

## BELIEF IN GOD BY INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE IN MULLĀ ṢADRĀ'S PHILOSOPHY (A CRITIQUE TO ATHEISTIC EVIDENTIALISM)

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### ABSTRACT

The epistemological approach of evidentialism maintains that a belief must have sufficient evidence in order to be rationally justified. The belief in God is no exception, it must pass as well the litmus test of evidence as a measure of its rational justification. But what counts as evidence? Responding to this question and identifying the nature of the evidence that can be used to justify belief has become a point of contention among philosophers. While some evidentialists have denied the possibility of evidence for the belief in God, others have attacked the very basis of the evidentialist claim by promoting belief in God without evidence. The following paper aims at proposing an alternative way or approach to argue and to justify belief in God, that is, intuitive knowledge. To excute this aim, this paper tries at first to describe briefly those two currents of thought and, further, examines and criticizes them by discussing and analyzing the notion of innate concepts and presentational knowledge as known by an intuitive knowledge based on Mullā Ṣadrā's view. According to some philosophers, this type of knowledge, presentational knowledge, can be included as "evidence" even from the evidentialist point of view which does not limit evidence to conceptual knowledge. By this, critical analysis will be applied here as a method to conduct the research.

**Keywords:** *belief in God, sufficient knowledge, justification, evidentialism, al-‘ilm al-“huḍūrī (presentational knowledge), innate concepts, Mullā Ṣadrā.*

### ABSTRAK

Pendekatan epistemologis paham evidensialisme meyakini bahwa sebuah keyakinan sepatutnya memiliki bukti atau berpijak pada fakta untuk dapat diterima (dibenarkan) secara rasional. Tidak terkecuali keyakinan atau iman kepada Tuhan, harus pula berpijak pada bukti sebagai tolak ukur justifikasi rasionalnya. Akan tetapi apa yang dimaksud dengan bukti/fakta? Menanggapi pertanyaan ini dan menjelaskan hakikat 'bukti' yang dapat digunakan untuk membenarkan keyakinan telah menjadi hal yang diperdebatkan di kalangan para filsuf. Sementara sebagian

(filsuf) penganut paham evidensialisme telah menolak kemungkinan adanya fakta untuk membuktikan iman kepada Tuhan, sebagian lainnya telah mengkritik basis (landasan argumentasi) klaim penganut paham evidensialisme dengan mengajukan (argumen) iman kepada Tuhan tanpa [harus berlandaskan pada] 'bukti'. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengajukan suatu jalan atau pendekatan alternatif untuk menjelaskan dan memberi argumen terhadap iman kepada Tuhan, yaitu pengetahuan intuitif. Untuk mewujudkan tujuan ini, tulisan ini berupaya, pertama-tama, mendeskripsikan secara ringkas kedua arus pemikiran di atas dan, selanjutnya, menelaah dan mengkritik kedua arus pemikiran tersebut dengan mendiskusikan serta menganalisis gagasan konsep-konsep bawaan dan pengetahuan presentasional yang dikenal sebagai pengetahuan intuitif berdasarkan pandangan Mullā Shadrā. Menurut sebagian filsuf, pengetahuan jenis ini, pengetahuan presentasional, dapat dimasukkan sebagai « fakta », bahkan dari sudut pandang paham evidensialisme sekalipun, karena paham ini tidak membatasi fakta hanya pada pengetahuan konseptual. Berdasarkan hal ini, analisis kritis akan digunakan sebagai metode untuk melakukan penelitian dalam tulisan ini.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *iman kepada Tuhan, pengetahuan yang memadai, justifikasi, evidensialisme, pengetahuan presentasional, konsep-konsep bawaan, Mullā Shadrā.*

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## Introduction

Commonly, belief or faith, in religious language, is a state of mind which confesses the existence of thing and all related to it (such as its properties, behavior, and so forth), and a factor from which an attitude emerges for that thing (Bunnin and Yu 2004, 80). A belief is usually preceded by knowledge of an object, even though in the form of simple information solely (Audi 1998, 21). When a person says that "I believe in A", it means that he confesses 'A' based on knowledge of him about 'A'. If the object 'A' which he believes in based on knowledge of it, is justified that it is true and correspondent to the reality, then his belief can be considered as rational-true belief or *rational-justified true belief*, in epistemological terminology.

Accordingly, in religious context, a belief (the most fundamental one is belief in God or 'faith') can be identified into two kinds; a belief with and without supporting by rational argumentation. Some religious peoples consider that the belief in religious case is different from common one (non

religious belief). Religious belief or 'faith' is a belief which has no relation to rationality or rational argumentation at all (Solomon 2001, 132). They maintain that 'belief' is a psychological state, it is not a result of thinking. While, some others sound off conversely that a belief, especially belief in God, should be based on rationality. Since, as we know, there is no religion denies the role of rationality; rather, all religions realize that human being has been bestowed 'intellect' or 'reason' by God in order to understand everything including his/her religious status, in such a way his/her religion is not mere doctrinal in question. However, in fact, to justify rationally the religious belief, especially belief in God, is not easy, but it does not mean there is no possibility at all to base the religious belief on rationality.

