



Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan tinjauan pustaka (*literature review*) sebagai metodologi penelitian, dengan penekanan pada sintesis dan integrasi gagasan-gagasan yang berkembang. Melalui penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa perspektif ontologis Ibnu 'Arabī dan Mullā Ṣadrā berhasil mendekonstruksi perselisihan teologis dan epistemologis yang demikian panjang antara kaum rasionalis yang mengunggulkan akal di atas wahyu dan lawan tradisionalis mereka. Teori imajinasi kreatif Ibn 'Arabī mengungkapkan tatanan ontologis akal dan wahyu, sedangkan teori *tashkīk* Mullā Ṣadrā (gradasi wujud) secara konsisten menempatkan akal dan wahyu bukan pada dua sisi yang berlawanan tetapi lebih pada satu kesatuan eksistensial bergradasi. Baik Ibn 'Arabī maupun Mullā Ṣadrā telah memutus lingkaran setan polemik teologis dan epistemologis dengan memberikan intervensi ontologis ke dalam perdebatan yang terjadi. Keduanya boleh jadi tidak berniat terlibat dalam polemik panjang tersebut, sehingga hasil tangkapan mereka jarang dieksplorasi dalam konteks historis polemik yang terjadi.

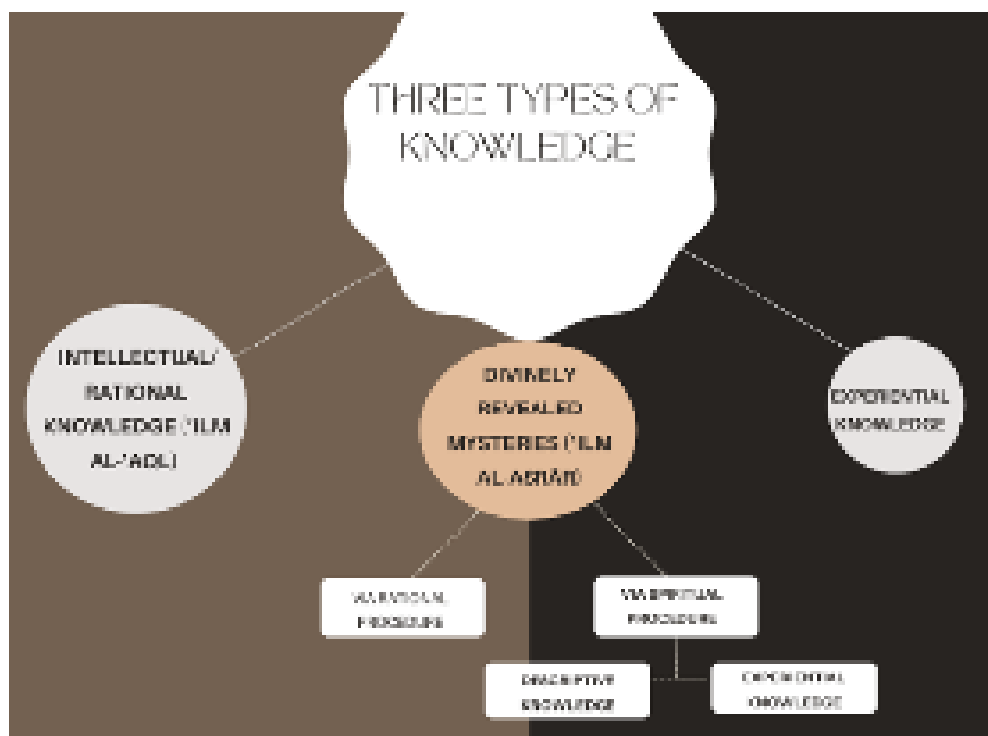
**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Imajinasi Kreatif, Gradasi Wujud, Ibn 'Arabī, Mullā Ṣadrā, Pendekatan Ontologis.*

## Introduction

There has always been tension between reason and revelation in the history of religions (Amini 2006, 406), including in Islamic theology (*kalām*) (Leaman 2002, 147). Each of these schools of thought is supported by its own body of evidence, based on a set of distinct methodologies, and is intertwined with other fields of study (Metzger 1994, 704–6). However, in attempting to present a synthesizing approach, this study will not delve into a detailed taxonomy of each perspective and its justifications. Aside from the fact that it will distract the article from its main goal, it is also necessary to mention that the taxonomy of religious and sectarian perspectives is counter-productive to the study's objective.

