

Part 5: The Material And The Immaterial

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Lesson 41: The Material and the Immaterial

Introduction

Philosophers have propounded preliminary divisions for all existents, among which is the distinction between necessary existence and contingent existence. Considering the fact that this distinction is made with regard to the relation between whatness and existence (necessity and contingency are obtained from the ‘matter’ of the proposition in the form of a ‘simple question’ [e.g., of the form ‘x exists’]), it is more compatible with the doctrine of the fundamentality of whatness.

On the basis of the fundamentality of existence, all existence may be divided into the independent and the relational (rabit), or the self-sufficient (ghani, literally rich) and the poor (faqir). That is, if an existent has absolutely no need of another and, in technical terms, is an ‘existent by itself’ (mawjud bi nafsih), it is self-sufficient and independent, and otherwise it is poor and relational.

It is clear that what is meant by self-sufficiency and independence are absolute self-sufficiency and absolute independence; otherwise, every cause possesses a relative self-sufficiency and independence in relation to its own effect.

It is self-evident that there are poor and relational existents, or contingent existence, which are concomitant with being effects, but that there is a self-sufficient and absolutely independent existent or a Necessary Existence in Itself (bi al-dhat) which is concomitant with the First Cause is established by proof, a proof which was indicated in the discussions on cause and effect, and in the discussions of theology there will be further explanation of this.

Likewise, philosophers have divided the whatnesses of contingent existents into two groups: substance and accident. They have called a whatness that is not in need of a subject in order to become an existent a 'substance,' and that which needs a subject, or in other words, a state or attribute for another existent, is called an 'accident.'

It was previously indicated that it is well known among philosophers that accidental whatnesses, according to induction, possess nine higher genera, and with the addition of substance, this makes ten categories. It seems that the concepts of substance and accident are secondary philosophical intelligibles which are obtained by comparing existents with each other.

For example, when one compares the existence of the states of one's soul (not their whatnesses) with the existence of the soul (not with its whatness) he sees that the occurrence of passive qualities, such as fear, hope, happiness and sadness, etc., depends on the existence of the soul, so that on the assumption of the absence of the existence of the soul, no room remains for their existence.

This is opposed to the existence of the soul, which does not need them and can also occur without them. In view of this comparison, existents are divided into two groups. The first group is called 'accident' and the second group is called 'substance.'

If one equates the concept of substance with 'non-accident,' one can divide all existents into substances and accidents so that the Necessary Existent, Blessed and Exalted, may also be considered an instance of substance, as with some Western philosophers. In this way the above-mentioned division will be a primary division. But Islamic philosophers divide contingent existence into substance and accident. For this reason they do not consider the application of substance to the Necessary Existent in Itself to be correct.

On the other hand, some Western philosophers have expressed some doubts about the existence of substance. For example, Berkeley denied the existence of corporeal substance, and Hume had doubts about the substance of the soul, as well. However, those who accept the existence of objective accidents and have denied the existence of their substances have unwittingly accepted the existence of many sorts of substance in place of one sort of substance. For example, in case the phenomena of the soul are not considered accidents of the soul, they will not need any subject, and in this case each of

them will be a particular substance.

Likewise, if the attributes of bodies are not considered accidents in need of a subject, inevitably they themselves will become corporeal substances. For what is meant by being a substance is nothing more than that the existence of a contingent existence does not need a subject.

Along with these divisions one can consider another general and primary division for all existents, and that is the division between the immaterial (mujarrad) and the material; that is, entified existence is either corporeal and possessing corporeal attributes, in which case it is called material, or it is not of this class and is called 'immaterial.'

This classification is not specific to contingent existence, for one of its classes, the immaterial, includes the Necessary Existent. Likewise, it is not specific to substance or accident, for both the immaterial and the material can be substance or accident. For example, souls and completely immaterial things are non-material substances, and bodies are in the class of material substances, and qualities of the soul are immaterial accidents while sensible qualities are material accidents.

In this Part, we are considering this very classification, and after explaining the concepts of its categories we will state their general characteristics, and then we will set out to explain their sub-categories and the principles of these. In addition, we will also take up the discussion of substance and accident.

The Meaning of 'Immaterial' and 'Material'

The term mujarrad (immaterial) is the passive participle of tajrid meaning 'to be stripped,' and this meaning brings to mind the idea that something which has clothing or a skin is peeled and made naked. But in philosophical terminology this term is used as the opposite of 'material,' and what is meant is an existent which does not have the characteristics of material things, and there is no intention here to indicate that something was previously material and that it was stripped of this state or of anything else and it actually means 'immaterial.'

Hence, in order to understand its exact meaning, the meaning of the term 'material' must first be clarified. Considering that this term is related to 'matter' (maddah), we must explain the meaning of the term 'matter.'

The meaning of maddah (matter) is etymologically 'helper' (madad konandeh) and 'extender' (imtidad dehandeh), and as a scientific term is employed in several senses.

1. Logicians call the quality of the relation between the subjects and predicate of a proposition with regard to reality (necessity, contingency, impossibility) the 'matter' [mode] of the proposition.
2. Also, the propositions which constitute a syllogism, disregarding their form and structure, are called the matter of the syllogism.

3. In physics 'matter' is used for an existent which possesses specific attributes such as mass, attraction and repulsion, friction, etc., and it is used as the opposite of 'force' or 'energy.'

4. In philosophy, 'matter' is used for an existent which is the ground for the appearance of another existent, as soil is the ground for the appearance of plants and animals. Hence, the philosophical meaning of this term comprises the meaning of relation, and it is close to the meaning of 'mayeh' (stuff) in Farsi.

Philosophers call the first stuff of all corporeal existents 'the matter of matters' or 'hayula ula' (prime matter),¹ and there are differences of opinion about its reality. Aristotelians hold that prime matter has no actuality of its own, and its reality is nothing more than potentiality and capacity for corporeal actualities. A discussion of this will come later.

In conclusion, the term 'material' in the terminology of philosophy is used for things related to the matter of the cosmos, and for them to be existents requires a prior matter or stuff, and sometimes it is used in a general sense which includes matter itself. With regard to usage, it is approximately equivalent to corporeal (jismani). The word mujarrad means immaterial and incorporeal, that is, a thing that is neither a body nor an attribute or characteristic of a body.

Characteristics of Corporeal and Immaterial Beings

Body is defined in various ways, the most famous of which are the following:

1. Body is a substance possessing three dimensions (length, width and depth). More precisely, it may be said that it is a substance in which three intersecting lines may be supposed such that the angles formed by the intersection of the three lines are right angles. The expression 'supposed' is added in order to include things like the sphere, for although there are actually no such lines in the sphere, such lines can be supposed in it, as one can bring about such lines by cutting the sphere.

2. It is narrated that the theologians (mutakallimin) defined body as a substance which occupies space, in technical terms shaghil hayyiz (occupier of a domain).

3. In defining it, Shaykh al-Ishraq (Suhrawardi) says: It is a substance which can be the object of sensible ostension.

There have been discussions about these definitions and whether any of them is a logically complete definition (hadd tam mantiqi), but it is not necessary to mention them.

In any case, the clearest characteristic of body is its extension in three dimensions, and this characteristic has various implications, including that bodies are, mentally, infinitely divisible in three directions. Another is that bodies have locations, but not in the sense of spaces independent of bodies by which they are filled, but in the sense that will be explained in the discussion of location.

Third is that such existents are naturally capable of being objects of sensible ostension, for sensible ostension is performed with regard to location, and whatever has a location can be the object of sensible ostension. Finally, corporeal existents possess a fourth dimension which is called 'time,' and the discussion of the reality of time will also be forthcoming.

Corporeality and materiality, in the specific meaning which does not include body and matter themselves, are subordinate to the existence of bodies. In other words, they are things which do not occur independently of bodies. Their most important characteristic is that they, as subjects to body, are divisible.

Therefore, the soul belonging to the body, which in one sense is united with it, is not corporeal, for even though it is subject to the body it is not divisible. On the contrary, attributes and accidents of bodies such as color and shape, which are subject to the body, are divisible. Hence, they are considered corporeal things.

With regard to the characteristics of bodies and corporeality, their opposites can be delineated as the characteristics of immaterial things; that is, immaterial entities cannot be divided, and they have no location in space or time. There is only one sort of immaterial entity to which a spatial or temporal location may be related by accident, and that is the spirit belonging to a body. That is, one can say: the spirit is in the place where the body is, and the time that the body is existent is the same time when its spirit is existent.

However, this possession of a location and possession of a time are really attributes of the body, and as a result of the association and union of the spirit with the body, loosely speaking and metaphorically one also may relate these to the spirit.

It is to be noted that the gnostics ('urafa) and Illuminationist philosophers also proved that there is a third kind of existent which is an intermediary and barzakh² between perfectly immaterial entities and purely material ones. They are called imaginal existents,³ and in the terminology of Sadr al-Muta'allihin and his followers, they are called imaginal and barzakhi immaterial entities, and likewise the term 'imaginal bodies' is sometimes applied to them. Further explanation of this will be given.

¹. The Arabic hayula is derived from the Greek term for matter, hyle. [Tr.]

². In Islamic eschatology, the barzakh, literally isthmus is the phase between death and resurrection. The term is also used for the imaginal world that stands as an isthmus between the physical and the transcendent domains. [Tr.]

³. The term mithal is also used for the Platonic Ideals or Forms. Suhrawardi uses the same term, which literally means 'example' or 'similitude', for that which is seen in visions or dreams. [Tr.]

Lesson 42: What is Location?

Introduction

The discussion of time and space is among the most important problems of philosophy which has always attracted the attention of thinkers and philosophers, and it has always retained its freshness and vivacity, and has never become stale or faded. It has not yet been filed away.

Although geniuses in Eastern and Western philosophy have thought and spoken at length about time and space, and among them the great Eastern philosopher, Ibn Sina has spilled much ink over the details of this subject in the Physics of his Shifa, yet there remains room for profound thinking, research and inquiries in its interstices.

The opinions of philosophers and authorities concerning time and space are so opposed and contrary to one another and include weird ideas to such an extent that few philosophical problems can be compared to it.

For example, on the one hand, time and space are considered to be immaterial substances; while on the other hand, they have been degraded to such an extent that they are considered illusory and imaginary. Kant, the famous German philosopher, considered them to be mental, or in his own terms ‘forms of sensibilities.’ Most philosophers, however, have considered them to be objective accidents.

In this regard, the great Islamic philosopher, Sadr al-Muta’allihin Shirazi has won the race against all of them and has presented a very important and firm view which can be considered the last word on the subject. This view may also be considered a basis for establishing substantial motion, the philosophical explanation of which at the very least is one of the major original innovations of this great philosopher, as will be made clear in future chapters.

In view of the fact that in the previous lesson the occupation of space and time has been discussed as properties of material things, we have seen fit here to present an explanation pertaining to space and time.

The Problem of Space and Time

In all languages there are expressions for space and time, and all people believe that material things are related to space and time, which relations can be stated in various ways: “The sun is in the sky,” “The sea is where fish live,” “The book is on the table,” and so forth. Likewise, it is said: “The honorable Prophet of Islam, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny, was born in the sixth century. During his time, wars took place between Muslims and infidels.” “Yesterday, school

was closed,” and so on.

In general, the common understanding is that all bodies occupy space. Rather, most people generalize this judgment and imagine that there is no existent without a place, as the simple minded imagine that God the Almighty also has a place in the heavens or beyond them, which, of course, is not correct, and this will be discussed further at the appropriate place. The very same line of thought is also applied to time and its relations to things and phenomena.

Naturally, the philosopher who would know and make known the realities of things also must answer this question: “What is the reality of space and time?”, especially since one encounters these concepts in many of the problems of philosophy, such as in the previous lesson where space and time were introduced as properties of material things, and in the discussions of theology we deny that God the Exalted occupies space or time.

The first difficulty which exists with regard to the explanation of the reality of space and time, and turns this explanation into a formidable problem, is that space and time cannot be experienced by the senses and they never fall into the traps of our sensory organs. They are not seen by the eye, nor touched, nor are they perceived by any other sense, although sensible things are related to them such that they are considered to be of the sensible material world.

It is because of precisely this aspect that Kant presented them as mental channels for knowledge of entified phenomena, and not as objective entified things themselves; and another group of thinkers considered them to be illusory and imaginary. On the other hand, a group of philosophers who could not deny their objective existence, and who also could not believe them to be material existents, held that they are immaterial things.

Finally, most philosophers have considered them to be material accidents whose existences are established through the joint effort of the senses and reason. Naturally, each group advanced a reason or reasons for its own view, and criticized the reasons of the others. Sadr al-Muta'allihin affirms the view about space which is attributed to Plato, that is, space is immaterial, although there is room for doubt about the veracity of this attribution to Plato and it needs to be researched further.

It is obvious that this work is no place for a review of all the positions and a criticism of all the relevant reasons. Therefore, we will confine ourselves to a mention of the most famous positions, and an explanation of the view we affirm.