To some philosophers, the criterion that must be possessed in the notion of rationality is to test it by evidence. With respect to the belief in God, they hold that in order to decide that belief in God is rational; we have to find out a sufficient evidence for the existence of God. The crucial question here is, *can a person believe in something rationally without having evidence for that belief?* A distinction should be made here with regard to the meaning of evidence. In the broad sense of the term, we may say that a person cannot believe something rationally without having evidence for the belief, whether it is propositional (syllogistic) or non-propositional (non-syllogistic) in nature.

Many philosophers, both theists and atheists, have accepted this criterion for the rationality of belief. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), and many others have considered it appropriate to apply this test of rationality to the belief in God. The relationship between religious belief and evidence is quite close in the sense of rational belief. Locke contends that faith is wholly based upon evidence. In contrast, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke states:

Faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind: which if it be regulated, as is our duty, cannot be afforded to anything, but upon good reason; and so cannot be opposite to it... This at least is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever mistakes he runs into: whereas he that makes use of the light and faculties God has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover truth, by those helps and abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his duty as a rational creature (Locke 1998, xvii, 24, 413-414).

To find a sufficient evidence in epistemic justification for the belief in God, as mentioned above, is surely difficult, if not to say impossible, since the object to believe in, that is God, is not sensual or visible object which is

easy to prove as what person can do in physical objects. In philosophy, God is considered as the Entity that is beyond human's categories of mind or intellect. Therefore, some philosophers, based on their epistemic analysis, seem to empower religious people's point of view that the belief in God can not be rationally justified and they incline to reject the role of intellect in the matter of knowing God. One of the best arguments proposed by them is that the belief in God is not the case to justify by means of rational effort, for there is no sufficient evidence to support it. In epistemology and philosophy of religion, this view on justification of belief is best known by evidentialism.

This theory maintains that a belief ought to be based on sufficient evidence in order to be rationally acceptable in the sense of epistemic justification. The quality of believer's evidence surely determines whether his or her belief in a thing is epistemologically justified or not (Conee and Feldman 2004, 83). Roderick Chisholm (1916-1999) states that to point out the distinction between a person who just believes in a thing and a person who has knowledge which leads him to have a strong belief in it, is the ability to definite the evidence they have. Since, mere belief has no evidence, while a belief which based on certain knowledge must have sufficient evidence (Chisholm 1989, 1). Knowledge on which a true belief is constructed should demand evidence. It will be sounded peculiarly to say that "Andi knows P" but he does not have evidence for his belief that "P is true". With one exception to belief in God or faith, if he departs from a true knowledge, he must have sufficient evidence, for if it is not so, it is just a belief or a dissimulation.

Evidentialism as what established whether implicitly by Chisholm or explicitly by Earl Conee (1950), Richard Feldman (1948) and William Clifford identifies that a belief, including the belief in God, could be able to justify rationally, if and only if it is based on sufficient evidence, but if not so, it is only irrational one and is unjustified epistemically. Moreover, some evidentialists criticize and challenge theism with contending that there is no sufficient evidence for the belief in God to be rationally justified, therefore, religious belief is epistemically irrational (Dole and Chignell 2005, 18).

This claim, of course, need for a typical response from theists, that is, to attempt to provide sufficient evidence for it, or at least to show that the belief in God is rational or plausible. What is important to note is that theists can claim to be rational or warranted in their beliefs even if they cannot convince atheists that God exists. But, before going to provide an argument for showing that the belief in God is rational. The crucial questions should be proposed here are 'does belief in God need evidential support to be rationally justified?' What evidentialism means by evidence exactly? Is evidence in their thoughts restricted into inferential one in the sense

of inferential knowledge such as what set forward by some arguments; ontological, teleological, and cosmological ones?

This paper aims at examining and criticizing the claim of evidentialism with respect to the belief in God by means of giving response to those previous questions and proposing an alternative way in upholding the belief in God. Here we try to establish that the belief in God can be reached through intuition, i.e., knowledge which is based on a direct awareness and self-evident in the sense of justification. In other words, It is possible to have unmediated knowledge of God which is not based on inference. In so far as it is not based on inference, the belief in God is innate or immediate, according to the foundationalist perspective. It means that the belief which emerges in a believer is not justified by inference or indirect justification but by immediate or direct justification (W. Alston 1976, 166). Furthermore, it can also be considered as rationally justified even using the evidentialist criterion since it is based on sufficient evidence, that is, the direct awareness of God through what known by presentational knowledge. In other words, the notion of evidence is broad and can be extended to include personal and subjective evidence as well. We will show that personal evidence can be reckoned as sufficient evidence, because it is considered to be a convincing evidence for individuals.

By this, in presenting this an alternative way as the response and critique of the evidentialism's claim, this paper will elaborate the case based on Mullā Ṣadrā's view which well known as one of the comprehensive expositions on intuitive knowledge among Islamic thoughts, especially in Islamic philosophy and mysticism.