The concerted efforts to solve this conundrum demonstrate the issue's criticality and far-reaching repercussions. Ibn Hazm (994–1064) may be among the pioneers in this massive undertaking. He denies the power of reason to establish basic morality (Montada 2001, 165–66). For him, reason has no independent epistemic status. Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) made a similar effort in his book, *Dār Ta'āruḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql* (El-Tobgui 2020, 23–24). Like Ibn Hazm, he chose to avoid discussing reason in its ontological status. When proposing the concept of *fiṭra* as the source for man's intrinsic knowledge of God, he failed to examine its ontic position (Kazi 2013, 250–80).

On the contrary, Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240) and Mullā Ṣadrā (1572–1635) tried to solve the paradox by reconstructing the ontological order of things rather than looking at the debate merely from theological and epistemological viewpoints. In his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (*The Meccan Revelations*), Ibn 'Arabī divided knowledge into three branches, mixing objective rational and logical aspects of knowledge (*'ilm al-'aql*) with its subjective ontological aspects of experiential nature acquired by tasting (*'ilm al-ḥāl*) as well as divinely revealed mysteries (*'ilm al-asrār*) ('Arabī, n.d., 1:31).



**Figure 1.** Three Types of Knowledge (Bagir 2017, 63).

When it comes to Sadra, it is easy to see that ontological elements are the dominant theme of his encyclopedic work, *al-Asfār*. He penned these books to argue for his four philosophical pillars, namely the principality of Being (*aṣāla al-wujūd*), the gradation of Being (*tashkīk*), the union of intellect and intelligible during the intellection (*ittiḥād al-‘āqil wal-ma‘qūl wal-‘aql*), and last but not least the trans-substantial motion (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*). He used these four pillars to solve various Islamic polemics that have arisen up to his time (Ubudiyat 2010, 1:71–99).

This study will highlight the two Sufi philosophers’ ontological approaches to solving the crucial problem at hand, elevating the discourse above the conventional battlefields fraught with peril. Although neither philosopher directly dives into the polemic, their perspectives offer valuable insights that can be applied to the ongoing debates regarding the relationship between reason and revelation (or science and religion). Through their lens, this study aims to shed new light on the topic and contribute to the resolution of this longstanding polemic.

The justification for choosing these two Sufi philosophers over others lies in the unique perspective they offer on the issue at hand. Their ontological rethinking has been effective in capturing the crux of the matter and moving it towards a synthesis. This is because they utilized their vast knowledge of Islamic transmitted and rational sciences not to

defeat one opinion over another, but to uncover a more comprehensive and fundamental perspective. As a result, their approach goes beyond the conventional arguments and seeks a more holistic solution to the problem (Leaman and Nasr 2001, 663–71).

Another justification for selecting these two Sufi philosophers is their diverse backgrounds and eras. Both philosophers assert that their ideas are unique to their personal experiences. According to Corbin, they are both exceptional spiritual individuals who embody the norm of their orthodoxy and era because they do not adhere to the conventional beliefs or practices of any particular theological or sectarian group. As a result, their contributions are distinct and personal, discovered through their spiritual journeys (Corbin 1981, 5).

This paper uses an integrative literature review as a research methodology to find a synthesis approach. The goal of using an integrative review method is to overview the knowledge base, critically review and potentially re-conceptualize, and expand on the theoretical foundation of the specific topic as it develops (Snyder 2019, 335–36).

The article will contain four sections. The first will provide an overview of a historical project of philosophical-synthesizing processes among Muslim scholars. The second section will discuss Ibn ‘Arabī and his intervention in reconciling reason and revelation, as well as his groundbreaking view of imagination’s ontological and epistemological role as an indispensable mediator. The third section will discuss Mullā Ṣadrā’s four-pronged epistemological approach to knowledge and its relationship to his principle of ontological gradation (*tashkīk*). The fourth section will consist of the concluding remarks.

### **The History of Synthesizing Trend**

At the outset, it is worthwhile to note that by the 9th century, Islamic scientific endeavors had been divided into two broad categories: rational or acquired sciences and traditional or transmitted sciences (Fakhry 2004, xviii; Muthahhari 2009, 9). And theology is a crucial component of the rational sciences (Fakhry 2004, xviii).