The Difference between ‘Space’ and ‘Spatial Location’ and between ‘Time’ and ‘Temporal Location’

Before discussing the reality of place and time, it is necessary to bear in mind this point, that philosophers differentiate between space or place (makan) and spatial location or where (‘ayn), and

likewise between the concepts of time (zaman) and temporal location or when (mata). The concepts of whereness and whenness are considered to be relative, obtained by relating a thing to a place and time.

In the Aristotelian table of categories they are placed among the seven relative accidental categories, although it seems that basically these kinds of concepts must not be considered whatish concepts or categories. The reason for this becomes clear with regard to the characteristics of the kinds of concepts explained in Lesson Fifteen.

In any case, the Aristotelians believed that both the concept of where and when are independent whatish concepts and specific categories and have no relation to the whatness of time and space. Others have also had no doubt that though these kinds of concepts are brought about in relation to time and space, they are different from the concepts of space and time.

For this reason, one should be careful not to confuse discussions about space and time with those about these relational concepts.

The Reality of Space

Regarding the whatness of space, a few positions have been reported which are quite weak and not worth discussing, and no famous philosophers has held them. For example, there is the position that space consists of the prime matter of bodies or their forms or actualities, or that it is an independent corporeal area in which the cosmos is contained.

Among the positions, two are quite famous: one, which is attributed to Plato, has been affirmed by some Islamic sages, such as Sadr al-Muta'allihin; while the other is attributed to Aristotle, and it has been accepted by the majority of Islamic sages, including Farabi and Ibn Sina. The view attributed to Plato is that, space is a substantial immaterial dimension which is identical to the volume of the cosmos.

This position seems strange because an immaterial existent, even if an imaginal form which is barzakhi, has no relation to material existents, and cannot be considered a locus for them. However, there is a strong possibility that a mistake has been made in the narration or translation of this position, or that what is meant here by the term immaterial (mujarrad) is not the technical sense.

This view is supported by the fact that Mir Damad has denied that Plato held this position.¹ According to this conjecture, one may interpret the position to claim that space is the volume of the cosmos considered separately from it (and in this sense is 'abstracted' from the cosmos).

As for the view reported to have been held by Aristotle, it is held that space is the inner surface of a body which makes contact with the outer surface of another body, like the inner surface of a glass which makes contact with the outer surface of the water contained in it.

There is a difficulty with this position. If we suppose that a fish is standing in a flowing river, without a

doubt, the surface of water in contact with the surface of its body is always changing, and so, according to the position mentioned above, we must say that its space is constantly changing, although we assumed that it was standing still in its own place and that there has been no change in its space.

Another precise point which must be taken into consideration is that the above-mentioned definition is composed of two basic concepts. One is the inner surface of a containing body, and the other is contact with the outer surface of the contained body. However, 'surface' is a kind of amount and thus belongs to the category of quantity, while contact, according to the Aristotelians, is of the category of relation, and by combining these two categories a third category cannot be brought about.

In addition, contact is an accidental state for the mentioned surface, and for this reason cannot be the difference by which its essence is defined. In this way, it would have to be considered a special kind of category of continuous quantity. In any case, the question of the category to which space belongs remains unanswered.

It seems that the concept of space is not a non-relational concept (mafahim-e nafsi) such as man, animal, color and shape, but rather it is an accidental concept which includes a sense of relation to a thing which has a space. In order to obtain this concept, two things must be compared to each other from a specific point of view so that one may be considered the space of the other. This shows that space is not a kind of whatish concept included in the categories, but rather is a respectival concept.

Secondly, in order to consider something as the space of another it is not necessary to take into account its particular whatness or substance. For example, when we consider a glass as the space of some water, it is not because its body is made of crystal, and when we call water the space of a fish, it is not because it is a liquid composed of oxygen and hydrogen, but because it has the capacity to contain a thing which has a space, and that which in reality is taken into account is its being a container, not its substance.

Regarding these two points, one may say that when some of the volume of the cosmos is considered separately, and it is compared with a body contained in it, the mentioned volume will be its space.

It must be noted that sometimes space is applied to a quantity of volume which is greater than the capacity of the thing related to it, as when a house or a city is said to be the space of a person. Giving heed to this point, philosophers have said that these are not 'true spaces.' It is to be concluded that the true space of every thing is the amount of volume of the cosmos which is equivalent to the volume of the body related to a space insofar as it contains it.

Among the conclusions obtained from this philosophical analysis is that space is subordinate to the cosmos, and space does not exist prior to the appearance of or with the annihilation of the latter. Hence, one cannot consider the volume and surface of a thing to be independent existents which must have been created independently.

Rather, basically such concepts as volume and surface are representatives of aspects of corporeal existence which the mind separates from bodies. For this reason one can consider these kinds of cases, which are accidents, as aspects of the existence of material substances. Careful study of this subject makes clear why space is specific to bodies and may be considered a property of material existents, for the source of their abstraction is nothing but the volume of bodies.

[1.](#) Cf., Qabasat, p. 164.

Lesson 43: What is Time?

Discussion about the Reality of Time

Strange positions have also been reported regarding the reality of time, to which Ibn Sina has referred in the Physics of his Shifa. However, it seems that the solution of the problem of time was easier for Muslim philosophers than the problem of space, for they are almost entirely in agreement that time is a kind of continuous quantity characterized by instability and which by means of motion becomes an accident of bodies.

In this way, the position of time in the Aristotelian table of categories becomes perfectly clear. Sadr al-Muta'allihin has also presented this explanation in numerous places, but in the final analysis of the problem of motion, he states a new view which is especially important.

No matter how clear the explanation of time given by the philosophers is, if one is precise about it one will encounter ambiguous and questionable points which require deep thought. Perhaps it is these which attracted the fine and insightful attention of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, and led him to present a new theory of time.

In order to explain these points something must be mentioned about the principles of the philosophers related to this question, even though this is not really the place to discuss and research them.

Philosophers normally introduce motion as an 'accident,' but do not explain this any further. Only some of them have regarded it as of the category of 'that which acts' or 'that which is acted upon.' Shaykh al-Ishraq considered it to be an independent category alongside substance, quantity, quality and relation.

In this way, he limited the number of categories to five, and he considered the others as types of relation. Perhaps one may infer from the words of other philosophers that they have not considered motion itself to be among the categories.

Another principle is that motion is confined to four categories (quantity, quality, position, and place), and

they consider transferal to be a motion in the category of place. They imagined that motion in the other categories, including substance, was impossible. Therefore, motion, considered to be an intermediary between bodies and time, was inevitably taken to be motion in one of the four categories of accidents.

On the other hand, all of them accepted the theory of the ninefold celestial sphere as axiomatic, and they related the appearance of time to the circular rotation of the highest firmament. This point is also presented in some places by Sadr al-Muta'allihin.

Regarding these principles and points, questions may be raised about the famous definitions of time, among the most important of which are the following:

1. There is no doubt that time is extended and divisible, and hence is considered to be a kind of quantity or to possess a kind of quantity, but why should it be considered as a quantity of motion?

The simple answer which is given to this question is that time is flowing and not fixed, such that not even two moments of it coexist, and necessarily one part of it must pass before the following part may come into existence. This sort of quantity can only be related to something which is inherently flowing and not fixed, and that would be nothing other than motion.

As was indicated, this answer depends on the fact that gradualness, flux and instability are particular to motion, a motion which is presumed to be specified to the four categories of accidents, and for this reason they deny the possibility that time could be a quantity for corporeal substance. But is this doctrine correct? If it is supposed that there were no accidental motion in the world, would there then be no room for the concept of motion?

2. Motion is an intermediary between bodies and time, but what kind of intermediary is it? Is it a fixed intermediary (wasitah dar thubut),¹ from which it could be concluded that bodies themselves really possess time by means of motion, or is it an accidental intermediary (wasitah dar 'urudh), such that bodies themselves never really possess time? In other words, is the attribution of corporeal substance to time an accidental characterization (ittisaf bil-'aradh)?

Perhaps the answer which must be given on the basis of the principles [of the mentioned philosophers] to this question is to accept the second alternative. But is it correct to accept that bodies themselves do not possess time, regardless of their continuous and gradual changes? If we suppose that all changes are instantaneous but successive, will there be no precedence and posteriority among them?

Let us assume that they consider motion to be a fixed intermediary and that the true attribution of possessing time by bodies is considered to be posterior to the occurrence of motion. This assumption implies that bodies essentially have the capacity for the attribution of this quantity which results from motion, although prior to the occurrence of motion bodies do not have this attribution actually.

Before it takes the form of a ball or cube, wax has such a capability, for it possesses extension and

volume. However, the ancient philosophers did not see any way for the influence of flux and motion in the essences of bodies, so how could they accept the attribution to such existents of an attribute which is flux and instability itself?

This is just like the case in which we want to relate line, surface and volume, even if by means of a cause, to an abstract existent which lacks extension, in a way that these qualities will really be attributed to it!

3. Another question is what kind of relation is that between motion and time? Is motion the cause for the appearance of time, as so many of the philosophers seem to hold, or is it merely that which serves as the subject of the accidental attribution of time? In any case, in what category should motion itself be included? How is its attribution to time to be determined?

It was previously indicated that some of the philosophers, such as Shaykh al- Ishraq, considered motion to be an independent category of accidents. Others considered motion to be two-sided: they considered the side related to its agent [i.e., the mover] to be in the category of that which acts and they considered the side related to its object, the moved, to be in the category of that which is acted upon.

Other philosophers have given no clear explanation. In any case, the answer to this part of the question requires greater precision. However, the application of cause and effect to motion and time may be considered a kind of development of the terminology of causality, similar to what was indicated in Lesson Thirty-Seven.

4. Another question which can be raised is that if the standard for relating time to motion is its essential instability, this is found in all motions; so why do the philosophers relate time to the rotation of the Sphere of Atlas [the highest of the celestial spheres of traditional cosmology]?

And if there were no Sphere of Atlas or it had no motion, would the other phenomena of the cosmos not possess temporal priority or posteriority? And basically, how can an accident which depends on its own subject be considered the realm for other things and phenomena?

To this question an answer may be given in the following form: The time whose appearance is related by philosophers to the highest sphere is continuous and perpetual, or in other words, absolute time. This does not contradict the claim that every specific phenomenon has its own limited and specific time.

What is meant by saying that the time associated with the celestial spheres is a realm for the occurrences of other events is nothing more than that the temporal extension of each of the events corresponds to a part of the temporal extension of the motion of the celestial sphere.

We know that 'this house is ruined from its very foundations,' for the hypothesis of the celestial spheres has been falsified and has lost its credibility.

With the raising of these questions and the attempts to answer them it has become clear that the

problem of time cannot be solved as easily as was first imagined, and the theory popular amongst the philosophers is not convincing.

Now the time has come to explain the discovery of Sadr al-Muta'allihin in this regard.

The Theory of Sadr al-Muta'allihin

With the acceptance of the positive points previously made pertaining to time, Sadr al-Muta'allihin removed the weak points and compensated for the deficiencies and shortcomings in the theories of the ancient philosophers. In conclusion, he presents a new view that solves the problem of time and the problem of substantial motion simultaneously. Truly, this must be considered one of his most valuable innovations in philosophy.

The positive points [he accepted from the ancient philosophers] are the following:

1. Time is extended and divisible and in one sense is a quantity.
2. Time and motion have a close and inseparable relation, and no motion occurs without time, as, likewise, the occurrence of time without the existence of a sort of continuous gradual motion and alteration is impossible. This is because the passage of the successive parts of time is itself a kind of gradual alteration (motion) for the time-bound thing.

The weak points he found in the views of the ancient philosophers which he tried to compensate for are the following:

1. The ancient philosophers considered time and motion to be accidents external to things, whereas in Sadr al-Muta'allihin's view they are analytic accidents (*awaridh tahlili*), and it is not the case that they may be considered to have existences removed from that of their subjects, but, rather, it is only in the realm of mental analysis that attribute and object of attribution, accident and its object are separable from each other. Otherwise, in the objective realm there is no more than one existence.
2. The philosophers confined motion to accidents, and for this reason they denied that there is an immediate relation of time to bodies, while the most basic motion must be considered motion in substances, for it is impossible that something whose whatness is without a transient extension should be characterized by a transient quantity by means of something else, as will be explained in the discussion of motion. Hence, time must be directly related to the things themselves, and it will be counted as their fourth dimension.²

It follows that according to the theory of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, time is a transient extended dimension of every corporeal existent, which is to be added to the non-transient spatial dimensions (length, width, and depth).

His answer to the first of the four questions mentioned above is that time is combined with substantial motion which is the very existence of bodies, and it is not confined to accidental motion.

His answer to the second question would be that time and motion do not have a double existence so that one can be considered the cause of the appearance of the other, and so that we may imagine that bodies are related to time by means of motion external to their essences, and so that there may be room for a question regarding the quality of this mediation.

In their whatness and substances, bodies have both a true attribution of motion and transformation and a true attribution of time and transience. Just as spatial extension is an aspect of their existence, temporal extension is another aspect of their existence, as well.