## Sufficient Evidence in Epistemic Justification

The word 'evidence' is derived from the Latin *ex videre* which means 'to see'. The term is used to state the justification of a belief or to justify what people believe in is true. Evidence is something used to support or reject some claim by which people can reach a belief in it (Bunnin and Yu 2004, 233). It should be noted that an epistemologist can only talk about subjective evidence through which one reaches truths. In other words, in epistemology, evidence can be in form of beliefs or propositions that may be used to justify other beliefs or propositions (2004, 233). From Kant's point of view, knowledge is a cognitive attitude that is both subjectively and objectively certain; the knower knows that the grounds of his knowledge are adequate. But belief or faith is based on the grounds that are subjectively convincing (Kant 1965, 645–52).

Evidentialists maintain that a belief is rationally justified if and only if there is an adequate or sufficient reason to support it (Conee and

Feldman 2004, 83). But what does 'adequate' or 'sufficient' evidence mean? It is difficult to give an exact answer; perhaps we can say that sufficient evidence is one that is convincing – i.e., one that results in the conviction or confidence to accept a belief and would be unreasonable for it not to accept. But what the sufficient evidence is that can be used to support the doxastics attitudes or individual's belief? Epistemological evidentialism has no answer but a 'good reason'. For evidentialists, reason can be good or bad, and only good reason that is indicative of truth concerning a proposition can be evidence that support a belief. The following examples may provide us more obvious understanding of what evidentialists want to say with good and bad reason; having a tree-ish experience or being appeared to tree-ly in normal circumstances is a good reason for one to believe the proposition "there is a tree" is true. While, simply wanting there to be a tree is a bad reason for one to believe that "there is a tree" (McCain 2014, 32). From these two examples, evidentialists will consider that the first case has evidence that supports believing that "there is a tree", that is, the experience on a tree. In contrast to the latter one, it has no evidence in support of "there is a tree". So, we may suggest that one needs evidence for a belief to the degree to which he or she may accept it and that degree is the good reason.

However, the sufficiency of evidence, that is the good reason as mentioned above, depends upon the individual's experience on something whether concrete or abstract. This experience of the self, generally, can be categorized into two kinds; psychologism and anti-psychologism. The former holds that evidence consists of psychological items, while the latter holds that evidence consist of non-psychological items (McCain 2014, 35). Further, the most prominent form of psychologism holds that evidence consists solely of non-factive mental states or events by which one can be in even if they misrepresent the world. The non-factive mental states that psychologism counts as evidence are ones that represent the world as being a certain way – things such as beliefs, introspective experiences, perceptual experiences, memorial experiences, and perhaps others such as intuitions and rational insights. It represents the world through phenomenal force to us in such a way that it 'feel as if' the representation is true and we can tell that it is true. While, the most prominent form of anti-psychologism is 'propositionalism'. It holds that evidence consist of only propositions whether factive or non-factive<sup>1</sup> (2014, 35–36).

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<sup>1</sup> Factive proposition is the view that evidence consists only of true propositions. While non-factive is the view that evidence consists only of propositions, but those propositions can be true or false (McCain 2014, 36).

By this, we can consider that the sufficient evidence to support the belief is not restricted into evidence which constructed from factive mental states (based on factual/empirical experience) or anti-psychologism on a thing and reasoning by inferential method, but also evidence which is empowered by other kinds of non-factive mental or psychological states such as intuitions and rational insights with their best characteristics is that the relevant mental states represent the world as being particular way.

## Intuitive Knowledge and Its Validity

Etymologically, intuitive knowledge is derived from the word 'intuition', in Latin word '*interi*' means look at, look upon or inspect. Terminologically, in epistemology, it is the innate power of mind to see or directly apprehend truths, without the aid of sensory stimuli, and without prior inference or discussion (Bunnin and Yu 2004, 358). Intuitive knowledge, then, is opposite of inferential knowledge and reasoning. It is direct presentation of an object in the mind or soul; an object attends directly in the mind of subject without intermediary of a concept or perception. Therefore, through intuition subject does not know the concept of object but the object itself. Intuition can be empirical such as a direct presentation of sensible objects in the mind; practical such as a direct awareness of whether a particular circumstance fits with a general rule; or intellectual such as an apprehension of universals, concepts, self-evident truths, or ineffable objects, e.g., God (2004, 358).

In Western tradition, this kind of knowledge is not a strange thing. It has been well known among thinkers and philosophers, Henry Bergson (1859-1941) was one of them, we can say. He divided knowledge into two kinds; *knowledge about* and *knowledge of*. The former constitutes discursive or symbolical knowledge, while the latter is direct or immediate knowledge or intuitive knowledge, since it is grasped without intermediary. Further he explained that discursive or inferential knowledge tries to assert to us "about" a thing in acting as a translation of it. It depends on any reasoning as its reference and, therefore, the result is surely determined by that reference used. Other wise, intuitive knowledge is an absolute immediate knowledge, it is not a relative and intermediary one (Kattsoff 1992, 145–46). Accordingly, for him, intuition or intuitive knowledge is a simple act. It is an act directly opposed to analysis, for it is a viewing in totality, as an absolute; it is a synthesis, not an analysis, not an intellectual act, for it is an immediate, emotional synthesis (Gunn 2002, 43).