Hossein Nasr believed that it was more appropriate to refer to these rational sciences as the Islamic intellectual universe. He stated that in that universe, there is first and foremost *ma’rifā* or *‘irfān* (gnosis), followed by philosophy, and finally, theology (Nasr 2006, 119). Kalam is indeed an intellectual activity that combines philosophy, theology, and gnosis into a single whole (Harvey 2021, 6).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the synthesizing approach has been a fundamental aspect of Muslim philosophers’ intellectual pursuits since they entered into the Islamic intellectual sphere. As far back as al-Fārābī, Muslim philosophers have been engaging in intellectual labor to reconcile and synthesize various schools of philosophical thought (Fakhry 1965, 469).

In this context, Suhrawardi (1154–1191) has elevated the pursuit of a synthesizing approach to a whole new level. As a syncretic Muslim Sufi philosopher, he incorporated elements of ancient Persian mysticism into an Islamicate worldview, creating a unique synthesis of diverse ideas. His efforts were groundbreaking in the formation of the *Ishraq* school of thought, also known as *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* or illuminationism. However, his quest for synthesis came at great personal cost, and he ultimately sacrificed himself for his beliefs (Corbin 1994, 5).

Corbin contends that while the term “syncretism” can be problematic because it implies a project aimed at restoring doctrines from a distant past, it remains a useful concept. The idea of the past is not fixed and can be redefined, meaning that what was once considered ancient may be deemed relevant again in the present or future. This dynamic has played out over centuries of gnosis, and Suhrawardi’s restoration of “oriental theosophy” (*Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*) in the twelfth century was no exception. Unfortunately, his work has been subjected to hasty and superficial judgments by those unfamiliar with his corpus, leading to unwarranted criticism (Corbin 1994, 5).

Corbin remarked that Sufi philosophers such as Suhrawardi, Ibn ‘Arabī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, were able to incorporate ideas from numerous Muslim and ancient beliefs into their intellectual system. In this way, they have effectively blurred the distinctions between different traditions, thus opening new horizons for each religious group to interact more freely. He claimed that if one goes beyond the simple legal interpretation of the Sharia, and all assume their inner domain (*bāṭin*), then there appear to be many ways of saying the same thing (Corbin 1981, 22–29).

Furthermore, Chittick believed that for Islam to face current intellectual crises, such as the tension between science and religion, the Islamic intellectual tradition must be revitalized (Chittick 2013, 5). According to Murata (1992, 3), philosophical Sufism, which Murata referred to as the sapiential tradition, is what Chittick (2013, 5) meant by Islamic intellectual tradition. Murata noted that Sufi philosophers tend to search for deeper meaning and understanding of texts, thus leaving many spaces for diverse approaches to modern crises (Chittick 2013, 5).

Regarding this synthesizing method, Mullā Ṣadrā wrote, “We have been using a method in which, at the beginning and the middle of the discussion, we adhere to the consensus of the (academic) community, and then, at the conclusion, we depart from them. By taking this approach, we avoid the hardening of others’ attitudes toward what we intend; instead, they will become accustomed to and acquainted with what we are trying to say” (Sadra 1981a, 8:85).

For instance, he defended the Peripatetic proofs regarding the impossibility of the necessary Being having quiddity (*māhiyya*) before refuting their views and establishing his theory of the fundamentality

of Being (Sadra 1981b, 1:91–100; 1981a, 8:48–55). Furthermore, while criticizing the views of ancient Greek philosophers, Sadra recognized their role in spreading the light of wisdom throughout the world and regarded them as sincere and ascetic theists who avoided worldly temptations and focused their lives on the hereafter (Sadra 1981c, 5:206–7).

### **Ibn ‘Arabī and His Creative Imagination**

Ibn ‘Arabī’s book *The Meccan Revelations* is a remarkable attempt to synthesize various Islamic viewpoints, including theological, philosophical, and legal perspectives, using Arabic as his primary tool to construct a Quranic and Hadith hermeneutical framework. Despite being associated with dangerous and gnostic intentions by contemporary Muslims, including most scholars, according to Winkel, Ibn ‘Arabī is the most direct, authentic, and literal interpreter of the divine messages contained in the Quran and Hadith (Winkel 1997, 15–17).

Winkel stated that even if some people believed Ibn ‘Arabī to be a heretic, his method of argumentation and insights, which were correct and literal from the perspective of the Quran or Hadith, could have overcome the opposition. Because he avoids stability and reification in his language, he is frequently misunderstood. He makes use of a variety of language formats to avoid being confined. Because of this, one would quickly avoid classifying him into any conventional typology of Islamic scholarship. And his attempt had successfully made him as enigmatic as possible (Winkel 1997, viii).

