemological value, *Aristotle's* emphasizes on sense as below: "Whoever has no sense will have no knowledge" (Al-Farabi, 1405: 99; Ibn Rushd: 197); this means that he would not have the knowledge comes from the same sense, so sense plays a key role in the epistemology of the peripatetic philosophers, and *Ibn Sina* emphasizes this notion. In his theory of actualization of the human intellect, he emphasizes the importance of sensory experiences and perceptions for knowledge, and states that if potential intellect wants to reach completion, it requires sensory observation and perception. *Ibn Sina's* explanation in the *al-Isharat* of experience and observation (Ibn Sina, 1379: vol. 1: 215) explicitly confirms this idea. According to *Avicenna*, "observations" (Mushahadat) are propositions whose truth is acknowledged by the aim of external senses (Ibid: 214 -

215). In general, for acknowledgment and affirmation of sensory propositions intellect needs senses

Logicians, including *Ibn Sina*, have divided knowledge into concept or ideas (tasawwur) and acknowledgment or affirmation of proposition (tasdiq) (Farabi, 1408:Vol. 1: 266; Ibn Sina, 1405: 9,23; Ibn Sina, 1404: 17). The discussion of the place of sense in epistemology therefore comes up in two areas: the field of concepts and the field of acknowledgment, which we follow in proceeding.

2) The role of Sense in acquiring concepts

From *Ibn Sina's* point of view, sense plays a fundamental role in obtaining concept as it is impossible for humans to have a concept without sense. The role of sense in acquiring these concepts manifests in two ways: direct and indirect; and our concepts are divided in two kinds: a) partial concepts, b) universal concepts (*maqoulat*= *intelligible*). Partial concepts are also divided into three categories: sensory, imaginary, and estimative (Ibn Sina, 1375:51-52).

1) Types of perception;

Ibn Sina has pursued this issue under the heading "Types of Perception"⁶ and he assumes that the conceptual knowledge is of four types:

- 1- **Sensory Perception:** The precise meaning of sensory perception is "the perception of material object which is present to the identifier with its material and material attributes." Due to the fact that they are material with material characteristics, they are categorized as partial.
- 2- **Imaginary Perception:** It is the perception of a material object in which, in spite of the existence of material attributes, such as shape and color, matter is not present. This is different from the previous one because the imaginary concept is conditioned by the absence of matter but the sensory form is conditioned by the presence of matter; Moreover it is also possible to separate some material attributes such as time and place from the imaginary concepts, but this is not possible for the sensory concepts.
- 3- **Estimative Perception:** This is translated as the perception of partial meanings. This perception belongs to an imperceptible thing in which the abstraction of matter is more complete, so besides the absence of matter, there is no material attribute and only the sensory perception features are only partial. Like receiving a special father's love for a particular child.

These three types are partial perceptions.

- 4- **Rational perception:** Perception of the rational universals (Ibn Sina, 1379:Vol. 2:324). In this case though the sense is not directly involved, it indirectly plays a fundamental role.

2) Abstraction and extracting (Tajrid va Intizā)

Another argument that points out Islamic philosophers are not rationalists in general and *Ibn Sina* in particular - on the second criterion - is the issue of abstraction and extracting; A debate without which the topic of Universals or intelligible concepts cannot be explained in *Ibn Sina's* thought. The intelligible concepts are obtained through the abstraction of the sensory forms that implies the role of sense in this category of concepts. *Ibn Sina* in book *Al-burhan* also explains that *Aristotle's* phrase

stating the idea of "one who lacks senses does not even have the knowledge of that sense" expresses how intellect uses sense to acquire its concepts. Likewise, the discussion of abstraction is sufficiently elaborated and explained. As an introduction, he says that beings are of two categories - those that are intelligible in their nature and themselves and those that are tangible in their nature; The first category are creatures that are not material and have no material attributes and can never be tangible, therefore do not require the process of abstraction while the second category is tangible in its essence and existence and requires intellect to make them intelligible (process of abstraction)(Ibn Sina,1956: 221); These beings are first sensually perceived and then the intellect understands them through the act of abstraction. The *Avicenna's* own statement about abstraction is that the sense takes the sensory forms and lends them to the imagination, and they become the subjects of our theoretical reasoning. Intellect finds them with various and opposite attributes such as finding a person with different features (e.g. color, shape, and body composition) that are found in another person different characteristics. Then intellect works on these concepts and separates them. It is as if these contradictory attributes are peeled away and abandoned until they reach a common meaning in which there is no difference between them;(Ibn Sina, 1956: 222 : Ibn Sina,1375H:304) Thus the intellect is active in obtaining intelligible concepts of tangible objects, but its activity is meaningless without sensory perceptions, and its subject matter is sensory concepts; In other words, intellect is like a factory whose raw materials are sensory and the role of these raw materials is to help the system work and produce intelligible forms(p.: 23) To *Ibn Sina*, human inherently use the senses to identify objects(Ibn Sina, 1404: 22).