Occasionally, among Western philosophers, intuition was considered in the same meaning with the innate ideas, even though they are different in



some cases, that are knowledge or ideas which are not derived from sensual experience but which originate in the mind itself. Some philosophers such as Descartes (1596-1650), Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) held that human beings have some innate ideas which are not rooted in the senses; rather, these ideas exist in the mind before any perception by the senses. Descartes held that some terms like existence, unity, shape, time, motion, and distance are innate ideas; according to him, the mind obtained these without any sense perception. Descartes says:

If we bear well in mind the scope of our senses, and what it is exactly that reaches our faculty of thinking by way of them, we must admit that in no case are the ideas of them presented to us by the senses just as we form them in our thinking. So much so that there is nothing in our ideas which is not innate to the mind or the faculty of thinking, with the sole exception of those circumstances which relate to experience such as the fact that we judge that this or that idea which we have immediately before our mind refers to a certain thing situated outside us. We make such a judgment not because these things transmit ideas to our minds through the sense organs, but because they transmit something which, at exactly that moment, gives the mind occasion to form these ideas by means of the faculty innate to it. Nothing reaches our mind from external objects through the sense organs except certain corporeal motions, as our author himself admits in article nineteen, in accordance with my own principles. But neither the motions themselves nor the figures arising from them are conceived by us exactly as they occur in the sense organs, as I have explained at length in my Optics. Hence it follows that the very ideas of the motions themselves and of the figures are innate (*innatas*) in us. The ideas of pain, colors, sounds and the like must be all the more innate, if on the occasion of certain corporeal motions, our mind is to be capable of representing them to itself, for there is no similarity (*similitudinilcm*) between these ideas and the corporeal motions (Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch 1985, 304).

However, with respect to its very original meaning, intuition has become an alternative way for who can not reach the truth of things, especially in metaphysical entities, by means of conceptual or intellectual knowledge. It is what suggested by many mystical thinkers and religious philosophers who are skeptical to the possibility of conceptual knowledge in revealing the mystery of metaphysical problems including the issues of divinity. To them, the issues of divinity such as the existence of God have no conceptual categories which reason or intellect can grasp, it beyond them even intellect itself. Therefore, mystical thinkers and religious philosophers only trust to this kind of knowledge. For some of them such as Ibn 'Arabi,



Suhrawardi, and Mullā Ṣadrā, who formulated and developed intuitive knowledge in Islamic world, intuitive knowledge is *dzauq* (inner sense of soul) which connected with the divine effulgence (*al-faiḍ al-ilāhī*) that illuminates the nature of all realities. Further, Ibn 'Arabī asserted that in contrast to speculative or intellectual knowledge which originates only the 'possibility' of truth, intuitive knowledge products the certainty of it. Speculative knowledge implies only the shadow of realities, while intuitive knowledge grasps the realities themselves (Afifi 1989, 154). Ibn 'Arabī preferred to call this kind of knowledge by the term *'ilm al-asrār* means knowledge of the secrets, while two other philosophers called it by *al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī* means the presentational knowledge, to differentiate with *al-'ilm al-ḥuṣūlī* means the acquired or conceptual knowledge (Nur 2012, 142). In fact, Mullā Ṣadrā has made a fundamental improvement of what Suhrawardi proposed concerning the presentational knowledge as the real knowledge to reveal the nature of realities, especially the knowledge of divinity. Ṣadrā's innovation on this kind of knowledge can be found in his original idea of *ittiḥād al-'āqil wa al-ma'qūl* (the unity of knower and known or subject and object). It is, to him, in presentational knowledge, the subject knows the object not by its concept but its existence itself attends in the mind of subject directly. By this, the object is the knowledge itself (*al-ma'lūm 'ain al-'ilm/al-'ilm wa al-ma'lūm syai'un wāḥid*), in such a way both unite. Ṣadrā asserted that "*In the presentational knowledge, the knowledge is the object itself*"<sup>2</sup> (Ṣadrā 1981, vol. VI, 231). He said also: "*The knower [the intellect or the faculty of intellection of the soul] unites with the object, while the imaginative and sensual faculties of the soul unite with each imaginal and sensual forms*"<sup>3</sup> (Ṣadrā 1981, vol. IV, 234). By this, in intuitive knowledge, there is no gap between subject and object; the gap which may give the room of fallacy and doubt for subject in knowing the object.

With respect to this having no intermediary by means of any concept which can make a gap between subject and object, intuitive knowledge is infallible, for in this case it is the very reality of object itself is observed and attending to the soul of subject. Taqi Mishbah Yazdi explained that:

Error in perception is imaginable when there is an intermediary between the perceiving person and perceived entity, and knowledge is realized by means of it. In this case the question arises as to whether

<sup>2</sup> The original text: "«[أن] في [العلم] الحضوري، العلم عين المعلوم.»"