To illustrate his point, Winkel takes the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* as an example, which is most often associated with him but which he never used. Then he says that the Sunnis take his insights but denigrate his name; his disciples create a full-fledged system out of his insights that are themselves defiantly anti-systematic; the Shi’ites base an entire philosophy on that system; contemporary Sufis consider him dangerous, but the only danger to them is that Ibn ‘Arabī would tell them to strictly follow Sharia and abandon their spiritual institutions. In conclusion, Ibn ‘Arabī compels you to recognize that whatever you believe you know about Islam must be substantially fine-tuned in light of the texts provided by the Quran and the Sunnah (Winkel 1997, ix).

In his project, Ibn ‘Arabī not only integrates reason with revelation, but he also incorporates imagination into the equation. In the prologue to his translation of *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, R.J. Austin views Ibn ‘Arabī as a peak not only of Sufi discourse but also, in a significant way, of the Islamic intellectual universe. His comprehensive and unified view of the world was based on a very intricate ontological structure presented in his writings and teachings (Akkach 1997, 97–98).

Several of Ibn ‘Arabī’s disciples then meticulously pieced together his entire oeuvre to explicate his worldview. From there, additional scholars

examined the works of his students and categorized them under a variety of themes, including the topic of creative imagination. However, what exactly is meant by this term? It is crucial to remember that in Ibn 'Arabī's lexicon, imagination is not related to either profane or fanciful notions. It is also not linked to any physical organ that produces illusory images, nor is it directly concerned with artistic production (Corbin 1981, 3–10).

Imagination is indeed essential in Ibn 'Arabī's ontological worldview. It is viewed as the creative source of existence, our very being, and the ontological isthmus (*barzakh*) between infinite existence and nonexistence that we will never escape and through which we can maintain contact with the Infinite and the Absolute. He asserted that "*Barzakh*, by its very essence, faces two contradictory sides (existence and nonexistence), displaying to those with eyes the marvels of His signs that demonstrate His majesty, grace, and magnanimity. It is the ever-flowing heart that constantly changes form. The giants rely on it, while the dwarfs disregard it" ('Arabī, n.d., 1:391).

The word "*barzakh*" (isthmus) is derived from the Qur'an, which makes more than one allusion to its nature, see Q.S. 25: 53; 55: 19-20; and lastly, 23: 100. In this ontological isthmus is where the creative imagination plays such a critical epistemic role that "he who does not recognize the place of imagination is entirely devoid of gnosis (*ma'rifa*), and the Gnostics (*'arif*) who missed this corner have not smelled any gnosis at all. And among the most special knowledge given to the people of Allah is the imaginal unveiling (*kashf khayālī*)" ('Arabī, n.d., 2:313). So, what is this imagination? And why it is so essential in Ibn 'Arabī's worldview?

Corbin answered the questions by focusing on this imagination's multifaceted role in the fulfillment of the mystical experience: its theogony and cosmogonic function; its cognitive and creative role as theophany; and its mediation in the dialogue between God and man, the Worshipped and the worshipper, the Beloved and the lover. Corbin correctly emphasized the difference between imagination and fantasy in his presentation; whereas imagination's creative force arises from its ontological privileges, fantasy is an exercise of thinking without foundation in nature, and so it is the madman's cornerstone (Corbin 1981, 179).

Isutsu approaches the subject from a specific Hadith mentioned by Ibn 'Arabī. To begin, one should take the Hadith, "All men are asleep (in this phenomenal world); only when they die do, they wake up," as literally as Ibn 'Arabī desired. With this Hadith in mind, Ibn 'Arabī asserted that we are all trapped in a dream. What we call "reality," especially the sensory realm that surrounds us and which we frequently perceive as "reality," is a dream. We perceive many things with our senses, distinguish one object from another, arrange them according to our reasoning, and finally build something concrete around us. Then we call that (solid) structure 'reality,' and we know it as it is (Isutsu 1984, 7).