His answer to the question about the category to which motion belongs is that motion is not a whatish concept or category, but it is an intellectual concept which is abstracted from the nature of material existence, as the concept of stability is derived from the nature of the existence of immaterial things. Just as stability is not something which is objectively an accident of immaterial and stable things, neither is motion an objective accident of material existents. It is the human mind which analyzes existence into essence and attribute, accident and its object.

Likewise, his answer to the question about the quality time has, of being a realm for events, is clear, for time is not an independent realm for things and phenomena, so that it has a separate existence and temporal things are contained in it. Rather, like the volume of a body, it is an essential and internal characteristic of body, and naturally, every phenomenon will possess a specific time for itself which is considered to be an aspect of its existence.

At the most, to determine precedence and posteriority of things in relation to each other, a longer temporal extension must be taken into consideration, and the temporal position of each of them is to be determined through a comparison with other times. If the celestial spheres exist, whose temporal extension is greater than that of any other existent, and then they would be able to play this role.

If they do not exist (as in fact they do not), the very temporal extension of the entire corporeal world will be the standard for determining the temporal positions of particular phenomena, as the volume of the entire world is the standard for determining the spatial positions of particular phenomena.

The similarity and harmony of time and space become clearer with this explanation along with the profundity of the interpretation given for space.

An Explanation of Some Points

1. The expression 'instant' (an), which is employed in ordinary language for a tiny part of time, in philosophical terminology means the extremity of a fragment of time, similar to a point in relation to a line.

A line is infinitely divisible, and each part of it also will have extension, even if our minds cannot imagine extremely short extensions, so just as a point is never reached by dividing a line, each part of time, no matter how small it is assumed to be, will have an extension, and an instant will never be reached by dividing time. Therefore, the composition of time by successive instants is no more than an illusion.

2. The expression 'aeon' (dahr), which in ordinary language has the meaning of a long time, in philosophy means something like a container for immaterial things, as opposed to time (zaman) which is taken to be a container for material things.

In reality, aeon [in the sense of perpetuity] indicates the lack of temporal extension of immaterial things. Likewise, the expression 'eternity' (sarmad) is specific to the divine station which indicates the transcendence of the Sacred Divine Existence over the attributes of all created things.

Likewise, these two expressions [dahr and sarmad] are used in contrast to the relation of where (mata), and for this reason it is said that the relation of immaterial to material things is the aeon (dahr), and the relation of divine station to created things is eternity (sarmad). It is also said that God the Exalted has an eternal priority (taqaddum sarmadi) to all creatures, and that the immaterial things have a perpetual priority (taqaddum dahri) over material things.

3. The ancient philosophers, who considered time to be an implication of motion in accidents, took the substances of bodies, and even more certainly the substances of the celestial spheres, to be beyond the scope of time, although they believed in their perpetuity coextensive with time.

However, regarding substantial motion and the influence of time and its passage on the essences of material existents, these [material existents] must be considered without exception to be temporal.

4. Temporal priority and posteriority are particular to events which exist in time. They themselves will also have temporal extension. However, existents which are beyond the scope of time and which possess an existential permanence are unchanging and nontransient and will not have a temporal priority or posteriority with relation to temporal things.

Rather, in reality, their existence encompasses temporal things, and past, present and future are equal in relation to them. For the same reason, it is said that events are scattered over the surface of time, and are collected in the container of perpetuity (dahr), 'Separate things in the container of time (zaman) are collected in the container of perpetuity (dahr).'

[1.](#) A fixed intermediary is one which is applied or fixed directly to an object, as opposed to an accidental intermediary which is applied indirectly to an object because of some accidental feature or association of the object with something else.

Motion is a fixed intermediary between time and bodies if the body in motion is in direct relation to time; otherwise motion is an accidental intermediary and the relation of body to time is indirect and accidental. [Tr.]

[2.](#) It must be noted that 'the fourth dimension' in philosophical terminology is different from its meaning in the physics of Einstein's theory.

Lesson 44: Kinds of Substances

Theories about the Kinds of Substances

There are differences of opinion among philosophers about the kinds of material and immaterial substances. The Peripatetics divided substances into five types:

1. Intellectual substances are completely immaterial, and in addition to having no spatial or temporal dimensions by nature, they are not attached to any material or corporeal existents.

It must be noted that the application of 'intellect' to such existents is unrelated to intellect in the sense of the power which perceives universal concepts, and the employment of the term 'intellect' regarding completely immaterial substances is a sort of homonymy, as is the employment of 'intellect' by scholars of ethics in yet a third sense.

2. Psychic substances are essentially immaterial, but are attached to bodies (corporeal existents), and without a body they have no possibility of coming about, although it is possible that after coming about their attachment to a body may be cut off, and after the death of the body they may persist.

3. Corporeal substances have spatial and temporal dimensions, and we sense their appearances in the form of accidents of color and shape, while we prove their existences by reason. The Peripatetics considered every corporeal substance to be composed of two other substances by the name of 'matter' and 'form.'

4. Matter or hayula is also an indefinite substance without actuality according to the Peripatetics. It exists in all bodies, including the celestial spheres and the elements. However, the matter of each celestial sphere takes its own specific form, and for this reason, as they speculated, generation and corruption, and tearing and mending are impossible for them.

However, elemental matter takes different kinds of forms (except for that of the celestial spheres), and in this regard the world of elements is the world of alterations and transformations, of generation and corruption.

5. Form is the aspect of actuality for every corporeal existent and is the source of the particular effects of every kind of matter. There are various kinds of forms, and among them is the form of corporeality which exists in all corporeal substances and is inseparable from hayula.

There are other forms which also occur successively concomitant with the form of corporeality in the different types of corporeal things and are capable of change, transformation, generation and corruption, such as the elemental forms, mineral forms, vegetable forms and animal forms.

On the other hand, Shaykh al-Ishraq denied the existence of hayula as a substance without actuality as a part of corporeal substance. He took the form of corporeality to be the corporeal substance itself and he accepted other elemental, mineral and vegetable forms as accidents of corporeal substance.

Of the five kinds of substances posited by the Peripatetics, he accepted only three (intellectual substance, psychic substance and corporeal substance), but he also attested to another kind of existent as an intermediary between the completely immaterial and the purely material by the name of 'immaterial phantoms' (ashbah mujarradah) or 'suspended forms' (suwar mu'allaqah) which he later introduced in the terminology of more recent philosophers as 'imaginal' (mithali) or 'intermediary' (barzakhi) substance.

Earlier it was mentioned that Berkeley denied the existence of corporeal substances and consequently, matter and material forms. He believed that what we perceive as material things are really forms which God the Exalted has brought into existence in our psychic world, and that their realities are psychic realities, and that there exists no material world beyond the soul.

It was also mentioned that Hume also considered psychic substance to be doubtful and announced that we can only decisively prove psychic phenomena (accidents), for these are the only things which can be directly experienced.

Corporeal Substances

In Lesson Twenty-Three we proved the existence of a material reality, and it was explained that it is incorrect to imagine that the material world exists only in the psychic world and in the realm of man's perception, for by means of presentational knowledge man finds that he does not bring sensible forms into existence himself.

Hence, there is no other alternative but that they are brought about by a cause external to him which somehow influences his sensory perceptions. The hypothesis that God the Exalted made these perceptual forms to appear in our souls without intermediary—as was held by Berkeley—is also an incorrect assumption, because the relations between an immaterial agent and all souls and all times and places are equal.

Hence, the appearance of specific phenomena at a definite time without the mediation of preparatory agents and specific temporal and spatial conditions cannot take place, although the entire world of being is the creation of God the Exalted, and He is the only one who gives being to existents, as will be explained in the proper place.

Moreover, with the denial of the existence of matter, no room remains for the soul as a substance attached to matter, and it would have to be considered an intellectual substance and a completely immaterial thing, while completely immaterial things cannot be the objects of accidents or of alterations.

It is to be concluded that the belief in a material world, in addition to being spontaneous (irtikazi) and in a sense 'innate' (fitri), is also necessitated by rational proof. In this regard, some Western thinkers have proclaimed that what is provable about the material world is only those accidents which may be the objects of sense experience, and that corporeal substance is not provable.

For example, when an apple is the object of sense perception, by means of the eyes we see its color and shape, we smell its fragrance, by touching it we perceive its smoothness, and by eating it, its taste, but there is no sense by which we perceive that there is something called the substance of apple, the locus of its accidents, in addition to the color, shape, smell, taste and things like that.

In retort to them it must be said that although we do not have a sense for perceiving substance, by reason itself we understand that objective existents are either accidents or substances, where by accident is meant a state or attribute for something else, something that needs a subject to which the attribute applies, while a substance is something which does not need an objective subject of attribution.

Hence, if that which relates to sense perceptions is an accident, inevitably it will be in need of a substantial subject, and if it does not need a subject, then it itself will be a substance. In any case, there is no rational alternative to accepting the existence of material substance. However, it is another matter to identify objective substances and accidents which we presently have no intention to investigate.

Psychic Substances

In Lesson Thirteen we mentioned that presentational knowledge of the soul is the same as the existence of the soul itself, and that every human being possesses this knowledge to a greater or lesser extent. But this knowledge has degrees, and at the beginning a weak level occurs, which correlates with the weakness of the existence of the soul. For this reason, it is not an object of awareness.

Gradually, a weak awareness of it appears, but not to the extent that a clear mental interpretation of it may be formed. For this reason it is confused with the body. The more the existence of the soul is perfected, and the level of its immateriality is raised, the more its awareness of itself will be increased until it reaches the point that it becomes clear that it is an immaterial substance which is independent of the body.

However, such knowledge will be obtained by none but those who advance through levels of spiritual perfection. Therefore, the majority of people are in need of proof to obtain conscious knowledge of the immateriality of the soul.

There are various ways to prove the immateriality of the soul, the examination of which merits an independent book of its own. Among them there are reasons given from dreams, the summoning of spirits, hypnotism, and likewise from the works of yogis, miracles of the friends of God (awliya), and such things. Some of their premises are established by reports for those who do not have direct information of

such things, and in truth these sorts of reports are corroborated way beyond what is required for credibility.

Another group of reasons makes use of premises which must be proven in the empirical sciences, especially psychology and biology, such as the premise that all organs and cells of the body are gradually replaced, and even the cells of the brain are altered as a result of dissolution and nourishment with fresh material, while the soul has a fixed individual existence which survives through dozens of years, and every man is aware of his own individual identity.

Purely philosophical arguments for the immateriality of the soul are also divided into two groups: one group of arguments are those which are obtained by the analysis of ordinary knowledge by presence; the other group of arguments first establish the immateriality of psychic phenomena such as perception, will and affection, then they prove the immateriality of their subject, the soul.

Since we will discuss the immateriality of the qualities of the soul in the future, especially the immateriality of knowledge and perception, here we will content ourselves with some arguments which directly establish the immateriality of the soul.

Two Proofs for the Immateriality of the Soul

1. Ibn Sina, in his *Isharat*, presents an argument for the immateriality of the soul that may be summarized as follows.

If one is placed in an environment in which his attention is not distracted by external things, and the condition of his body is such that he does not notice it, that is, he does not suffer from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, pain or any other discomfort, and even the weather is completely still so that the blowing of the wind does not attract his attention, and in the words of Ibn Sina, there is 'balmy weather,' in such a situation if one focuses one's attention on oneself, that is, on the 'I, the perceiver,' so that one has no attention on anything corporal, he will find his soul, while he will not find any of his bodily organs. What he finds is different from what he does not find, and hence the soul is other than the material body.

This argument, as we have considered it, is an aid to enable the mind to have a correct interpretation of presentational knowledge of the soul. The conditions mentioned by Ibn Sina are really a guide for the common man to be able to focus his attention so that material factors do not attract his attention to the body and things related to it.

It was previously indicated that those who are advanced in the stages of spiritual perfection are able to turn their own attention completely toward the soul and to observe the reality of it, but the common man must observe such conditions in order to divert his attention from material things to some extent.

2. Another argument for the immateriality of the soul is that when we pay precise attention to our own existence, the 'I, the perceiver,' we see that the existence of 'I' is a simple indivisible thing. For example,

it cannot be divided into two 'half I's,' while the most fundamental characteristic of body is divisibility, as was explained in Lesson Forty-One. However, such a characteristic cannot be found in the soul, and it is not subject to the body in being divisible.

So, there is no other alternative but its immateriality. The most that can be said is that the soul is attached to the body and has a special existential relation to it, so that it influences the body, as the body moves with the will of the soul, and it is affected by the body, as it suffers hunger and thirst and is influenced by and influences the body in many other ways that must be taken up in discussions of the mind– body problem.

Lesson 45: Continuation of the Discussion of the Kinds of Substance

Intellectual Substance

The ancient philosophers took quite tortuous routes to establish the existence of intellectual substance. For example, they all resorted to the 'principle of the unit' (i.e., the unity of the effect given the unity of its direct cause) in order to prove the existence of the first intellect which is the most simple and most perfect of the contingent existents.