<sup>3</sup> The original text: «العاقل [أي النفس العاقلة أو القوة العقلية من النفس] يتحد بالمعقول والنفس الخيالية والحسي في: النفس، يتحد بصورها الخيالية والحسية.»

this form or concept which mediates between the perceiving subject and the perceived object and plays the role of reflecting the perceived object represents the perceived object precisely and corresponds to it perfectly or not. Unless it is proved that this form and concept corresponds precisely to with respect to the validity or the perception. However, in the case that the thing or person perceived is present before the perceiver without any intermediary with its own very existence, or is united with it, no error can be supposed, and one cannot ask whether the knowledge corresponds with what is known or not, for in this case the knowledge is the known itself (Yazdī 1999, 105–6).

## Evidentialism's View on Belief in God

As mention earlier, in evidentialism's epistemology, that the criterion of true belief is grounding it on the evidence. It is including the belief in God that on the basis of the evidentialist approach, some philosophers such as David Hume (1711), J. L. Mackie, Willaim K. Clifford (1845-1879), Brand Blanshard (1892-1987), Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), Michael Scriven (1928), Antony Flew (1923-2010) and Michael Scriven who reject the belief in God as rational belief since it, as they assert, has no sufficient (Clifford 1879, 345; Blanshard 1974, 400f; Russel 1957, 3ff; Scriven 1966, 87ff; Flew 1976, 22ff). Russell was once asked what he would say if, after dying, he were brought into the presence of God and asked 'why he had not been a believer?'. He replied, "I'd say 'Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence!'" (Salmon 1978, 176).

Evidentialism has emerged in the western philosophical thoughts in the sense of criticism toward all beliefs with no exception. It examined a belief to be rationally acceptable if it satisfies the reason, but if not so, that belief is irrational. In the case of religious belief, evidentialist philosophers insisted the objection that the belief in God is not rationally justified, at least, for two primary reasons: insufficient evidence and evidence to the contrary (usually the problem of evil) (Clark 1990). We may establish a syllogistic reasoning for the objection of evidentialists, as below:

- 1) Belief in God is rational if and only if there is sufficient evidence for the existence of God.
- (2) There is no sufficient evidence for the existence of God.
- (3) Therefore, belief in God is irrational.

Further, William Clifford, the nineteenth century British mathematician, physicist, and influential evidentialists, contends in the way to assert the objection above by stating "*It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone,*

to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (Clifford 1879, 183). Of course, the claim that he emphasized was a moral evaluation of believing, not an epistemic evaluation. According to Clifford's point of view, it is irrational or unreasonable to believe in something without sufficient evidence or argument, and the belief in God is not out of it. Similarly, in *Reason and belief*, Blanshard (d. 1987) says:

[...] everywhere and always belief has an ethical aspect. There is a thing as a general ethics of the intellect. The main principle of that ethic I hold to be the same inside and outside religion. This principle is simple and sweeping: Equate your assent to the evidence (Blanshard 1974, 401).

Some philosophers extended the notion of epistemic duty to include withholding belief from what is not supported by evidence. Richard Feldman (1948), for instance, holds that it implies that (1) we have a duty to believe what is supported by our evidence, as well as (2) a duty to withhold belief from what is not supported by our evidence. Both Locke and Clifford focus on the failures to act on the second duty, and discuss less about the first. Locke talks about the person who is "in love with his own fancies" and believes without a good reason. Clifford discusses our duty to question "all that we believe." His famous saying is only referring to the crime of believing without good evidence. But they could have also highlighted cases in which people fail to believe despite having good evidence (Feldman 2002).

However, if we take apart this evidentialists's objection to belief in God as rational belief, as what exposed in the syllogistic reasoning above, we will find its root in one of the epistemic doctrines, i.e., well known by classical foundationalism. This epistemic doctrine claims that an epistemological position that assumes knowledge must have a foundation i.e., all knowledge is traced back to certain self-evident axiomatic truth. In other words, the criterion of knowledge which is able to bring us to true belief is necessarily having a foundation by which it is based on. The foundation that classical foundationalism means is that self-evident axiomatic truth to where we can trace back all knowledge. In accordance, to evidentialism, this ultimate foundation is the evidence from which we can grasp knowledge of and belief in other thing and if not so, we cannot know and belief in it.

Therefore, according to evidentialism, we always need to evidence as a reason to know a thing is and in such a way we have our beliefs to be rationally justified. This sufficient evidence should either be a properly basic belief or eventually rooted on a properly basic belief. In other words, evidentialism is based on the principles of foundationalism. On the other hand, accounts of epistemic justification by foundationalists assert that

a belief is justified epistemologically only if it is either properly basic or ultimately grounded on properly basic beliefs. This very idea of grounding our beliefs on those which are properly basic is another way of saying our beliefs must be based on evidence, which is the position of evidentialism.