However, such ‘reality,’ according to Ibn ‘Arabī, is not reality in the proper and real sense. That object, in other terms, is not a truly real Being, because Being in its metaphysical essence is as insensible in this phenomenal world as phenomenal reality is to individuals who are sleeping and dreaming about it. Then he argues that this world is present in the isthmus (*barzakh*); it is the borderland between existence (being) and nonexistence (impossibility), between the known and the unknown, between the negative and the positive (‘Arabī, n.d., 1:304). And this is what the term “imagination” (*khayāl*) refers to. Because you merely imagine it (i.e., this world) to be a different and independent reality from the absolute Reality, which it is not. He warns everyone that they are only imagination. And whatever they notice and say to themselves, ‘this is not me,’ is likewise imagination. As a result, the entire plane of phenomenal existence is made up of imagination within the imagination (Izutsu 1984, 8).

By proposing this elucidation, Ibn ‘Arabī had moved beyond the binary dichotomy of ontological and epistemological truth. He wanted to emphasize that the two realms are so intertwined that one cannot truly know something without ontologically moving from one level to the next. The ‘world of Images’ (*‘ālam al-mithāl*) is an ontological isthmus (*barzakh*) between the purely sensible and the purely spiritual, i.e., non-material worlds. All things that exist on this level of Being have something in common with things that exist in the sensible world on the one hand and resemble abstract intelligible that exist in the world of pure intellect on the other. They are unique things that are half-sensible and half-intelligible.

He illustrated:

It’s as if someone looked in the mirror at his image; he knows for certain that he is looking at his image on the one hand, but he also knows for certain that he is not looking into his (real) image on the other. For if he sees too detailed an image due to the size of the mirror, he knows that his image is bigger than what he sees. But if he sees his image in the bigger mirror, he knows that his image is not that big. So, he cannot deny seeing his image in the mirror but at the same time certain his image is not in the mirror. His image is not even standing between him and the mirror. The mirror is, thus, an isthmian body (*jasad barzakhī*) (‘Arabī, n.d., 3:361).

Then Ibn ‘Arabī continued “Except for the essence of the absolute Truth (al-Haqq), everything is in the state of rapid or slow transformation (*istihāla*), which is a veiled imagination and vanished shadow. Except for Allah—the essence of the absolute Truth—no entities in this world, the hereafter, or in between them, spiritual or mental, are in a constant state; rather, they are all eternally changing from one form to another. And imagination is nothing more than this state, and this is imagination’s intelligible side. Because they are all forms of enshrined images, nothing visible in the world exists apart from imagination and imagination itself.



The existential presence is simply the presence of the imagination, and the created world is sustained by imagination. And no one else says this except those who have been brought to view this scenery. This witnessing is bestowed by Allah, who has given us the light of faith" ('Arabī, n.d., 3: 525).

In practical steps to perfect one's reason (*'aql*), Ibn 'Arabī suggested that one must go down to the most elemental level of existence and begin living at the lowest level of earthly life. However, one must not stop halfway, but go on abandoning all activity of (human) reason and not exercising any longer the thinking faculty by realizing the 'animality' (*ḥayawāniyya*) that lies hidden at the bottom of every human being. At this stage, one becomes a pure animal with no mixture of shallow humanity. In this state of unmixed animality, that man will be given a certain kind of mystical intuition, a particular sort of 'unveiling' (*kashf*). This 'unveiling' is the kind of 'unveiling' that is naturally possessed by wild animals (Izutsu 1984, 16).

All of this is to say that in such an 'animal' experience, all the seemingly airtight compartments into which human reason divides Reality lose their ontological validity. A man who has thus reached the pinnacle of animality may, if he continues his spiritual practice, attain the state of pure Intellect. The reason that was abandoned previously to descend to the lowest level of animality is a reason that is attached to and fettered by his body. And now, in the second stage, he acquires a new reason or rather reclaims possession of his previously abandoned reason in a completely new form. This new reason operates on a level where its activity is unaffected by anything bodily or physical. And he sees things in their true ontological structure with this pure Intellect (Izutsu 1984, 16).

Finally, Ibn 'Arabī combines traditionalists and rationalists by applying the *wahdat al-wujūd*, which asserts that everything, including reason and revelation, is interrelated and only analytically categorizable. By renouncing the analytical reasoning that frequently impedes one's understanding of revelation, one reestablishes a relationship through the Imaginary world to the Truth and acquires the revelation's original meaning (*ta'wīl*) through the process of unveiling. He satisfies both traditionalists and rationalists with this explanation, allowing each group to play its own game.