On the other hand, they introduced the active intellect as the proximate agent of the elemental world (i.e., the sublunary world), and they also presented it as that which emanates the intellectual concepts to man and to his treasury of intelligibles, and they mentioned various different ways to prove its existence.

Also, to prove the existence of the tenfold vertical intellect they sought the assistance of the hypothesis of nine celestial spheres. They imagined that the nine intellects were to be obtained as the proximate causes for the nine celestial spheres, and they also imagined these intellects to be the ends of the motions subject to the volitions of the souls of the spheres. These nine intellects together with the active intellect were taken to compose the ten intellects.

Likewise, the philosophers, in order for to establish the existence of the world of the intellects, and especially the Illuminationists (Ishraqiyyin), in order to establish the existence of the horizontal intellects (i.e., the Platonic Forms), relied upon the 'Doctrine of the Nobler Contingent' and they formulated various reasons for the validity of this doctrine. But, this is not the occasion for a review and criticism of their explanations and arguments.

However, by focusing on the fundamentality of existence, the graduated levels of existence and the

reality of the causal relation, which are established in the philosophy of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, there emerges a simpler and at the same time more certain way to prove that there is a world of intellects which can be considered to be a new explanation of the doctrine of the nobler contingent.

Hence, first we will explain something about the above-mentioned doctrine, and then we shall describe the conclusions for the present discussion which may be drawn from it.

The Doctrine of the Nobler Contingent

The purport of this doctrine is that if we consider two contingent existents, one of which is nobler than the other, the nobler one must occur at a level prior to that of the less noble one, and the nobler must be the cause of the less noble. So, if the nobler is not known to us, we can discover it by means of the existence of the less noble.

The way this doctrine is used in the present discussion is as follows: intellectual substance is nobler than other substances, so, according to this doctrine, it must occur at a level prior to that of the others, so that there will be a means for their existences. Hence, the existence of other substances is a means to discover the existence of that which is at a prior level to them.

This doctrine came to be especially favored since the time of Shaykh al-Ishraq, and the following proof was used to establish it.

If the nobler existent does not exist at a prior level to the less noble, then it must be at the same level, a lower level, or not existing at all. If it existed at the same level—as, for example, if intellectual substance together with corporeal substance were produced by the first cause—then the 'principle of the unit' would be violated.

If the nobler existed at a posterior level—as, for example, if intellectual substance came into existence after corporeal substance, and corporeal substance were a means for the production of intellectual substance—this would imply that the existence of the cause were baser than the existence of its effect.

If it never came into existence at all, this would mean that something which has the capability to cause the nobler has no existence, that is, that the first cause would also lack the capability to create it! So, the only correct assumption is that the nobler existent exists at a level prior to the less noble and is a means for its production.

Later, this argument, which rests on the doctrine of the unit, was challenged and criticized by some, and defended by others, such as Mir Damad who offered other arguments in its defense, as well, the review of which is not appropriate here.

As we indicated, however, this doctrine may be more firmly established on the basis of the principles of the philosophy of Sadr al-Muta'allihin, as follows.

The causal relation between a cause and its effect is an essential and unalterable relation; that is, the existence of the effect is essentially dependent on the existence of the efficient cause, and it is impossible that the positions of cause and effect should be changed so that the existence of the cause should be dependent on the existence of the effect.

So, it is impossible that an effect should be produced by something on which it is not dependent. The causal relation is also a necessary relation, and it is impossible for the existential dependency of the effect on the cause to vanish, so that the effect could occur without the cause. Hence, the possibility of being an effect is equal to its necessity.

In other words, the causal relation between two existents can never be considered to be merely possible (imkan khass, the negation of the necessity of the terms of the relation), so that it is possible for one of the two existents both to be and not to be an effect of the other with neither of them being necessary. So, if it is not impossible for one thing to be the effect of another, it will be necessary for it to be the effect of the other, and without the other it would not come into existence.

On the other hand, in the discussions of cause and effect it was established that the criterion for being an effect is weakness of existence. Therefore, this supposition will be necessary wherever a more perfect and more powerful existent can be supposed, so that the weaker existent may be considered to radiate from its existence, not being independent of it.

By attending to these two premises, the above-mentioned doctrine may be obtained as follows: If we suppose that there are a number of existents each of which is more powerful than another, so that the former may be considered the cause of the existence of the latter; in other words, if a special gradation is posited among them, then each of the more powerful existents will be at a prior level to the weaker existents, and necessarily will be the cause in relation to them, until one arrives at an existent for which it is impossible to suppose a more perfect one, and which cannot possibly be the effect of any of the other existents.

According to this doctrine, the existence of intellectual substance, which is more perfect than other substances and can be the cause for their existences, is established. This will be an intermediary between the level of infinite intensity of existence (i.e. God, the Exalted) and the lower levels of existence.

On this basis, the existence of horizontal intellects may also be established, that is, one can suppose a number of intellectual substances none of which is the cause of another of them, but each of which is the cause for a species of lower existents and merely possesses the perfection of that very species in a more perfect and simpler form.

Several points must be observed: one is that horizontal intellects will be the effects of one or several intellects more perfect than they, for an intellect may be supposed which possesses the perfections of all of them, and which stands in the chain of their causes. Earlier it was mentioned that the possibility of

being a cause is equal to its necessity.

The second point is that none of the horizontal intellects will have a whatness common with the species of existent from which it is produced, for the abstraction of a whatness of a single species from different levels of existence is impossible. Even two intellectual substances which are taken to be vertically related so that one is the cause of the other will not have a single whatness.

The third point is that this doctrine is not capable of establishing the number of intellects, and there is no way to prove how many intermediaries exist between the first intellect and the horizontal intellects. Since the hypothesis of there being ten intellects is based on the hypothesis of there being nine celestial spheres, with the invalidity of the latter, the former also becomes invalid.

Imaginal Substance

As was mentioned in the previous lesson, the Illuminationists proved the existence of another world called the world of 'immaterial phantoms' (ashbah mujarradah) or of 'suspended forms' (suwar mu'allaqah), which is an intermediary between the intellectual world and the corporeal world, and in this regard, in the language of the later philosophers this was called the world of the isthmus (barzakh), or the imaginal world (alam-e mithal).

Probably the Illuminationists either were inspired to use this term by the mystics ('urafa), or they themselves found it through mystical disclosures. In religious texts some topics may be found, especially about the world of the isthmus and the questions of Nakir and Munkar¹ and the like which can be explained by means of the imaginal world.

It is necessary to note that Shaykh al-Ishraq does not use the term 'isthmus' (barzakh) for the imaginal world of forms, but applies this term to the material world. It is also to be mentioned that the expression mithal [image or form] is used for this world in a sense different from the Platonic Forms, for the latter are completely immaterial and a kind of intellectual substance, while imaginal substances are another kind of existent unlike intellectual substances, which are completely lacking in corporeal attributes and limits, and are unlike corporeal substances, which are divisible and possess location.

Rather, they are of the kind of imaginal forms which are drawn in the minds of men. For example, in order to halve them in the imagination, one must bring into existence two smaller forms in the mind, not that a larger form is to be divided into two halves.

Likewise, it must be kept in mind that expressions such as 'phantoms' regarding this world are not used in the sense that the entities of this world are faint forms of corporeal existents nor that they are weaker in the level of their existence than bodies. Rather, this expression shows that there exist fixed and unchangeable forms in that world, which are not only no less weak than material entities, but are considered to be more powerful than them.

Shaykh al-Ishraq considered the forms which are seen in a mirror to be sorts of abstract phantoms, and he also related genies and the forms which are seen in dreams to this world. Furthermore, he held that sensory perception is also the observation of imaginal forms which exist in this world.

However, Sadr al-Muta'allihin held that sensory perception is related to the imaginal plane of the soul, as will be explained in the appropriate place. As for the forms which are seen in a mirror, they are brought into existence by the reflection of light, and have no relation to the imaginal world.

Likewise, according to the exoteric meaning of the Qur'an and sunnah, the genies are subtle corporeal existents, which in the words of the Noble Qur'an are created of 'fire,' and have corporeal characteristics, and are even like man in having responsibilities, rewards and punishments, although because of their subtlety, ordinary people cannot sense them.

In any case, the existence of immaterial phantoms is undeniable, and in the sacred traditions one comes across expressions like 'phantoms' (ashbah) and 'shadows' (adhlal), which are comparable to immaterial phantoms. There are few people who have taken a few steps down the road of spiritual wayfaring who have not observed these sorts of existents. However, it is not very easy to establish their existence by means of rational proof.

Some philosophers have attempted to prove the existence of this world by employing the doctrine of the nobler contingent, while Sadr al-Muta'allihin took advantage of another doctrine, which he himself founded, called the doctrine of the baser contingent (imkan-e akhass).

However, the difficulty here is that one cannot definitively prove that there is a specific gradation from intellectual substance to imaginal substance to corporeal substance so that one may consider the corporeal world to radiate from the imaginal world and the latter to be an intermediary for the creation of the material world.

At the most one may say that immaterial substance may be considered as the source for the sensory and imaginary forms which occur in the souls of men, that is, the immaterial substances may emanate these forms while they lack intellectual levels. In this way, on the basis of the Doctrine of the Nobler Contingent, their existence is established.

It may be concluded that the most plausible way to establish the existence of imaginal substance is through mystical disclosures and the words of the Infallibles, Peace and salutations to all of them.

At the end of these discussions it is to be noted that the division of existence into the material and immaterial is a rational division which is comprehensive and exclusive; however, the confinement of the immaterial worlds to the intellectual, psychic, and imaginal is not a rational comprehensive and exclusive division. The addition of the imaginal world of the Illuminationists to the other worlds shows that it is not irrational to suppose that one or more other worlds exist of whose characteristics we are unaware.

[1](#). Nakir and Munkar are the names of the two angels who interrogate a person immediately following his death and burial about his religious beliefs. [Tr.]

Lesson 46: Matter and Form

Views of the Philosophers on Matter and Form

We have thus far taken up the discussion of three kinds of immaterial substance and one kind of material substance, and we have established their existence. However, we previously reported that the Aristotelians held that corporeal substances are composed of two other substances called matter and form, the former being the aspect of the potentiality of bodies and the latter being the aspect of the actuality of bodies. We shall now review this theory.

Before anything, we must bear in mind that matter, in the sense of the ground for the appearance of a new existent and that which receives its actuality, is accepted by nearly all philosophers, as, for example, water is said to be the matter for steam, soil for plants and animals, and grains and pits for their plants.

An existent which is the matter for other existents but which does not itself appear from some prior matter, in technical terms is said to possess ‘original existence’ (wujud ibda’i) and to be without need of a material cause, and it is called the ‘matter of matters’ (maddat al-mawadd) or prime matter (hayula ula).

The difference of opinion between the Aristotelians and others is over whether prime matter is a substance possessing actuality which can be considered a kind of corporeal substance, or is a pure potentiality without any kind of actuality whose only property is the ability to accept corporeal forms.

The opinion of the Aristotelians is the latter, and this was also accepted by most of the great Islamic philosophers, including Farabi, Ibn Sina and Mir Damad. In many instances, Sadr al-Muta’allihin has followed the same line, but in some cases he called hayula a ‘privative thing’ (amr ‘adami) and in some cases he referred to it as a shadow which the intellect considers for corporeal existents, but which does not have true existence, as the concept of ‘shadow’ is abstracted from weak luminescence and has no existence beyond that of light. [1](#) There are also some scholars who consider it incorrect to attribute the above-mentioned position to Aristotle. [2](#)

On the assumption of the existence of prime matter as a substance lacking actuality, it would seem inappropriate to consider matter and form alongside bodies all equivalently as kinds of substances. Perhaps it would be better if matter and form were considered to be two kinds of material substances,

with the explanation that prime matter is inseparable from corporeal form, and that the combination of them is called 'body.'

The main problem is that the existence of a substance which essentially lacks any kind of actuality cannot be established, and it seems that, with regard to this problem, the correct position is that of Shaykh al-Ishraq, 'Allamah Tusi and other philosophers who have denied the existence of this sort of substance.

With the denial of prime matter as a substance lacking any sort of actuality, no room remains for establishing the existence of another sort of substance which is the first form for prime matter and that which grants it actuality, for according to this view, which is attributed to the Platonists, the first matter is a substance possessing actuality, but which is not composed of matter and form.

However, new forms occur in it either alternatively or simultaneously, such that a specific elemental form appears in it, and with its removal, it is replaced by another elemental form. However, the elemental form comes into existence simultaneously with the mineral form or vegetable form, and altogether they are incarnated in the substance of the body, that is, their parts correspond precisely to one another.

However, through all these alterations, the body always remains as a substance which possesses actuality, despite the denials by some philosophers that the new forms are substances. These philosophers only accept them as accidents for the body.

Given the denial of matter without actuality, and the acceptance of the forms of species, as kinds of substance, corporeal substances may be divided into two general kinds: one is that of a substance which does not need a location at which to be incarnated, and this is the same as body; the other is a substance which needs another substance to be incarnated in it and impressed in it, and this substance is the form of a species, such as the elemental, mineral and vegetable forms.