Now what we can say about belief in God with this position; what kind of evidence we have? Can belief in God be traced back to self-evident? Or is it self-evident? These questions must be proposed by evidentialists in the light of their objection to belief in God. These are typically because they subscribe to classical foundationalism. A belief can be held without argument or evidence only if it is self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible. For evidentialists, belief in God is not self-evident—it is not such that upon understanding the notion of God, you see that God exists. For example, evidentialist like Bertrand Russell understands the proposition “God exists” but he does not see it to be true. So, belief in God is not a good candidate for self-evidence. Belief in God, to them, is not evident to the senses because God, by definition, transcends or beyond the sensory world. God is out of our sight, hearing, touching, tasting or smelling. When we make claims such as “God spoke to us” or “we touched God,” we are using those expressions (spoke and touch) actually in a metaphorical sense, not a literal sense; literally, God is beyond our senses. So God’s existence is not evident to the senses. Therefore, to evidentialists, people might be wrong about God’s existence and so belief in God cannot be incorrigible. Of course, “it seems to them that God exists” could be incorrigible but God’s seeming existence is a long way from God’s existence (Clark 1990).

So, for evidentialists, belief in God is neither self-evident, nor evident to the senses, nor incorrigible. Therefore, belief in God, according to them based on the view of classical foundationalism, cannot properly be included among the foundations of one’s rational beliefs. Briefly, the belief in God has no any evidence to justify; therefore, it is irrational.

## **Presentational Knowledge as a Basis for Belief in God According to Mullā Ṣadrā**

As we explained above in introduction that Mullā Ṣadrā was one of Muslim thinkers and philosophers who continually devoted his attention to find an alternative method to solve any problem concerning the matters which are out of intellectual categories such as divinity or deity. He agreed with theologians and Sufists who consider that conceptual reasoning or discursive knowledge is inadequate to explain the very reality of thing which is immaterial

and unconceptual. To him, that alternative method is intuitive knowledge, i.e., knowledge by present or presentational knowledge (*al-'ilm al-Ḥuḍūrī*).

Mullā Ṣadrā was in the same position with other philosophers that a true belief should be based on the true knowledge, for it can be a reason why we belief in. It is no exception with the belief in God; for Ṣadrā, to have a true belief in Him we must have knowledge of Him. But, as we have already known, knowledge of God is not like knowledge of other objects. God is not any entity that our mind can grasp and express as the categories, even nothing at all we can have in our mind. He is beyond all categories, moreover beyond the mind itself. He is the Absolute, Indefinite, and Ineffable, that is, impossible to express Him through any concept of mind (Fazeli 2012, 184). Therefore, as the Sufis and some religious philosophers, Ṣadrā also realized such case and took intuitive method rather than discursive one. He developed the method that has been established by the Sufis and previous philosophers with a brilliant integration between revelational, discursive, and intuitive methods, that is, to understand the Divine Reality through revelation, reasoning and intuition.

With respect to intuitive method, he adopted what established by Suhrawardi in resolving many philosophical problems that could not be resolved by representational or conceptual knowledge (*al-'ilm al-Ḥuṣūlī*) such as how to know the self, that is, presentational knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) (Kalin 2010, 165).<sup>4</sup> This kind of knowledge is operative in human beings right from birth. Hence, even though human being has no inferential knowledge or abstract ideas at birth, his presentational knowledge is active, i.e., the self-consciousness or knowledge. One knows the self, as well as some of his innate inclinations, through knowledge by presence. One knows the actuality of his or her being, the feeling of hunger, pleasure and pain, the reality of the will and the like, through this knowledge. This kind of knowledge is certainly not derived from sensations and experiences, since it is not representational.

Furthermore, the most complete type of knowledge - that is, presentational knowledge - is the origin of all knowledge. That is to say,

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<sup>4</sup> In Islamic thoughts whether philosophy or mysticism, intuition has been distinguished into two kinds; intellectual intuition and spiritual intuition (*dhawq*). The former was established by philosophers and called it by *ḥads*, that is, a direct and fast reasoning by which the conclusion can be grasped without syllogistic process. While, the later was maintained by Sufis and they called it by *dzauq 'irfanī* or *kasyf*, that is, a brightness of inner or soul which grasped through contemplation and purifying the soul to see and understand an object, especially immaterial (Shah 2012, 157).

there is a faculty in human beings whose function is to “take a picture” so to speak of external objects. All of our mental forms which are recorded in our memory have been acquired by this faculty, and we may call it the faculty of imagination. Since this faculty has no independent existence and is a part of the human soul, it can make a link to the external object and “take a picture” providing that the human soul makes an existential relation with that external object. Accordingly, the chief condition to create the mental form is its presentational relation to the reality of the soul. This presentational link allows the soul to know the reality through knowledge by presence. In fact, the faculty of imagination converts this presentational knowledge to conceptual knowledge. In other words, when an object is present before a soul, the faculty of imagination creates a mental form of it (i.e. presentational knowledge) and transfers it to the memory. Hence, the origin of all knowledge is knowledge by presence. In his *Kitab al-Masha'ir*, Mullā Ṣadrā says:

Knowledge is nothing but presence of existence without any obstacles. Every comprehension is realized due to some mode of abstraction from matter and its obstacles. It is so, because matter is the source of privation and absence; since each part of the body is absent from the other components and absent from the totality, the totality becomes absent from the totality. Thus, the more intense is each form, in the sense of degree of purity from matter, the sounder is its presence to its inner-reality... (1984, 63).