And more importantly that he emphasizes that because the human soul is weak, it cannot obtain the rational form of objects without the mediation of sensory form.⁵

He states in *Kitab Al-Nafs of Shifa*(Ibn Sina, 1375: 304) and in *Al-Najat*(Ibn Sina, 1362H:372) that one of the ways through which animal faculties -in general- and sense in particular, help the human soul and intellect, is to provide and give detail for it. Then, the intellect abstracts intelligible forms from those details, in a way similar to the way it abstracts them from its matter and its material attributes and interests.

According to the abstraction in *Ibn Sina's* thought, it is important to confirm that sense plays a fundamental role in the construction of human conceptual knowledge stressing the idea that senses are gateways to human knowledge. It can be deduced from *Avicenna's* words that sense in the realm of concepts can be seen as a source. Thus, it can be stated that the knowledge for *Ibn Sina*, in the realm of concepts, is based on sense, and there is no knowledge available to man before sensory perceptions;

B)The role of sense in acquiring affirmations (acknowledgments): Sense is important in obtaining affirmations and plays a major role in this area. The affirmations can be divided into two main categories: sensory affirmations and rational affirmations; Sensory affirmations are those that arise from the senses and are not attained without the existence of senses. These are partial and attribute a predicate to a particular subject; in addition, their subject and predicate are sensory. Like, "This bird is white" that cannot be acknowledged without sense.

Rational affirmations are general affirmations that are not directly obtained from sense but are based on intellect; although they may be based on senses in some cases; for instance the statements like "every metal expands by heat" or "some creatures are possible". The First needs sense in its subject and predicate conceptions, while the second proposition does not even have such dependence on the sense. Following this introduction, we discuss the role of sense in two areas: in rational affirmations and in sensory affirmations.

1- The role of sense in Rational affirmations

In a chapter of *Al-Burhan, Ibn Sina*, after explaining how sense plays a role in achieving intelligible (i.e ideas of reason) discusses what role sense plays in rational affirmations; He believes that sense has played a role in rational affirmations in a variety of ways so that if one has no sense, in addition to the conceptions about that sense, he won't have a part of the affirmations about it (Ibn Sina,1404:140). This is particularly significant in the context of Avicenna's epistemology. According to his view, sense is effective in the acquisition of Intelligible and rational affirmations in four ways as follow: (Ibn Sina,1956: 222)

- 1- Intermediary (*Al- Kain bil- Araz*): This is to say that intellect does not really use sense in the affirmations, but for obtaining those conceptions uses the sense. It implies that when the intellect attains an affirmation, it first conceives the subject and its predicate, then proceeds to affirm it implying that intellect uses these senses in obtaining these conceptions; since if these conceptions were not present the proposition would not be understandable, so for this view that affirmations are sensory-based. For example, the proposition "the sun is clear", the metaphors of this proposition are understood by the senses, but their acknowledgment is grasped by reason, and unless one has a conception of "the sun" and "the light" it will not affirm the proposition, and their conception achieved by the sense. In this vein *Ibn Sina* says (ibid)
- 2- As a partial deduction (syllogism): In a way that sometimes intellect understands the judgment of a genus and doesn't know what species of this genus are under it to know that those species have the same judgment. Here the intellect understands by sense the individuals (instances) of one species, and by that individuals understand the specific form and its quiddity, and find out that it also belongs to the genus who has such judgment. Consequently, it forms a partial deduction and then acquires the judgment of new species and individuals. For example, reason has the judgment that "metal is conductive" and then, by sense-perception realizes some individuals of metal, such as 'mercury', then makes the syllogism: "mercury is a species of metal", "every metal is conductive" so "mercury is also conductive". Therefore, by sense-perception, reason has acquired a new knowledge (ibid:222). As *al-Tusi* has pointed out (At-Tusi, 1361: 377) that his type goes back to the first, except that the first type is the discussion of the essential attributes of the concepts and meanings, while in this type the discussion is an extensional expression means that it is found with a sense of instances of a genus and then the judgment transmit to the whole (or each

individual) of that genus. Of course, secondarily, sensory experience helps to formulate or to develop and restrict conceptually the Components of affirmations(Ibn Sina, 1956: 222-. 223).