However, with the denial that these sorts of forms are substances, the corporeal and material substances will be confined to bodies. This seems to indicate the difference between primary and secondary substances in Aristotle. The primary substances are not incarnated, only the secondary ones are.

An Argument for the Aristotelian Theory

The Aristotelians, who believe in prime matter as substance devoid of actuality, have offered for their position two arguments which were originally close to one another: one of these is called the 'proof from potentiality and actuality' and the other is called the 'proof from union and separation.' They may be summarized as follows.

There are transformations in bodies which are unions and separations, as well as substantial and accidental changes; for example, a continuous unified body may be transformed into two separate

bodies, water changes into steam, the seed of a tree changes into a tree. Without a doubt, these various changes do not take place in such a way that the first substance is completely obliterated and one or more other existents are brought into existence from pure nothingness.

Rather, certainly something from the prior existent remains in the later existent. However, that which remains is not the form and actuality of the prior existent; hence there is no other alternative but that another substance exists in them which preserve the existential relation between them. This in itself essentially and necessarily must have no actuality, and for this reason, it accepts various sorts of actuality.

In this way it is established that there is a substance which has no actuality, and which is characterized by the acceptance of forms, and, in philosophical terms, it is called pure potentiality. In other words, every corporeal existent possesses two aspects: one is the aspect of actuality and the possession of properties, and the other is the aspect of potentiality and privation in relation to future actualities.

These two aspects are different from each other, and so, every corporeal existent is composed of two different objective things. And since it is not possible for the existence of a substance to be composed of two accidents or of a substance and an accident, there is no other choice but that they must be composed of two substantial parts, one which is the aspect of actuality, and the other the aspect of potentiality.

This argument can also be put in the following form, or the following may be considered as another argument. It is possible for all bodies to change into another kind of body, such as the change of one element into another or the transformation of one or more elements into minerals, vegetables or animals (potentiality and actuality).

Likewise, all bodies have the possibility to be changed into two or several other bodies of the same kind (union and separation). This possibility for change and transformation is a kind of quality which is called the 'quality of preparedness' (kayfiyyat isti'dadi) or 'possibility of preparedness' (imkan isti'dadi). This is capable of intensity and weakness, perfection and deficiency, as the preparedness of a fetus to change into an existent which possesses a spirit is greater than that of a zygote.

This accident needs a substantial subject which cannot be considered to be a substance possessing actuality, since this substance has to have the possibility for the appearance of this quality, and the supposed possibility will be another quality dependent on a third possibility, and likewise to infinity.

This implies that in order for any existent to be transformed into another, and for the appearance of every new substance or accident infinity of accidents must occur each of which has temporal priority to another. Hence, it is inevitable that these accidents must be borne by a substance which is the potentiality, possibility and preparedness itself and which has no sort of actuality at all.

Critique

The mentioned arguments are not firm enough, and all of them are more or less controversial. However, since the pivotal concept in all of them is the concept of 'change,' we would do well to provide a brief explanation of it, although a more detailed discussion will come under the topics of change and motion.³

Change and transformation may be imagined in a number of forms. Of those relevant to this topic, the following are the most important:

1. Accidental change, such as the change of the color of an apple from green to yellow and from yellow to red.

It must be noted that according to philosophers such as Shaykh al-Ishraq, changes of species are of this sort, for they considered specific forms to be accidents. Likewise, according to modern physicists, the change of water into steam and vice versa are sorts of gathering together and separating of molecules, not a sort of substantial change.

2. The appearance of a new substantial form in matter, such as the appearance of vegetable form in soil, according to the position of the Aristotelians who consider specific forms to be substances.

3. The obliteration of a temporally contingent substantial form from matter, such as the change from vegetable to soil, according to the Aristotelians.

4. The obliteration of a previous substantial form and the appearance of another substantial form, such as the change of an element into another element, according to the Aristotelians.

5. The substantial attachment of an immaterial thing to matter without being incarnated in it (for incarnation is characteristic of matter), such as the attachment of spirit to body.

6. The cutting off of the above-mentioned attachment, such as the death of an animal or man.

By attending to the above classification, the weakness of the first argument becomes clear, for if change is related to accidents of the body, corporeal substance will be preserved with its actuality, and there will be no need for the assumption of a substance without actuality. Likewise, if there is a sort of attachment of the soul to the body, or its detachment (the fifth or sixth cases) the substance of the body with its own actuality remains.

Also in the second and third cases, in which a new substantial form is incarnated in a body or is separated from it, the previous substance is preserved. It is only in the fourth case that it is conceivable that with the obliteration of the previous form, a substance possessing actuality does not remain; hence, the thing which is in common between them is a substance which lacks actuality.

But we must remember that according to the philosophers, the corporeal form is never corrupted or

obliterated, and if the existence of prime matter were also established, it would persist along with the corporeal form (regardless of substantial motion, which will be discussed in its own place). With regard to this point, a question that may be posed is, what rational objections would arise if body is considered a simple substance (i.e., not composed of matter and form) in which another form is incarnated or from which another form is detached?

Perhaps the second explanation may be considered as the answer to this question, that is, body with its own actuality cannot take a new form, but it must possess another part whose essential property is receptivity, and essentially requires no actuality.

The second explanation is based on the notion that the aspects of potentiality and actuality are two entified aspects, each of which has specific objective instances. Since the existence of a body cannot be considered to be composed of two accidents or one substance and one accident, there is no other choice but that they must be considered to be composed of two substances instead of these two aspects.

This notion is debatable, for the concepts of actuality and potentiality, like other fundamental philosophical concepts, are secondary philosophical intelligibles, which are abstracted by the intellect with a specific attention.[4](#)

In other words, when we take two corporeal things into consideration, one of which lacks the other (as the seed of a tree lacks the fruit of the tree), but which can come to possess it, then the concept of potentiality or receptivity is related to the first existent, and when it comes to possess the other, the concept of actuality is abstracted from it.

Hence, these concepts are abstracted concepts, which are obtained by the comparison of two things, and they do not have entified instances. There is no reason to consider the aspects of potentiality or receptivity to be entified things on the basis of which the existence of a substance or even an accident may be established, the whatness of which is the whatness of potentiality and receptivity.

Likewise the establishment of the causal relation among existents does not require that there be an existent whose whatness is being a cause or being an effect. This is another example of how first and second intelligibles are confused.

It is to be concluded that when a corporeal substance is compared to another substance or to an accident which is capable of being incarnated in it, it is called 'potential' (bil quwwah) in relation to this incarnation, but this does not mean that it possesses an objective part called 'potentiality.'

Secondly, the second premise may be disputed, for it is possible that one may consider the objective existence of a body (not its whatness) to be composed of substance and a number of accidents. Especially, according to the position of those who consider accidents to be aspects and levels, of the existence of substance. Hence, supposing that each of the two aspects of potentiality and actuality

possess objective instances, one can consider the instance of the aspect of actuality to be corporeal substance and the instance of the aspect of potentiality to be one of its accidents.

The third explanation also has two basic premises. One is that the possibility of preparedness is a kind of objective accident and is a whatish concept. The other is that the characterization (‘urudh) of this accident requires potentiality and a prior possibility, and hence in order to avoid an infinite regress a substance should be posited which itself is the very potentiality, possibility and preparedness.

This explanation is also flawed, for, first of all; preparedness is an abstracted concept which cannot have entified instances. For example, to say that the seed of a tree has the preparedness to turn into a tree means that the seed of the tree has the preparedness for turning into a tree, and if water and warmth and the other necessary conditions obtain, gradually it will develop and roots, leaves and branches will appear. So that which is entified is the seed, water, warmth, etc., but there is no additional entified existent by the name of ‘preparedness,’ and consequently, preparedness cannot be considered a kind of objective accident.

Secondly, on the assumption that preparedness is a entified quality, one may consider the first preparedness to be the effect of corporeal substance. In this way infinite regress may be avoided without need for positing a substantial potentiality (matter lacking actuality).

There is another problem with this position, which will not be mentioned in order to avoid prolonging the discussion. We merely indicate that being an existent corresponds to being actual, and moreover, they are in truth the same.

Hence, basically the supposition that an existent lacks actuality seems to be incorrect. The assumption that matter obtains actuality only in the shadow of a form is not coherent with the essential property attributed to matter of lacking actuality and being pure potentiality.

Perhaps it will be said that the pure potentiality of matter is like the essential possibility of every whatness which is inseparable from it. At the same time, in the shadow of causality, it becomes necessary ‘by another.’

However, it must be noted that the essential possibility of a whatness is a purely intellectual attribute which has no objective instances, as whatness itself is a respectival concept. But in the case of matter, it is assumed that this is an objective substance whose existence is pure potentiality. Perhaps it is for this reason that Sadr al-Muta’alihin called prime matter an intellectual and privative thing (amr ‘aqli wa ‘adami). (Take note.)

[1.](#) Cf., Asfar, Vol. 5, p. 146, and Mabda wa Ma’ad, p. 265.

[2.](#) Cf., Abu al-Barakat, Mu’tabar, Vol. 3, p. 200.

[3.](#) Cf., Lesson Fifty-One.

[4.](#) Cf., Lesson Fifty-Two.

Lesson 47: Accidents

Views of Philosophers about Accidents

As was previously indicated, it is well known among philosophers that substance is a highest genus, and it is a specific category which has various species. However, accident is not a specific category, but is a general concept abstracted from nine categories, and the predication of it to each of them is accidental, not essential.

In contrast to this position, three other positions may be indicated. One is the position of Mir Damad who considered accident, like substance, to be a category and a highest genus, and those which others take to be accidental categories; he considered to be species of accidents.

Another position is that the categories are: substance, quantity, quality, and relation, and other accidental categories, according to this position, are considered to be kinds of relations. Finally, the position of Shaykh al-Ishraq (Suhravardi) is that the categories consist of the four mentioned above in addition to motion.^{[1](#)}

It seems that, first of all, substance and accident are types of secondary philosophical intelligibles, none of which can be considered a highest genus and whatish category. Secondly, as has been proclaimed by Sadr al-Muta'allihin, motion is an ontological concept and is neither itself a category, nor is it included in any whatish category.

Thirdly, many things which are called objective accidents and are taken to be categories or types of categories (including all of the seven relational categories) are abstracted concepts, and none of them are objective accidents to be considered as independent whatish categories or types of categories.

It is clear that the presentation, criticism, and review of all of these positions require more detailed discussion which is not very useful. For this reason a short discussion will suffice for this topic.

Quantity

The category of quantity may be defined in this way: it is an accident which is essentially capable of being divided; and the modifier 'essentially' is used in order to exclude from the definition divisions of other categories, because their divisions are obtained subordinate to the divisions of quantity.

Quantity may be generally divided into two kinds: continuous (i. e., geometrical quantity) and discrete (i. e., number), each of which includes different kinds which are discussed in the two sciences of geometry and arithmetic.

It should be noted that the philosophers consider the first number to be two, which is divisible into two units. One is considered to be the source of the numbers, although it is not held to be a kind of number. It seems that it can easily be accepted that number is not a whatish concept, and that in the external world there is nothing by the name of 'number' but only things which have the attributes of being unities or pluralities (numbered).

For example, when an individual person is located somewhere, nothing is brought into existence called unity over and above his own existence. However, attending to the fact that there is no one beside him, the concept of unit will be abstracted from him. Likewise, when another individual is located beside him, the second individual is also a unit, but we consider them together and relate the concept of two to them, although there is no objective accident between them by the name of the number two.

By the way, how can a single accident (the number two) subsist in two subjects?! (Take note.) And also, when a third individual sits beside the other two, the number three is abstracted from the set of them. However it is not the case that an entified accident called two has been destroyed and that another one called three has been brought into existence. In this very same situation we can consider the first two individuals and relate the number two to them, as we can consider one of them along with the newly entered individual and call them two persons.

Further evidence that the concept of number is respectival (i'tibari) is that it is an accident of the numbers themselves, their fractions, and sets, and if number were something entified, an infinite number would occur in limited subjects.

Likewise, number is equally related to immaterial and material things, to the real and to the fictitious. Are we to consider number to be an immaterial accident when related to immaterial things and a material accident when related to material things?! Are we to consider number to be real when it is related to real things, and consider it respectival when the same number is predicated to a respectival thing? Or are we to allow that something respectival have a real entified attribute and accident?

Regarding continuous quantities, as was made clear in the discussions of time and space, they are aspects of the existence of bodies, and they have no existence apart from the existence of bodies. In technical terms, composite making (ja'l ta'lifi) and independent creation do not apply to them, even if the mind is able to consider them as independent whatnesses.

Considering this point, there is a sense in which they can be taken to be accidents of bodies, but accidents whose existence is the very existence of the body, and all of their whatnesses exist by one existence. In other words, the existence of these kinds of accidents is an aspect of the existence of substances.