Accordingly, our knowledge of these mental forms is actually presentational knowledge and not conceptual. There is no mediation between the subject and the mental form, since to assume this would entail an infinite regress. That is to say, if our knowledge of mental forms is mediated through other forms, then ostensibly, the latter would also need to be mediated through yet other forms, ad infinitum. In this case, we would not have any knowledge at all.

Mullā Ṣadrā agreed with most Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī and ibn Sīnā concerning the presentational knowledge and its two kinds, namely; knowledge of the soul about its essence and all states (psychological states) such as hurt, hungry, etc., and knowledge of the cause about its effect. The first is self-knowledge or consciousness; the self is aware of its reality as well as its properties and all states without any preceding conception. While in the later, the cause has direct consciousness concerning its effect in the sense of the necessity of its perfection. The cause is existential factor for the effect, in such a way it is impossible for the cause has no awareness of its effect. In these two kinds of presentational knowledge above, the dichotomy

of subject-object does not happen, since the known object and the knower are the same reality. There is no plurality or otherness between knowledge, the knower, and the known object.

Şadrā stated that knowledge of soul about its essence, properties, and faculties is illuminative and presentational. It is not knowledge through conception which is additional to the soul. The relation between soul and its essence, properties, and faculties is essential relation with no otherness or plurality in existence, in such a way enable the soul to reveal them directly (Şadrā 1981, vol. VI, 162-163). So does knowledge of the cause about its effect is direct and presentational. The existence of effect is illuminated from the existence of cause, so that knowledge of cause about its effect must be immediate as the necessity of its perfection. In the case of cosmology, Şadrā maintained that God's knowledge on His creatures is directly present and essential for Him. His knowledge is general and particular at once. He called knowledge of God on His creatures by '*al-'Ilm al-Ijmālī fī 'Ain Kashf al-Taḥṣīlī*'.

Furthermore, Şadrā agreed also with Suhrawardī, that in addition to two kinds above, there is another kind of peresentational knowledge, i.e., knowledge of effect on its cause. To Şadrā, it is possible for effect to know its cause by immediate way. The possibility of knowing the cause for the effect occurs in the sense that the effect knows its cause through knowledge of the effect on the reality of itself. By knowing its reality, that is, definite and dependent reality which is in need at all times to another reality as cause of it, the effect can know that the cause must exist immediately. Şadrā identified the reality of effect as '*wujūd rābiṭ*' (dependent existence) or '*wujūd faqrī*' (povert existence). By this, according to some philosophers and Sufis, including Mullā Şadrā, considered that human being has ability to know God by presentational knowledge. It is in accordance with the famous mystical expression: '*man 'araḥa nafsahu faqad 'araḥa rabbahu*' (whoever knows the reality of himself, he knows necessarily his God). The self-knowledge which leads to knowledge on God constitutes prevalence of self-reality, i.e., dependent and illuminative existence from God's Existence. From this explanation, the Existence of God is recognized by human soul directly through self-consciousness on its reality as the manifestation of His Existence without any preceding concept and with no any gap between subject-object.<sup>5</sup>

Every effect knows its cause presentationally (*bi al-ḥuḍūr*), so does

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<sup>5</sup> In this case, Mullā Şadrā adopted Suhrawadī's cosmology that maintains the illumination system in exposing the problems of creation. Anyhow, he used the term '*wujūd*' in explaining illuminative cosmology as what described in his theory of Gradation in Existence (*tashkik al-wujūd*) (See Şadrā 1981, vol. I, 253, 120, 379, 401, 433; VI, 18, 22; VII, 158; IX, 257).



human being knows God presentationally as the consequence of knowing and revealing the nature of self. However, for Ṣadrā, the presence of God in human's existence which leads to knowing Him, of course, does not mean the presence of His Essence (*ḥuḍūr al-Dhat*) and knowing His Essence, but it is in the sense of general knowledge as the consequence of the nature of self, that is, the dependent existence. In other words, human has possibility to know God in the term of the absolute Cause and independent Existence who manifests and illuminates in existence of His creatures. Ṣadrā adopted, in this case, Sufis's teaching that the Essence (Dhat) of God is impossible to reach and to know by human being. Knowledge of the effect on its cause in presentational meaning is restricted only into self-consciousness of extensive existence of the effect as manifestation or illumination of the cause (God), not a direct knowledge on the essence of cause which is Absolute and indefinite (Ṣadrā 1382, vols. 22-23).