**Figure 2.** Ibn 'Arabī's Concept of Creative Imagination.

### **Mullā Ṣadrā and His Synthesizing Approach**

Mullā Ṣadrā, following in the footsteps of Ibn 'Arabī, addressed the issue of reason and revelation in various rubrics. Even though Being and its manifestations constituted the majority of his philosophy, he also addressed epistemology and the means available to humans to achieve authentic knowledge. And prophetic revelation has loomed big as the ultimate source of knowledge in this field (Nasr 2006, 223). Operating in the Abrahamic world of prophecy, Muslim philosophers have had to explain how God knows the world, a question alien to most classical Greek philosophers, particularly in terms of divine knowledge of particulars of the world of multiplicity and individual human actions (Nasr 2006, 223). *For further reading on the subject of Divine Knowledge, see (Renard 2004).*

Mullā Ṣadrā's project involved synthesizing the epistemological views of the Peripatetic and Illuminations schools of Islamic philosophy, as well as the Sufi doctrine of "knowledge of the heart," into a comprehensive methodology of knowledge. This methodology encompasses a hierarchy of knowledge, which begins with the sensual and progresses through the imaginary and rational, to the intellectual and intuitive, ultimately culminating in the knowledge of the purified heart. In this Islamic philosophical view, the mind is a reflection of the heart, which is the center of the microcosm. The doctrine of Unity (*tawhīd*) unifies all modes of knowledge into complementary and non-contradictory stages of a hierarchy that leads to the supreme form of knowledge, the gnosis of the One. It should be noted that the rational and sensual faculties of knowledge are not opposed to one another, nor are the intellectual and intuitive, but rather they all work together to achieve a higher level of understanding (Nasr 2006, 103).

Sadra made it abundantly clear that his philosophical project is

aimed at creating a synthesis of Sufism, philosophy, and Sharia, without underestimating the importance of any of them. He cautions the reader not to accept his statements as the result of unveiling (*mukashshafa*) and tasting (*dhawq*) or blind imitation (*taqlīd*) without first going through the process of intellectual proofs (*hujaj*) and demonstrations (*barāhīn*) and committing to consistently follow the rules that go with them, as no one will find the right guidance by blindly following transmitted tradition and information while denying intellectual and discursive methodology (Sadra 1970, 308, 438).

He stated that “reason is the source of transmission. Dismissing reason to uphold transmission will result in dismissing both of them altogether.” (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 3: 475) (Sadra 1981d, 3:475). He believed that revelation without demonstration is an insufficient condition for wayfaring (*sulūk*), just as mere discourse without revelation is a significant deficiency in spiritual wayfaring. He opines that philosophy (*ḥikma*) does not call into question the truths of divinely ordained paths (*al-sharāyi al-ḥaqqā al-ilāhiyya*). Rather, the goal of both is the same, namely, knowledge of the Ultimate Truth, His attributes, and His will and acts. He further asserts that one who does not possess the knowledge of how to harmonize religious discourses with philosophical demonstrations says that they stand opposed to one another (Faruque 2018, 35).

For Sadra, it is possible to strike a harmony between the Quran, demonstration, and gnosis, without falling into contradiction because genuine philosophy does not contradict the essence of the truths found in scriptural texts. As stated above, Sadra contends that philosophy has a ‘prophetic’ origin. He argues that it did not begin with Thales but rather with the Prophet Adam and that it progressed through Hermes and a few other prophets until it finally reached ancient Greece, and then on to the Islamic world. Sadra’s line of reasoning hinges on his contention of the fact that philosophical inquiry has been going on since the dawn of time (Faruque 2018, 38).

Even if a person has complete mastery of all intellectual proofs and methods, according to Sadra, they must be illuminated by the light of revelation to arrive at the truth. His discussion of the triangular relationship between philosophy, revelation, and mystical illumination concluded with an auto-critical remark affirming his prior engagement with [theoretical] discourse and its reiteration. “I frequently ask Allah for forgiveness for wasting a portion of my life delving into the opinions of polemical philosophers and theologians, learning their sophisticated pedanticism and finesse discourse, until it became clear to me at the end, with the light of faith and Divine help, that their syllogism is futile and their path is not straight” (Sadra 1981b, 1:11).

The unity of the intellect and the intelligible (*ittihād al-‘āqil wa al-ma‘qūl*) is another of Mullā Ṣadrā’s key theories in dealing with knowledge

production. He brilliantly has given this long-held Muslim philosophical tenet a fresh meaning in the light of the unity of Being and trans-substantial motion (*ḥaraka jawhariyya*). During the act of intellection, the form of the intelligible (*ma'qūl*), the owner of intellect (*'āqil*), and even the intellect itself (*'aql*) become joined in such a way that one is the other (Leaman and Nasr 2001, 1139–60).