- 3- The third mode is Induction: Induction here is different from the term induction in logic (which includes both incomplete and complete); Induction here does not create science, but alarming the mind, and the intellect after attaining the general judgment does not consider the details or instances, while in induction of terms of logic, always it considers the details(At-Tusi, 1361:376 – 377); for its explanation it should be added that, sometimes there may be a self-evident proposition that does not need to be argued, but it may not be present in the mind and one may not understand it correctly and may not be certain about it, but when he understands instances of it by sense, he gets prepared to understand that self-evidently rational judgment. Here the sense is stimulating or preparing the mind(intellect). For example: "Two parallel lines tangent to a circle divides the circle into two semicircles"; Now one might doubt this, but if they draw a circle and two parallel lines tangent to it, he feels that these two parallel lines tangent to the circle are divide it into two semicircles. Therefore, his mind wakes up with a sense and realizes that this is a self-evident proposition(Ibn Sina, 1956: 222-. 223). A similar condition is "the whole is greater than the component" and "the fire is light" and "the earth is heavy"(Tusi, 1361: 377) that was stated previously.
- 4- Through experience: For *Ibn Sina*, experience is, in fact, a mixture of induction and syllogism. It is neither complete induction that gives certainty nor purely syllogism without examining empirical cases. Of course, the result of experiencing is more persuasive than induction, because the experience, unlike induction, gives certain general knowledge(Ibn Sina, 1956: 223). Due to the fact that we find cause through the experience, while we do not find cause in induction. Without sense we cannot make empirical syllogism and cannot arrive at a general conclusion, therefore, reason requires a sense to obtain a general empirical judgment(obid).

In the *Kitab ol-Nafs-e Shifa*, he mentions the way for obtaining empirical premises, in which the intellect, with the help of sense, acquires a new judgment(Ibn Sina,1375:305). This is the same method used in empirical propositions or tested and proven data (*mujarrabat*); Things whose truth is acknowledged by testing repeated experience, through the formation of a syllogism, proves the stated proposition; For instance: “scammony purges”(Ibn Sina,1362: 13; Bahmanyar, 1375: 253). The use of sense in the *mujarrabat* is obvious in such a way that if one does not sense or feel something will not attain such affirmations. *Ibn Sina* has also considered *hadsīyyat* (Data provided by finding the middle term of a syllogism) to be the same as that of the *mujarrabat* and based on sense and experience(Ibn Sina, 1379: Vol. 1:218). *Hadsīyyat* is as dependent on the experience as the *mujarrabat* needs. For example: “the moon gets its light from the sun”.

- 5- To acknowledge through sequential and multiple reports (*tawātur*); This method is mentioned by the *Ibn Sina* in *Kitab ol-Nafs of Shifa*(Ibn Sina, 1375:305). In his opinion *mutawātirāt* are things whose truth is acknowledged through sequentially transmitted and multiple reports about them; As an

example, it could be mentioned that “the existence of cities we have never seen and people from the past”. There are two things valid in *mutawaterrat*: one is the repetition of the witness and the other is the rational decree that refuses the consensus on falsehood; Thus *Motawaterat* like *mujarrabat* are based on sensory experiences. The important point is that *mutawatrrat* are valid in cases that are sensorial (Ibn Sina, 1362: 115; Ibn Sina, 1379:vol. 1: 219; Ibn Sina, 1400:89).

The soul (intellect) in these five ways acquires the principles of perception and affirmations by sense. What is derived from the *Avicenna's* phrases in this discussion is that in rational acknowledgment, sense plays a role, but not the role of an acknowledger, rather it provides conditions for affirmations.

3)The role of sense in sensory affirmations

Sensory affirmations have features such as being partial (Ibn Sina, 1379: Vol. 1:216) that is presented in examples as "this water is cold " or "snow is white", their subject and predicate are both tangible and both felt at the time of the judgment. Of course, *al-Tusi*, in his commentary on *Ibn Sina (ibid)*, has stated that some sensory propositions taken from internal senses, such as the statement of “we have ‘fear’ and ‘anger’”, as well as the ones derived from external senses, are particular. Some other observations are neither taken from external senses nor from internal senses, but the soul, without intermediaries of any tool, is certain of them (ibid). Just similar to the knowledge of itself and its actions. In that the subject and predicate of sensory propositions are tangible is not a question, but the question is “whether the sense in these cases is also the testifier”?. The same question is raised about observations, because observations are like sensible things (Ibid:215; Bahmnyar, 1375:96)².