Relational Categories

Among the ten categories, there are seven each of which is regarded as possessing some kind of relation, and for this reason they are called the relational categories and some philosophers have taken them to be species of the category of relation (nisbah or idhafah). The relational categories are as follows:

1. The category of relation (idhafah), which is obtained from the occurrence of a relation between two existents, and is divided into those which have similar terms, and those which have opposite terms. The former kind is like the relation 'being the brother of' which holds between two brothers, or the relation of simultaneity between two things which exist at one time. The latter kind is like the relation of a father to his child, or the relation of priority and posteriority between two parts of time, or two phenomena which come into existence at two times.
2. The category of where ('ayn), which is obtained from the relation between a material thing and its location.
3. The category of when (mata), which is obtained from the relation between a material existent and its time.
4. The category of position (wadh'), which is obtained from the relation among the parts of a thing to each other, considering their directions, such as the condition of standing, a posture in which the parts of the body are located over one another so that the head is on top, or the condition of reclining, which is abstracted from the location of the parts of the body next to one another in a horizontal form.
5. The category of possession (jidah or milk), which is obtained from the relation of one thing to another which more or less encompasses it, like the condition of the body being covered by its clothes, or the head being covered by a hat.
6. The category of activity (an yaf'al), which describes the gradual influence of a material agent on the matter acted upon, such as the sun which gradually warms water.
7. The category of passivity (an yanfa'il), which describes passive matter which is gradually affected by a material agent, such as water which is gradually warmed by the sun.

It should be noted that all of these categories, except for that of relation, are specific to material things, since they possess time and place, and the relations between parts and considerations of direction are conceivable only for bodies. Likewise, the encompassing of clothing and the like is also peculiar to material existents. Also, gradual affecting and being affected by occur only among material things.

However, the category of relation is common between material and immaterial things. Examples of it can be found among material things, such as the relation of above and below between two stories of a

building and relation can be found to hold between immaterial things, such as the divine eternal priority (taqaddum sarmadi) to other immaterial things, and the temporal simultaneity among the intellects.

Likewise, one can consider one term of a relation to be an immaterial existent and the other term to be a material existent, such as the ontological priority of an immaterial cause to its material effect.

It seems that none of these are primary intelligible whatish concepts. The best reason for this is that relating one existent to another depends on one who relates them, who compares them with one another, and a concept dependent on comparing and relating cannot describe a thing which is entified and independent of mental respects.

For example, the relation between two brothers, or the relation between a father and his children, is not a entified thing which exists between the related terms; rather, by considering two individuals who have come into existence by means of one father and mother, and who share this respect, the mind abstracts a relation with similar terms called brotherhood.

Considering that the father is the preparatory cause for the appearance of his child and not the reverse, the mind abstracts a relation with opposite terms called fatherhood. It is not the case that with the birth of a child another entified thing comes about called the relation of fatherhood, and that after the birth of a second child yet another objective thing called brotherhood appears between the two children.

Likewise, the concepts of greater and smaller, closer and farther, equality and simultaneity, etc., are all concepts which are obtained by comparison, and none of them has a entified instance, although each of them has a specific source of abstraction, and one cannot attribute relational concepts in an arbitrary manner.

Among the evidence for the respectival nature of relation is that, on the one hand, it is applied to the relation between God Almighty and His creatures, while on the other hand, it can hold between two nonentified things, between an existent and a nonexistent, and even between two impossible objects. It is clear that God Almighty cannot be the subject of any accident, and likewise, a nonentified thing and a nonexistent cannot be characterized by entified objective properties.

By examining other relational categories it becomes clear that, except for the two terms of the relation, which are the source of abstraction for these concepts, there is no other entified object in existence by the name of the objective relation, let alone that a certain configuration should appear in the subject due to the influence of the relation. The attribution (ittisaf) of these concepts to objective things is no reason for their existence as entified objects, as is the case with regard to all secondary philosophical intelligibles.

[1.](#) Cf., Suhrawardi, Talwihat, p. 11.

Lesson 48: Quality

The Category of Quality

Every human being finds various mental states within himself through knowledge by presence, such as the states of joy and sorrow, fear and hope, pleasure and pain, attraction and repulsion, love and enmity, etc. Likewise, he perceives some corporeal attributes through his own external senses, which are often changeable, such as colors, tastes, smells, sounds, etc.

Philosophers have included all of these psychic and corporeal states and attributes in a universal concept and have called it quality, which they have taken as a genus for all of them, and defined as follows: quality is an accident which is essentially incapable of division and does not include the meaning of relation. In actuality, they have introduced it as the negation of the features of quantity and relational categories.

It appears that, disregarding disputes which generally occur about the Aristotelian system of genus and difference, quality must not be taken to be a part of the whatnesses of these various material and immaterial accidents; rather they should be considered general abstracted concepts, such as state, configuration (hay'at), and accident, which are applied in the form of accidental predication to a number of things which in reality differ.

In any case, among the categories of accidents, those which may be considered definitely and certainly to be objective accidents which possess entified objects are in the category of quality, some of whose instances are perceived through infallible knowledge by presence.

On the basis of induction, philosophers have divided quality into four types: psychic qualities, sensory qualities, qualities specific to quantity, and dispositional qualities.

Psychic Qualities

A psychic quality (kayf nafsani) is an immaterial accident which only applies to psychic substances (jawahir nafsani). Until now, no precise and complete table of its kinds has been obtained. Philosophers consider knowledge, power, will, aversion, pleasure, pain, passive states, and mental habits and proficiencies to be among the psychic qualities. They have had discussions about them which have been related for the most part to philosophical psychology, the science of the soul ('ilm al-nafs).

As has been indicated, the most certain of all the kinds of qualities are psychic qualities with which one becomes acquainted through knowledge by presence and inner experience. Even the likes of Hume, who has raised doubts about many certainties, has considered the existence of this group of qualities to

be certain and undeniable.

Among the types of psychic quality, that which has the greatest relevance to philosophical discussions is knowledge, and for this reason there will be an independent discussion of this. After knowledge, will, power, and freedom are considered, which were discussed in Lesson Thirty-Eight, and more explanations pertaining to them will be found in the discussions of the attributes of God Almighty.

Sensible Qualities

By sensible qualities are meant those material qualities which are perceived through the external senses and sensory organs.

On the basis of a view which was accepted in ancient natural science, according to which the external senses are of five kinds, philosophers have divided the sensory qualities into five groups: color and light as visible qualities, sounds as audible qualities, tastes as gustatory qualities, smells as olfactory qualities, and cold, hot, rough and soft as tactile qualities. But in modern psychology, it has been proven that there are other senses in addition to the five well-known senses which must be taken into consideration when classifying the sensory qualities.

The proof of the existence of sensible qualities outside the realm of perception is not as easy as proving psychic qualities, for knowledge by presence does not apply to them. The question may be raised as to whether what we perceive as states of material things exist in the same way in the context of the external world, or whether the soul is capable of perceiving these things within itself as a result of a chain of physical, chemical and physiological actions and reactions, while they themselves cannot be proven to exist in the material world.

In order to provide a correct answer to this question one must make use of arguments whose premises are drawn from the empirical sciences. The definitive establishment of these sorts of premises depends on the progress of the relevant sciences. For example, the whatness of energy and the relation between matter and energy are not yet known with certainty, and for this reason a definitive philosophical analysis cannot be provided for them.

The ancient philosophers did not hold that light and heat had any reality apart from the states and accidents which are perceived by the sensory organs, and in this respect they considered them to be essentially simple and unanalyzable.

However, on the basis of some views in modern physics, they must be considered to be material substances, and however much they are called energy as opposed to matter in the terminology of physics, since it is believed that matter comes into existence through the concentration of energy and turns into energy through decomposition and radiation, from a philosophical perspective, energy must be considered a kind of body. It is impossible for a body to be composed of something other than bodies or

to change through decomposition into something other than extended substance (i. e., body).

The issue is not settled with this, and with further attention it becomes clear that what is perceived directly is not the substance of light and heat, but an attribute of luminosity and heat. Here the previous question may be repeated as to whether the sensible qualities exist in the external world in the same way that they are reflected in the realm of perception.

Qualities Specific to Quantities

Philosophers have also named another group of qualities as qualities specific to quantities. One group of them, such as oddness and evenness, are attributes of number. Another group, such as straightness and curvature, are attributes of geometrical subjects.

Apparently, the reason these qualities are considered to be an independent group and not sensible qualities is that they are not perceived directly by the senses.

The attributes of numbers cannot be considered to be real things and objective accidents, given that number itself is respectival (i'tibari) and lacks an object in the external world. However, the attributes of geometrical subjects, such as the straightness and curvature of a line, or the flatness, concavity and convexity of a plane are abstracted concepts, abstracted from the mode of existence of bodies by several intermediaries.

This is especially so, given that line and plane themselves are negative limits (hudud 'adami) of bodies without any real existence of their own, which the human mind loosely considers to be whatnesses existing in the external world. Therefore, it is difficult to consider this group of qualities as objective accidents possessing entified objects. At most they may be considered to be analytic accidents.

Dispositional Qualities

The fourth type of quality which philosophers have taken to be in the category of quality is that of dispositional quality (imkan isti'dadi; isti'dad, lit. preparedness), which they have defined as follows: a quality by means of which the appearance of a specific phenomenon gains preponderance in a subject.

Sometimes it is called dispositional contingency, opposed to other kinds of contingency, such as essential contingency (imkan dhati) and occurrent contingency (imkan wuqu'i),¹ because other meanings of contingency are secondary philosophical intelligibles, and non-whatish concepts, contrary to dispositional contingency, which is taken to be a whatness belonging to the category of quality.

The reason given for the entifiedness of dispositional qualities is that they have existential attributes such as proximity and remoteness and intensity and weakness; for example, the preparedness of a zygote to acquire a soul is remoter and weaker than the preparedness of a complete fetus.

The preparedness of the seed of a tree to turn into a tree is more proximate and stronger than the preparedness of the soil. If dispositional contingencies were also intellectual concepts, like the other expressions involving contingency, they would not be subject to such attributions.

In order to evaluate this reasoning, it is necessary to refer to the character of the acquaintance of the mind with the concept of disposition or preparedness and to relate it to some objective existents which have this attribute. With experience of changes in objective things, man acquires knowledge that the appearance of every entified phenomenon depends on the occurrence of specific conditions and the removal of certain obstacles, which usually takes place gradually.

For example, the transformation of water into steam is conditional on a specific temperature which is gradually reached. The growth of a plant in a salty field is conditional on the removal of harmful minerals and the provision of useful minerals and the necessary water and heat, which do not appear all at once.

Noting the causal relation and the necessity for the occurrence of conditions requiring existence and nonexistence, when we consider matter (i. e., the material cause of a phenomenon) in relation to its given actuality, if all the necessary conditions are provided and all the obstacles are removed, then it will be completely prepared and ready for the reception of the new actuality.

If even a few of the existential conditions do not obtain, or some of the obstacles are not removed, then the preparedness will be remote and weak. If only some of the conditions exist or if most of the obstacles remain, then the preparedness of the matter will be very remote and weak.

In conclusion, in a material thing which possesses the preparedness for taking on a new actuality, other than the occurrence of conditions and the removal of obstacles, no other entified thing by the name of 'preparedness' obtains. Rather, preparedness, or disposition, is a rational concept which is abstracted from the occurrence of conditions and the removal of obstacles. Evidence for this is that this concept will not be abstracted until one compares the previous and present situations.

In the case of dispositions, the application of expressions such as proximate and remote, intense and weak, perfect and imperfect and the like, is figurative and indicates the abundance and paucity of conditions and obstacles.

What is interesting is that Sadr al-Muta'allihin, despite following the views of other philosophers about substance, accidents and some other topics, and considering dispositional possibility as a type belonging to the category of quality, has at times confessed to the fact that the concept of preparedness is abstracted from the removal of obstacles and impediments.

Among these, is his statement in the Asfar where he says, "Dispositional possibility depends on the removal of obstacles and impediments, so that if they are all removed it will be called a proximate potentiality (quwwah qarib), and if they are imperfectly removed it will be called a remote potentiality (quwwah ba'id).[2](#)

Likewise, in his Mabda wa Ma'ad,³ he is almost explicit that disposition is an abstracted concept and a secondary intelligible, and what is meant by saying that it has an objective existence is that it is attributed to objective things.

Conclusions

From the discussions about substance and accident, the following conclusions have been reached:

1. The concepts of substance and accident are secondary philosophical intelligibles, not primary intelligibles or whatish concepts. Therefore, they should not be considered as genera of whatnesses or as whatnesses in themselves.
2. Immaterial substances include complete immaterial existents (i.e., vertical and horizontal intellects), psychic substances, and imaginal substances. Material substance is the same as corporeal substance, and if specific forms be considered substances, material substances will be divisible into two subdivisions, body and specific forms.
3. Among the concepts which are called accidental categories are: psychic qualities and sensory qualities, which can be considered whatish concepts possessing entified objectivity. Continuous quantity, which includes geometrical quantities and time, must be considered an analytic accident which refers to dimensions of the existence of bodies. Also, qualities specific to quantity can be taken as analytic accidents.

However, other types of accidents are intellectual and abstracted concepts which have no objective existence themselves as independent types of accidents, though they possess an objective source in external reality from which they are abstracted.