This notion is critical not just for Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge, but also for comprehending the function of knowledge in human perfection. The act of knowing elevates the knower's very being through trans-substantial motion. "Knowledge is light," according to a Hadith of the Prophet, a premise that is also central to Mullā Ṣadrā's thinking. The unity of knower and known implies, in the end, the unity of knowing and being. Man's being is altered by the light of knowledge, and his mode of being is defined by his mode of knowledge. The significance of knowledge and the belief that knowledge affects our being even after death can be found in this profound reciprocity. Mullā Ṣadrā's texts are replete with diverse applications of this idea, all of which maintain the premise of the ultimate unity of being and knowing (Leaman and Nasr 2001, 1134).

He writes in one passage, "The sensation is acquired when the Giver (of the forms) bestows bright perceptual form (i.e., abstract being) to mediate between perception and consciousness, which is none other than the actual sense and the sensible..." (Sadra 1981d, 3:317). Then he writes in his monographs that "the existence of intelligible form is intellectual light, with it all existing quiddities become intelligible (after being potentially intelligible). In a similar vein, imaginal forms are imaginal light by which things (actually) imagined (after being potentially imagined) or sensible light by which (potential) sensible become sensible" (Sadra 1981d, 3:319–22).

As previously stated, Mullā Ṣadrā is trying to solve the conflict between reason and revelation by going deeper into the ontological reality of both. To borrow Yazdi's phrase, Sadra attempted to delve into the fundamental pre-epistemic question of the relationship between knowledge and its possessor (Yazdi 1992, 1–3). "I know something," certainly emphasizes the fact that "I" as the knowing subject is already acquainted with itself in some way. If this is the case, then such an acquaintance is anything other than the self's very being (Yazdi 1992, 3).

In this context, quoting Sabzawari as one of the most authoritative Sadra's commentators, Izutsu wrote: "*The problem of the unique form of subject-object relationship is discussed in Islam as the problem of ittiḥād al-ʿālim wa al-ma'lūm, i.e. the 'unification of the knower and the known.' Whatever may happen to be the object of knowledge, the highest degree of knowledge is always achieved when the knower, the human subject, becomes completely unified and identified with the object so much so that there remains no differentiation between the two. For differentiation and*

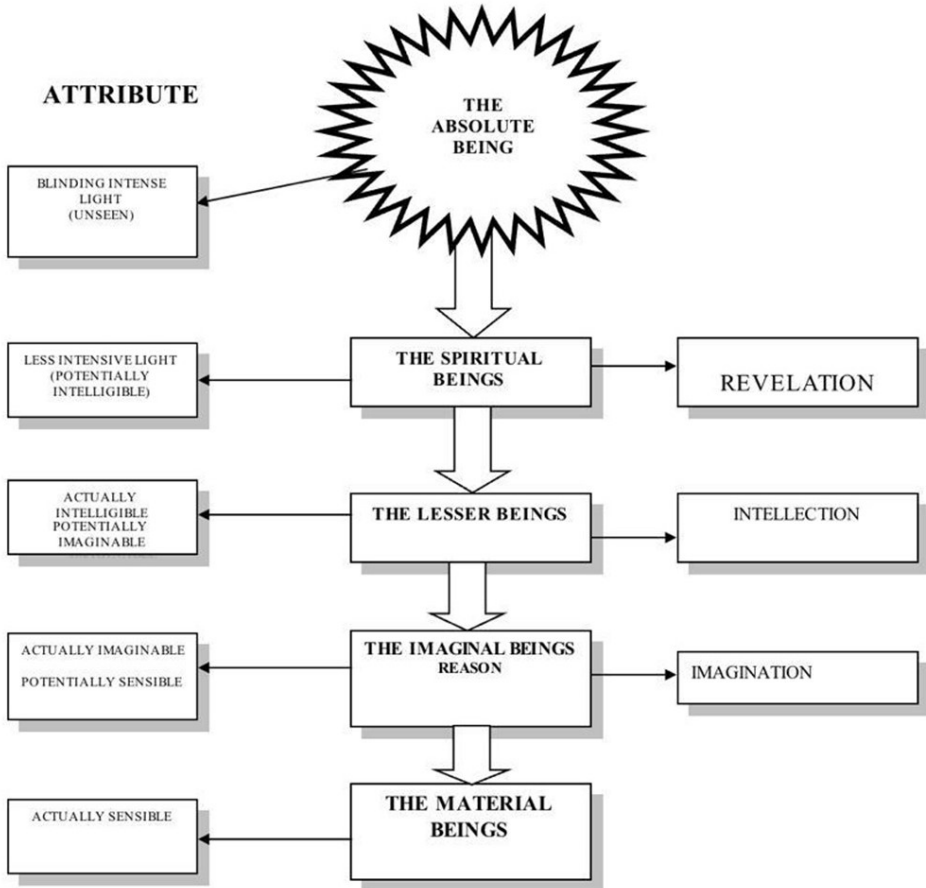
*distinction means distance and distance in a cognitive relationship means ignorance*" (Izutsu 1971, 5).