Hence, in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, the presentational knowledge does not only enable cause to know its effect, but also it is possible for effect to know its cause in the form of general (*ijmālī*) knowledge, even more knowledge on effect will never occur successfully without knowing its cause. Therefore, knowing the effect in truth involves knowing its cause, that is, God, in cosmological case (Fazeli 2012, 191).

Knowing God in the sense of presentational knowledge is knowing Him directly or knowing without dichotomy of subject-object. It means that knowing Him actually comes from knowledge of the self on its reality which, in turn, necessitates knowledge of its cause in general meaning. This undistinguishableness of subject-object in presentational knowledge takes human into knowledge that no need for evidence by other thing outside, for it is already clear in itself and self-evident (*badihī*). Finally, by this kind of knowledge, the belief that emerges from it can be strong and rational.

## Criticism to Evidentialist's Objection to Belief in God

As what mentioned above that the objection to belief in God as a belief that can be justified rationally is an objection based on a weak understanding of evidence. It considers that the notion of evidence is only restricted into what conceptual or inferential knowledge can reach. When evidentialism which proposed this objection claimed that 'a belief is rational if and only if there is sufficient evidence', what they mean by sufficient evidence here is evidence which sought through conceptual knowledge. Meanwhile, we know that conceptual knowledge only prevails on any object that mind can conceptualize, that is, a thing on categories such as quality and quantity,

space and time, etc. By this, some objects which occupy outside these categories such as immaterial entities will be considered as rationally unjustifiable objects or objects with no sufficient evidence to support a belief in it rationally. Atheistic evidentialism deems that God as one of such objects and the belief in Him has no sufficient evidence to support it.

However, having immateriality in character does not mean that those objects which are out of mind's categories are not real and non-existents. So that knowledge of them does not mean has no sufficient evidence to support belief in them as true belief. But those objects are real and have sufficient evidence to support the belief. Suppose, 'the self or soul', for instance, is immaterial and real entity. We have no possibility to deny its existence and to doubt our knowledge of it. For 'the self' already is and we aware of it before our mind can doubt in it. Knowledge of it we grasp with no effort of conception but we aware of it directly and presentationally, we never have unconsciousness of it, since subject and object are the same reality. Therefore, self-knowledge no need for evidence outside, but the evidence is in itself or, best known, self-evident knowledge.

From the explanation above, evidence can not be restricted into evidence which produced by inferential or conceptual knowledge merely, but evidence also can be identified through non-inferential knowledge, that is, immediate or direct knowledge. As what have been maintained by theistic evidentialists that sufficient evidence also involves intuitive or immediate knowledge. Alvin Plantinga (1932) states that evidence in evidentialist terminology is not restricted to inferential evidence; rather, it includes both types—non-inferential as well as inferential. In *Warranted Christian Beliefs*, he defines evidentialism as "the view that belief in God is rationally justifiable or acceptable only if there is 'good evidence' for it, where good evidence would be arguments from other propositions one knows" (Plantinga 2000, 70).

By this, our knowledge of God is impossible to force to have in the construction of conceptual knowledge. It is, of course, for God is the Absolute and indefinite Entity. Human intellect or mind has no power and possibility to reach what beyond itself. Therefore, God could not be expressed by any word or concept; God is ineffable and He is not an object that knowledge of it can be justified by evidence in the term of inferential knowledge. However, knowledge of God is still possible through intuitive method, that is, self-knowledge which is presentational in character, in spite of knowledge as prevalence of self-knowledge on its reality. It is not knowledge of God's Essence, since it is ineffable. Knowing Him by human is only in the sense of Him as the Absolute Cause after knowing the reality of self as a dependent and definite. And it is possible only by presentational knowledge which is

self-evident. So that the belief in God has evidence to support it but it is in the sense of evidence by intuitive knowledge.

## Conclusion

Based on what was discussed, the best way to demonstrate the rationality of the belief in God is through this unmediated way, i.e., through self-knowledge, or more accurately, through knowledge by presence. This sort of knowledge shows that, *firstly*, human beings can have a presentational knowledge of God, and, *secondly*, that they have an innate inclination towards God. One of the best arguments to show the truth of presentational knowledge is, in fact, self-awareness. If we consider the awareness of the self, we know that we possess unmediated knowledge of ourselves. When I consider myself, I will find that I am truly aware of myself in such a way that I can never be absent of myself. If the subject 'I' is known to itself, and it is the knowing subject who knows itself immediately, then the knowing subject knows itself presentationally. As we know ourselves by presence, we know our natural inclination towards the transcendent being by presence as well. Another argument to show the truth of presentational knowledge is empirical awareness. Awareness of one's sensation and feelings is an example of one's empirical awareness. One knows by presence that she/he is in pain. This awareness gives one a high degree of sense-certainty; when I am aware that I am in pain there is no way to doubt this awareness. This unmediated knowledge—which includes our knowledge of God—is not only basic in the sense that it does not come from other beliefs or sources, but it is also properly basic—i.e., it is acquired in a basic way and is accessible to human nature.

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