4. Of the nine categories of accidents, six of them are specific to material things: where ('ayn), when (mata), position (wadh'), possession (jidah), activity (an yaf'al) and passivity (an yanfa'il), and likewise continuous quantity and quality specific to it, and sensible qualities. Discrete quantities (numbers) and relations are common between material and immaterial things. Psychic qualities are specific to immaterial psychic substances.

Concepts common to material and immaterial things (discrete quantity and relation) are respectival (i'tibari) and abstracted things, and this very commonality between immaterial and material things is a sign of their not being entified, for a unitary whatness cannot be material at some times and immaterial at other times.

Quantity is not a unitary whatness; rather it is a general concept which is applied to several whatnesses with different realities, some of which are specific to material things and others specific to immaterial things.

5. Analytic abstractions such as continuous quantities and their qualities have no existence other than that of their subjects. These kinds of accidents must be considered as mere aspects of the existence of substance, which with their own subjects correspond to a simple posit (ja'l basit).

Objective accidents, such as psychic qualities, have a special accidental existence, and the posit of them is composite (ja'l ta'lifi). Numbers and relational categories and dispositional qualities are intellectual concepts and they have no real posits.

6. Meanwhile, it has become known that if a concept has one of these signs, it will not be whatish:

- a) being predicated of immaterial and material things equally, such as numbers;
- b) Being predicated of the concept itself, like the number two, this may be predicated to two number twos.
- c) Commonality between the Necessary Existent and contingent existents, such as relations.
- d) Inclusion of the meaning of relation, such as all relational categories.
- e) Changing with respect without an external change, such as above and below.

1. Essential possibility (imkan dhati) is an intellectual characteristic for a whatness insofar as it essentially does not have a preponderance for existence or non-existence, and neither of these is necessary for it. Occurrent possibility (imkan wuqu'i) is another intellectual characteristic for a whatness insofar as its existence, in addition to being not essentially impossible, also does not imply any other impossibility. [Tr.]

2. Cf., Asfar, Vol. 2, p. 376.

3. Mulla Sadra, Mabda' wa Ma'ad, p. 318–319.

Lesson 49: The Reality of Knowledge

Introduction

Many issues, most of which have to do with epistemology, can be raised regarding knowledge, and in this book, as well, the most important of them were mentioned in the part on epistemology. However, other discussions of knowledge are also possible from an ontological perspective, and philosophers have mentioned these in various places in their philosophical discussions. Sadr al-Muta'allihin has set discussions about knowledge as an independent topic.

Among these discussions is that of the immateriality of knowledge and the knower, which is appropriate to discussion of the 'immaterial and material,' and for this reason we mention it in this section, and following this, we take up the problem of the unity of the knower and the known.

Regarding the ontology of knowledge several questions may be raised, such as, what is the reality of knowledge and whether all types of knowledge have a single whatness, or at the very least, whether they all belong to a single specific category, and whether all types of knowledge are immaterial or whether they are all material, or are some of them immaterial and others material?

In order to answer such questions it is first necessary to take a glance at the types of knowledge, which were discussed to some extent in the part on epistemology.

A Review of the Types of Knowledge

Awareness of an existent is either obtained without the intermediary of a form or concept, in which case it is called 'presentational knowledge,' or it occurs through the intermediary of a sensory or imaginary form or through a rational or prehensive (wahmi) concept, in which case it is called 'acquired knowledge' and is specific to souls attached to matter.

A level of the existence of the soul called 'mind' (dhin) is considered to be like a receptacle for acquired knowledge, and mind is said to have various levels and aspects. Some of its levels oversee others, so that the lower levels obtain judgments concerning external reality in relation to the mind and another knowledge corresponding to this is then obtained, as discussed in Lesson Nineteen.

Human awareness of a single real state of affairs (nafs al-amr) is reflected in the mind in the form of a proposition, the simplest form of which is a predicative proposition which in turn may be divided into simple existential propositions (halliyyah basitah), compound propositions (halliyyah murakkabah), and other sorts of propositions.

In a predicative proposition there are at least two mental concepts, one of which is the subject and the other the predicate, and man takes into consideration the relation between them and makes a judgment of establishment (thubut) for affirmative propositions (qadhiyyah mujabah) or of absence of establishment for negative propositions, although there are differences of opinion in this field which were indicated in Lesson Fourteen.

Judgment or assertion (in technical terms) is obtained when a person believes in the purport of the proposition, even if the belief is mere opinion. The belief of a person does not always correspond to reality, and sometimes one may have beliefs about which one is convinced and definite but which are contrary to reality, cases of which are called compound ignorance.

Considering these points, acquired knowledge may be investigated along various lines, and each case may be discussed separately, but that which is usually taken up as a topic of discussion is the immateriality of perception, especially rational perception.

The Reality of Knowledge by Presence

In presentational knowledge, the essence of the known is present to the knower, and the knower perceives an entified existence, and this perceiving is not something external to the essence of the knower, but rather is an aspect of his existence, and is similar to the analytical accidents of a body which are considered to be aspects of its existence.

In other words, just as extension is not something separate from the existence of a body, but is a concept which the mind obtains through its own analysis, so too, knowledge by presence does not have an existence separate from the existence of the knower. The concepts of knowledge and knower are obtained through mental analysis of the existence of the knower.

An instance of it in the case of God Almighty is His Sacred Essence, which is neither substance nor accident, and in the case of creatures, is their rational or spiritual substance itself. Naturally, such knowledge will be neither an accident nor a quality.

Knowledge by presence may be divided into kinds, about some of which all of the Islamic philosophers are in agreement, and there is disagreement about others.

To explain, the known in presentational knowledge is sometimes the essence of the knower himself, such as self-knowledge in the case of souls and complete immaterial existents. In these cases the knower and the known do not have numerically different existences, and the difference between being the knower and being the known is respectival (i'tibari) and will depend on mental respect.

This is the kind of knowledge by presence about which there is general agreement among philosophers, including the Peripatetics and the Illuminationists. Sometimes the knower and known have numerically distinct existences, but not in the sense that one of them is completely separate and independent of the other. But is the very dependence and relation to the other, such as the knowledge of the existence-giving cause for its effect and vice versa. In this way two other kinds of presentational knowledge are obtained, one is the knowledge of the emanating cause for its effect and the other is the knowledge of the effect for the cause.

These two kinds are accepted by the Illuminationists and by Sadr al-Muta'allihin and his followers. All of them agree that the effect's presentational knowledge of its cause is specific to immaterial effects, for material existence is diffusion itself in the realm of space and time, and has no presence by which to perceive the essence of its cause.

However, with regard to the cause's presentational knowledge of its effect, Sadr al-Muta'allihin and some of his followers believed that in this case as well, the effect must be immaterial, and that basically knowledge about material existence insofar as it is material is not obtained, for particulars diffused in time and space have no presence that the essence of the knower might perceive.

However, others such as Muhaqqiq Sabzavari do not accept this condition for this kind of knowledge. They hold that the absence of material particulars from one another is not incompatible with their having a presence in relation to an existent which existentially encompasses them, as the diffusion of temporal existents in the realm of time is not incompatible with their collection in relation to the realm of perpetuity (dahr) and the existents encompassing time, and this is the correct position.

A fourth kind of knowledge by presence is also imaginable, and this is the knowledge of one another of two immaterial effects at the same level, but to establish that there is such a kind of knowledge by proof is difficult. It is to be concluded that in all the kinds of knowledge by presence, knowledge is the essence of the knower himself and is immaterial, and naturally it is not a kind of psychic accident or quality, although it is possible for the known to be a substance or an accident, and according to the endorsed position, will be either immaterial or material.

The Nature of Acquired Knowledge

Without a doubt, knowledge in the sense of definite belief, as opposed to opinion and doubt, is nevertheless similar to opinion and doubt in that it is a mental state or quality, and like other types of mental qualities, it is devoid of matter, for it does not make sense to suppose that a material accident occurs in an immaterial subject.

However, judgment about knowledge in the sense of logical propositions and their parts requires further attention, for as was indicated, a proposition is composed of different parts which generally cannot all be considered psychic qualities. Perhaps the reason for differences of opinion among some philosophers is that in some cases they consider one part of a proposition and in other cases another.

In any case, the pillars of a predicative proposition, which are its subject and predicate, are two independent concepts, each of which is separately conceivable and without need of conceiving something else. But the case is different regarding relation and judgment, for they cannot occur without conceiving the subject and predicate, and their concepts have prepositional and relative meanings.

On the other hand, the concept of subject and predicate refer to substances and accidents, essences and objective attributes and states of affairs (nafs al-amr). However, relation is something related to the one who relates, and does not refer to an objective instance. Likewise, judgment is the activity of the one who judges, and can only refer to a kind of unity or union between the instance of the subject and the instance of the predicate, but it itself does not have an instance in the external world. (Take note.)

For this reason it may be said that relating something to another thing is a mental activity, and the soul is the creative agent of the relation. Likewise, the judgment upon which the strength of a proposition rests and by means of which an assertive proposition becomes distinct from a mere collection of ideas is the action of the soul.

However, the idea of the subject or of the predicate does not depend on the action of the soul, and it is possible that it may appear in the mind involuntarily, although it requires a kind of attention of the soul.

It may be concluded that the dependence of relation and judgment on the soul is a 'productive dependence' (qiyam suduri); however, the dependence of the idea of the subject and predicate may be considered a 'dissolving dependence' (qiyam hululi), and their existence can be interpreted as a kind of 'impression in the mind.'

However, it must be noted that this impression and engraving is not like the drawing of a picture on paper or some other material subject; rather it is a quality of the soul, and is immaterial. For material accidents have a relation of position to their subjects, are ostensible by the senses, and are divisible subordinate to their subjects, while such things are not possible for the soul and things pertaining to it.

The productive dependence of relation and judgment [on the soul], though by itself not a reason for their being immaterial, nevertheless, observing that existence is parasitic on the existence of the subject and predicate, their immateriality is also established. In addition to this, their indivisibility is the best reason for their being immaterial.

The Immateriality of Perception

Reviewing the types of knowledge and observing the unity of knowledge by presence with the essence of the immaterial knower, and that knowledge, in the sense of belief and mental forms and concepts, is a psychic quality, and observing that relation and judgment play the role of intermediaries among them, the immateriality of all the types of knowledge becomes clear. In reality, their immateriality is proven by way of the immateriality of the knower.

However, there are also other ways of proving the immateriality of knowledge and perception, some of which will be mentioned. But first, we should point out that the terms knowledge and perception in these discussions are used as synonyms and include sensation, imagination and reasoning.

1. The first argument for the immateriality of perception, namely, 'the argument of the impossibility of impressing the larger in the smaller,' is famous, and one version of it is the following.

Sensory vision is the lowest kind of perception which is imagined to be material, and materialists have interpreted it as physio-chemical and physiological actions and reactions. However, by paying precise attention to this very kind of perception it becomes clear that the perception itself cannot be considered to be material, and the material actions and reactions can be accepted only as preparatory conditions, for we see large forms which cover an area of dozens of square meters which are several times larger than the area of our entire bodies, let alone the visual organs or the brain!

If these perceptual forms were material and projected in the organs of vision or other organs of the body, these forms could never be larger than the size of their locations, for material projection and impression

without correspondence to a location is impossible. Observing that we see these perceptual forms within ourselves, we cannot but accept that they are related to a plane of the soul (martabah-ye mithali-ye nafs, the imaginal plane of the soul), and in this way, both their own immateriality and that of the soul are proven.

Some materialists have replied that what we see are little pictures like microfilms which come into existence in the nervous system, and that with the help of context and making relative comparisons we find out their real sizes.

But this nostrum will not solve the problem, for, first of all, knowing the size of that which is represented by a form is different from seeing a large form, and secondly, assuming that the visible form is very little, and that we enlarge it with skills obtained from experience and through the use of context and by making relative comparisons, as if they were put under a magnifying glass of the mind, finally we still find the enlarged form in the mind, and the above-mentioned reason would be exactly repeated regarding this mental or imaginary form.

2. Another argument is that if sensory perception were a kind of material action and reaction, it would always occur whenever the material conditions were satisfied, while most of the time despite the satisfaction of the material conditions, the perception does not occur because of the attention of the soul to another matter.

Hence, it may be concluded that having perceptions depends on the attention of the soul and cannot be considered a kind of material action and reaction, even though these actions and reactions play an introductory role for the occurrence of perception, and as a result of the attachment of the soul to the body, the soul is in need of material grounds and preparatory conditions.

3. The third argument is that we can perceive two visible forms together and compare them with each other, so as to find, for example, that they are distinct, similar or identical to each other, or that one is larger than the other. Assuming that each of them is impressed in a part of the body, and that their perception is that very impression, this implies that every part of the perceptual organ perceives that very form impressed in itself and is unaware of the other forms.

So, what perceptual faculty perceives them together and compares them? If it is assumed that there is another material organ which perceives them together, the same problem will be repeated, for each material organ possesses parts, and if perception means the impression of forms in a material location each part will perceive the form impressed in it, and in conclusion, no comparison will be performed.