To prove his theory of knowledge by presence, Sadra unpacked his most fundamental principle of ontology, which he called the gradational existence (*tashkīk*). Understanding this principle enables a more comprehensive assessment of the ontological and epistemological spectrums of reason and revelation. The principle argued that because the concept of Being includes everything, it must be understood univocally. Existence is a graded reality that runs from its highest to its lowest point in its external reality, similar to the spectrum of light, which extends from its brightest to its least luminous points. In this gradation, one cannot differentiate between existence and knowledge (Yazdi 1992, 115).

In a manner comparable to Ibn 'Arabī's attempt to resolve the tension between traditionalists and rationalists, Mullā Ṣadrā approached the issue from its ontological depths. Consequently, he avoids falling into the traps set by each camp for the other. By tackling the debate of reason versus a revelation from an ontological point of view, Sadra had the advantage of diving deeper into the very existence of both and putting them in a more proper context. In his book, commenting on Hadith from the Prophet about the primordial intellect, he extensively elaborates on the ontological status of intellect as the first creation (Sadra 1970, 217).

In this perspective, Sadra, Ibn 'Arabī, considers divine revelation to be the in this perspective, Sadra, like Ibn 'Arabī, considers divine revelation to be the untextualized and written creation of the divine. and written creation of the divine. Ibn 'Arabī claimed, in line with the Islamic normative tradition, that the world is the manifestation of the words spoken by God. The universe, as shown in his works, is frequently compared to an unrolled book written on parchment (*al-raqq al-manshūr*). On the reverse side of this parchment is what is thought to be a representation of the natural world, while the front is thought to contain the Most Beautiful Names of God. When viewed from this angle, the process of creation seems to observers as ontological speech and writing (Rasic 2021, 3–4).

**THE GRADATIONAL EXISTENCE**



**Figure 3.** Illustration of Mullā Ṣadrā's Gradational Existence.

**Conclusion**

This paper has highlighted how Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā, as representatives of the long philosophical Sufi tradition, which is one of the finest examples of Islamic intellectual traditions, were able to break the vicious circle of legal, theological, philosophical, exegetical, linguistic, and other disciplinary polemics concerning the relationship between reason and revelation. While the debates centered on the question of whether revelation can be understood through reason alone and whether reason is capable of understanding the truth without the assistance of revelation, those Sufi philosophers moved to capture the very existence of reason and revelation. They looked at the problems from a more fundamental, pre-epistemic stage and attempted to intervene with

ontological reconstruction.

Ibn 'Arabī attempted to answer these questions by proposing the theory of ontological isthmus and creative imagination, whereas Mullā Ṣadrā proposed the principle of ontological gradation, the union between the possessor of knowledge, known objects, and the knowledge itself, and thus, provided the possibility of a multifaceted approach to understanding the reason and revelation. They have satisfied the traditionalists by confirming that revelation is an ontological level of pure Intellect activated by the Prophets to receive the Divinely Words and likewise satisfied the rationalists by demonstrating that human reason has the possibility to ascend to higher stages to gain access to the true meaning of revelation.

Finally, synthesis-making processes are useful not only for addressing internal polemics but also for narrating Islam in the modern world. This is especially true now that the West has abandoned pure rationalistic positivism in favor of phenomenological methodologies that emphasize the subjective role of human understanding. As growing Western scientific circles have shown a keen interest in combining epistemological aspects of human understanding with ontological aspects of the outside world, Islamic scholarship must strive for an all-encompassing synthesis of science and religion, reason, and revelation. In that way, Islamic messages as the final Divine revelation will be able to engage and address global spiritual crises in a much more assertive manner and meaningful dialogue.

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