Although *Ibn Sina's* has an ambiguous statement about the acknowledger of sensory propositions, in the form of internal or external sense, is sense or intellect. In some of his words it is understood that the acknowledger is the sense itself. for example, in defining sensible propositions, *Ibn Sina* says, "They are propositions which are confirmed by sense" (Ibn Sina, 1362:113). Elsewhere, where speaks about *mujarrabat*, saying that it can be obtained by the sense for which both a predicate object and its predicating and its predestination are necessity (Ibn Sina , 1375: 305;1362:372). In this way, the sense has contribution in the acknowledged. Therefore, if there is no sense, then there is no affirmation. *Ibn Sina's* phrase elsewhere was understood that affirmation takes place in different ways and that the affirmative faculties are different; Where he speaks of axioms (foundation theory), he states that It does not matter whether axiom is acknowledged by reason, or by sense or by sequential and multiple reports (*tawātur*), etc; (Ibn Sina ,1956: 63) So the sense is affirmative. Another example is that *Ibn Sina* considers common sense (*hiss-e moshtarak*), one of the internal senses, and the external senses as affirming (Ibn Sina, 1375: 230)

Although one can interpret *Ibn Sina's* above evidence in the shadow of another, and justify that sense is not an affirmative, the least impression, one can have is that in sensory propositions, sense has an important role.

About the primary propositions (*awwalyyāt*), he believes that, after the conception of the subject and the predicate, were conceived by sense or imagination

or in some other ways, the intellect in their affirmation needs nothing rather than the conception of the subject and the predicate. (Ibn Sina, 1362:121; Ibn sina, 1379: vol. 1:213; Bahmanyar, 1375:96) That is, sense is also effective in primary propositions.

In light of the foregoing and the evidence presented, it can be concluded that *Ibn Sina's* thinking is not the second criterion of rationalist thinking, since he has not the only way of acquiring knowledge and believes in the sense and experience of an important and essential role in the acquisition of knowledge; He is not an empiricist because he views experience as one way of acquiring knowledge.

According to the third criterion, he cannot be regarded as an empiricist philosopher, since upon this criterion, experience is the only source of knowledge, while *Ibn Sina* believes that only some of the data to be taken from sense and believes that intellect plays a key role in acknowledging as well as in analyzing and synthesizing ideas and affirmations. Of course, he may be considered as a rationalist by this criterion, in the sense that some of our affirmations do not derive their value and credibility from the sense.

According to the fourth criterion, since *Ibn Sina's* point of view is that the origin of the knowledge and conception of the propositions is sense, one cannot consider him to believe a priori synthetic propositions; So, According to this criterion, he is not a rationalist.

Conclusions

From what has been stated, we conclude that:

1. Although *Ibn Sina* is well-known as a rationalist philosopher, in his epistemological debates and terms one can find expressions in his works that indicate his tendency to experience. At least, it can confirm that the role of sense in the construction of human knowledge is crucial and essential. Sense has a special place in his epistemology and is the basis of human knowledge;
2. In his view, we have no innate or a priori knowledge, and all human knowledge comes back to sense, and the quotation from *Aristotle* that "Whoever has lost a sense has lost knowledge" is also accepted by *Ibn Sina*. Therefore, he cannot be considered among the rationalists like *Plato* and *Descartes* who believe in innate knowledge.
3. According to the rationalism and empiricism criteria, different answers can be given to the thinking of *Ibn Sina*. In the field of concepts, with the rejection of innate knowledge, it tends to be empiricist, and in the domain of affirmations, it tends to be rationalistic. It should be noted, of course, that rationalism and empiricism in the sense of Western thought do not exist in the minds of Muslim philosophers and also in *Ibn Sina*; therefore, it is not possible to think of rationalism or empiricism in absolute terms as a matter of thought. One can therefore present the theory of the "originality of rational experience" about the role of sense and reason in his epistemology.

Notes:

1 The author does not tend to call Ibn Sīnā an empiricist because of the semantic burden that "empiricism" has found in the new philosophy, but in order to keep the cohesion of the paper in which the criteria of empiricism are expressed, this concept has not been so semantically

charged. It is believed that as Folquie has termed “Rationalisme Emmpiriste” or “Empirisme Rationalite”(In france) (see: Folquie, *Metaphysique*, tr. By Mahdavi , Yahya, Tehran, 1347H:p 107), this may be has more acceptability about Ibn Sīnā. According to this view, like empiricism, all our knowledge, direct or indirect, is derived from experience, and on the other, like rationalists, it is certain that some of our data does not come directly from experience (Ibid: 109).

2 In Foulquie's phrase “Rationalisme Emmpiriste” or “Empirisme Rationalite”(In france)

3 Sense only gives the conceptions which are the origins of the affirmation.

4 When he speaks about the types of perception, he means conceptual knowledge and does not include affirmative knowledge or acknowledgment.

5 Of course, the role of active intellect in transferring sensory concepts of tangible objects to the intellect and the creation of sensible forms should not be ignored; active intellect plays a key role in the epistemological and ontological discussions in In Ibn Sīnā's Thought (see: Ibn Sīnā, 1379: vol. 2: 368 - 367; Ibn Sīnā, 1375: 221 - 222; Ibn Sīnā, 1362: 98)

6 Whether there is sense that acknowledge is debatable, and the answer depends on the nature of the affirmation that requires another opportunity.

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