So, there is no other alternative but to accept that a simple perceptual faculty perceives both of them, and finds both of them with its own unity and simplicity. Such a faculty can be neither a material substance nor a material accident. Therefore, perception will not be the impression of a form in a material location. With this argument, it is also proved that perception and the perceiver are both immaterial.

4. The fourth argument is that we sometimes perceive something and remember it after the passage of many years. If it is assumed that past perception is a special sort of material effect in one of the organs of the body, then after the passage of dozens of years it would have to be erased or changed, especially given the fact that the cells of the body change every so many years. Even if the cells remained, due to metabolism and the absorption of new nutrients, they will have changed, so how can we remember exactly that very form, or compare a new form with it, and perceive their similarities?

It is possible that it will be said that every cell or every new material part inherits the effects of the previous parts and retains them. But even under this assumption the question will remain as to what faculty perceives the unity or similarity of the previous and present forms.

It is clear that without this comparison and perception, remembrance and recognition could not take place. This argument becomes clearer with attention to the doctrines of substantial motion and the continual passing away of material things and in one respect is similar to the argument given in Lesson Forty-Four, where scientific and empirical premises were employed for the establishment of the immateriality of the soul.

Lesson 50: The Union of the Knower and the Known

Introduction

In his books the Shifa¹ and the Isharat,² Shaykh al-Ra'is (Ibn Sina) quotes several Greek philosophers to the effect that when a rational existent apprehends something it becomes united with it. He also reports that Porphyry has written an essay on the topic. However, he himself criticizes this theory and takes it to be impossible.

On the other hand, in his Asfar and other works, Sadr al-Muta'allihin confirms it and insists on the correctness of this theory, and he generalizes it to include all kinds of knowledge, even sensory perception.

This strange disagreement between the two great philosophers on this topic naturally arouses one's curiosity and interest in solving the problem and deciding between the two sides of the conflict. For this reason, at the end of this section we devote a lesson to this topic.

The Controversy

In the previous lesson we learned that in presentational knowledge of the self there is no numerical difference or distinction between the knower and the known. For this reason it should be called the unity (wahdat) of knowledge, knower and known. It was indicated that this knowledge by presence is accepted by the Peripatetics, including Ibn Sina.

Hence, there can be no disagreement about the union (ittihad) of the knower and the known concerning this case, especially as the expression 'union,' as opposed to the expression 'unity' (wahdat), is used in places where there is a kind of numerical difference and duality, though in the knowledge of the self there is no sort of numerical difference whatsoever, except for conceptual respect (i'tibar).

Apparently, Ibn Sina holds that those who accept the union of knower and known confine the discussion to intellection, as opposed to imagination (takhayyul) and sensation. At the most it can be extended to knowledge by presence, for in the language of the philosophers, the term 'intellect' ('aql) and its respectivals are used repeatedly with regard to knowledge by presence.

However, Sadr al-Muta'allihin expanded the scope of the discussion to include knowledge and perception without qualification, including acquired as well as presential knowledge, and including reasoning, imagination and sensation, and in all these cases he subscribed to the union of knower and known.

Explanation of the Topic

Before dealing with the core of the problem, the concept of 'union' (ittihad) must be made clear. We must see precisely what is intended by those who accept the union of the rational agent ('aql) with the intelligible (ma'qul) or the union of the knower with the known. Perhaps the correct perception of this meaning will provide considerable help in solving the problem.

The union of two existents will be either a union with respect to their whatnesses or with respect to their existences, or with respect to the existence of one and the whatness of the other.

However, the union of two complete whatnesses implies a transformation in whatness which is a contradiction, for the assumption of a complete whatness is the assumption of a specific conceptual mold which does not correspond to any other conceptual mold, and the union of two complete whatnesses would imply the correspondence of two distinct molds, such as the union of a circle and a triangle, to use an example of sensibles to illustrate the case regarding intelligibles.

The union of a complete specific whatness with an incomplete whatness (genus and difference), according to Aristotle's apparatus of genus and difference, is unobjectionable and ubiquitous, but this has no relation to intellection and perception. In intellection, such union does not occur. In addition

sometimes man intellects a whatness completely distinct from the whatness of man and such that there is no shared whatish property between them.

Therefore, if one were to believe that in perception the whatness of the perceiving existent becomes united with the whatness of the perceived existent, and, for example, that the whatness of man becomes one with the whatness of a tree or an animal, this would be contradictory and impossible.

Likewise, the union of the existence of the perceiver with the whatness of the perceived and the reverse are also impossible, and even if the union between existence and whatness is in some sense correct, it is the union of the existence of a single existent with its own whatness, not with the whatness of another existent.

Hence, the only hypothesis that can be maintained regarding the union of the subject and object of intellection is that of the union of their existences. Now we must see whether the union between two existences is possible or not. If it is possible, in how many ways can it occur?

Types of Union of Existence

The union of two or more entified existences, in the sense of a kind of dependence or interdependence between them, is possible, and may occur in several ways.

- a) The union of substance and accident, in view of the fact that an accident is dependent on a substance and cannot be independent of its subject. This union may be more firmly established on the basis the position of those who hold that an accident is an aspect or level of the existence of the substance.
- b) The union of matter and form, for the form cannot be separated from its locus and continue independently with its own existence. This kind of union is sometimes generalized to body and soul, given that it is not possible for the soul to come about without a body, although it may survive independently.
- c) The union of several matters in the shadow of a unitary form to which they are attached, such as the union of the elements which compose a plant or animal. This kind of union is really an accidental union, and a true union would only be obtained with the union of each element with the form.
- d) The union of prime matter, assumed to lack any sort of actuality, with the form which grants it actuality. Sometimes this kind of union is considered to be a real union. However, with the rejection of prime matter as a entified substance lacking actuality, there is no room left for this kind of union.
- e) Another kind of union can be held to occur between two effects of a single emanating cause, considering each of them to be united with the cause, such that separation between them is not possible, although calling such relations 'union' is not without imprecision.

e. The union between the existence–granting cause and its effect which is the relation itself and dependence on it. There is a specific sort of gradation between such a cause and its effects. This sort of union, according to the fundamentality of existence and its gradation, is called the ‘union of the real with the diluted’ (ittihad haqiqah wa raqiqah).

It must be noted that the union under discussion is a union obtained as a result of perception, and this is the union of the knower with the existence of the known–in–itself (ma’lum bi al–dhat), that is, the very perceptual form which occurs in the mind, not union with an objective existent. Therefore, the union of matter and form, or objective substance and accident is irrelevant to this problem.

Considering the kinds of union and those philosophers hold acquired knowledge to be a psychic quality, it is easy to accept the first kind of union, and, naturally, those like Ibn Sina would not deny this sort of union.

However, Sadr al– Muta’allihin did not like this kind of union and he tried to prove another kind similar to the union of matter and form; that is, he considers the relation between the soul and perceptual forms to be like that of prime matter and its forms. Just as the actuality of prime matter is obtained in the shadow of its union with a form, actual intellection occurs for the soul in the shadow of union with intellectual forms.

A Review of the Theory of Sadr al–Muta’allihin

In order to make clear the theory of Sadr al–Muta’allihin, an excerpt from his own words is presented here:

The existence of the form which is actually intellectuated is the same as the existence of the intellecting faculty (‘aqiliyyah) for the soul (and in technical terms, its existence–in–itself is the same as its existence–for–the–other), and if it is supposed that the perceptual form has another existence, and that the relation of it to the perceiving existent is only the relation of an object and its locus, then one would have to be able to posit that each of them has an existence independent of the other, while the intellectuated form does not have an existence apart from this very aspect of being intellectuated, an aspect which is its very essence itself, whether or not the one who intellectuates it is outside of this essence.

Previously we said that correlatives (and among them the subject and object of intellection) are partners with respect to the degree of their existence. This judgment also holds for sensible forms.

...Others say: Psychic substance has a passive state in relation to intellectual form and that intellection is nothing other than this passivity. However, how can something essentially devoid of intellectual light perceive the intellectual form that essentially possesses the property of being intellectuated? Is it possible for a blind eye to see something?!

...In reality, the actual intellecting faculty (‘aqiliyyah) of the soul is like the actualization of prime matter by

means of a corporeal form, and just as matter in and of itself is not determinate, the soul in and of itself does not intellect, and becomes an actual subject of intellection in the shadow of union with the intellectual form.³

There are several controversial points in this explanation:

1. Regarding his statement, “if the relation between the perceptual form and the perceiver is a relation of an object and its locus, then it must be possible to consider separate existences for each of them,” it may be asked what is meant by ‘separate existences.’ If what is meant is that the perceptual form can exist without a location, this implication would be incorrect because no accident or form which is in need of a location can occur without it.

If what is meant is that the intellect can consider them separately, this is also possible in the case of perceptual forms. In addition to this, Sadr al-Muta’allihin himself considers the existence of accidents to be aspects of the existence of substance, and he does not accept their independent existence. So, what would be wrong with considering knowledge a kind of accident and an aspect of the existence of the knower?

2. Regarding his claim, “Being actually intellectured is an essential property of intellectual forms, whether or not there is an intellect outside of its essence,” it must be said that the terms ‘being known’ and ‘being intellectured’ are relational, and the supposition of one without the supposition of an existent which is knower is impossible. At most it may be said that these two terms may at times apply to a single existent, such as knowledge of the self, and sometimes the term knower corresponds to an existent outside of the essence of the known.

The mere applicability of the term ‘object of intellection’ (ma‘qul) to something is no reason to suppose that the term ‘subject of intellection’ (‘aqil) is also true of the whatness or existence of that very thing.

In other words, the additional concept of ‘object of intellection’ cannot be considered to be essential for something (whether ‘essential’ is understood in accordance with the Isagoge, or in accordance with the Kitab al-Burhan [Aristotle’s logic]) so that with the help of the principle of ‘the equality of correlatives’ the property of being ‘subject of intellection’ may be established for its essence.

Moreover, a requirement of the above-mentioned principle, as Shaykh al-Ra’is (Ibn Sina) states in his Ta’liqat, is ‘equality in implication, not in the level of existence.’⁴ It may be concluded that the actuality of the property of being an object of intellection for a perceptual form does not require anything beyond that it possess an actual intellecting subject, whether in its own essence or outside of it.

3. As to the analogy between the passivity of the soul for perceptual forms and a blind eye, it must be said that, firstly, it is possible for a person to consider the soul the agent of the perceptual form, as in the cases of judgment and abstracted concepts and all logical and philosophical secondary intelligibles; secondly, why not compare the soul with a seeing eye which obtains actual vision when faced with a

visible object?

As for the analogy between the soul and prime matter, according to the accepted theory, which denies prime matter that lacks actuality, there is no need for further explanation of it.

Inquiry into a Problem

Careful attention to the points mentioned makes clear that the relation between the knower and the known cannot be explained in one way for all cases; rather, giving due consideration to the kinds of knowledge involved, each case must be reviewed separately to determine the relation. We now list the conclusions reached thus far:

1. In the case of presentational knowledge of an essence, the knowledge, the knower, and the known have a single existence, and there is no sort of numerical difference to be found among them, except according to differences in rational respects. If the expression 'union' (ittihad) is applied in such cases it is because of the numerical differences among the respects suggested; otherwise, we would have to use the expression 'unity' (wahdat). And there is general agreement on the unity of the knower and the known in this case.
2. What is meant by those who believe in the union of the knower and the known is not the union of the knower and the accidentally known (ma'lum bi al-'aradh), but the union of the knower and the known-by-essence (ma'lum bi al-dhat; i.e., the perceptual form).
3. Likewise, what they mean is not the union of the whatnesses of the knower and known, for this would require a change in whatness, a contradiction in terms.
4. The union of the existence of one thing with the whatness of another is also obviously incorrect.
5. In the knowledge by presence that the emanating cause has of its effect and vice versa, a 'union of the real with the diluted,' or, in other words, a graded union of levels of existence, is obtained, for the existence of one of them is the very relation and dependence on the other and is not independent in itself.
6. The knowledge by presence that two immaterial effects have of one another, assuming that there is such knowledge, can be considered an accidental union between the knower and the known, for each of them has an essential union with its emanating cause.
7. In acquired knowledge of the type which is considered to be the action of the soul, in which the soul is considered to be an agent by self-disclosure (f'il bi al-tajjali), an agent by agreement (f'il bi al-ridha) or an agent by foreknowledge (f'il bi al-'inayah), the union here may also be taken to be a kind of graded union of levels of existence.

8. In the type of acquired knowledge which is considered to be a quality of the soul, the sort of union which holds between that which is known-by- essence—a specific quality of the soul—and the substance of the soul is one between a substance and accident.

- [1.](#) Cf., Al-Shifa, 'Tabi'at,' fann 6, maqalah 5, bab 6.
- [2.](#) Cf., Isharat, namat 7.
- [3.](#) Cf., Asfar, Vol. 3, pp. 313–320; Vol. 6, pp. 165–168.
- [4.](#) Cf., Ta'liqat, pp. 76, 91, 95

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