Sadra's Philosophical System as a Model in Islamic Philosophy

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[Preface]

The aim of this paper is to show that through the perspective of Mulla Sadra's philosophical system Islamic philosophy in its present state is stagnant. The main reason for this is that the past philosophical systems produced in Islamic civilization were neither modified nor replaced by new ones according to the fresh knowledge, which gave lead to new understandings.

As we shall show in the course of our treatment of Mulla Sadra's system, in scientific studies human mind cannot operate without a system, and this is an indispensable epistemological requirement of the mind to function in. Since the mind needs a dynamic system to work in, old systems, which have become worn out, so to speak, and decrepit in view of the newly continuous emergence of knowledge, can no longer support the mind in producing original ideas.

The dynamic characters of systems come from their originality as relevant to their socio-cultural and scientific context. Otherwise, they will not find acceptance in a civilization and gradually they will loose their effect upon the scientific community and in turn upon the community at large. We shall try to evaluate these points in relation to Sadra'sphilosophical system. But since the idea of system is central to my paper, I shall try to introduce Sadra's system in relation to the concept of system in philosophy.

First of all, philosophers may be classified into three classes according to what they project in the history of philosophy:

1. Systematic system builders, whom I shall call "system philosophers";

2. Those philosophers whose writings can constitute a system, in principle but did not create such a system systematically, may be called "minor-system philosophers", in which case we have to construct their system systematically out of their corpus;

3. Those philosophers that deal only with certain philosophical problems and therefrom construct theories of that nature may be called "piece-meal philosophers". These thinkers usually accept a system that was constructed before them and carry out their scientific studies within it.

According to our classification, Mulla Sadra is a "system philosopher" of the first kind, as he constructed a system in a systematic way in his *magnum opus, al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyah fi'l-asfar al-'aqliyyat al-arba'ah.*[1] In this work we find all the characteristics that a philosophical system may have, such as well-defined concepts, holistic approach and covering all aspects of its scope, coherence and consistency, well-developed theoretical framework and deductive connection of all parts of the system. We can see these characteristics as reflected in the system of Sadra. It is the aim of this study to show this; but this is a task that requires further clarification of the concept of system as understood in this context.

I. Philosophical Systems and Sadra's Methodology

A system is, to use Kant's term, a "systematic organization of ideas into an architectonic whole". In this sense, a system is a well-knit organization of ideas and doctrines, which cannot have any gaps, nor any inconsistencies and contradictory ideas in it. As such it is "a coherent, logical, necessary [unity] of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted.[2] Philosophers who pay attention to this point do explain the nature of systems as understood in philosophy:

Human reason is by nature architectonic. That is to say, it regards all our knowledge as belonging to a possible system...[3] Systematic unity... is indispensable to reason...[4] By an architectonic I understand the art of constructing systems. As systematic unity is what first raises ordinary knowledge to the rank of science, that is makes a system out of a mere aggregate of knowledge, architectonic is the doctrine of the scientific in our knowledge...

By a system I understand the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea. This idea is the concept provided by reason... The whole is thus an organized unity, and not an aggregate. It may grow from within, but not by external addition. It is thus like an animal body, the growth of which is not by the addition of a new member, but by rendering of each member, without change of proportion, stronger and more effective for its purposes.[5]

Here Kant defines the "architectonic" as "the art of constructing systems", whereas I define it as "the structural design of a unity". Thus, the science or "art" of constructing systems is to be understood here as "philosophy". As it is seen, Kant attributes the process of constructing a system to the pure reason and thus architectonic is its characteristic. But this would lead us to think that constructing a system is not a science, whereas he claims that systematic unity is attained only in a science. In that case, he must either establish architectonic of reason as an independent science, or refuse this and instead simply claim this task for philosophy.

Although a system is a well-knit unity, as we shall see, it is possible to divide it into certain subsystems that make up its "parts". Subsystems, or parts, are not merely attached to the main system, but rather they are all deduced discursively from the knowledge established gradually. Therefore, in most systems architectonic unity is a deductive unity, which gives it its speculative character. It is the method employed by the philosopher, which determines this deductive or speculative character of his system. Therefore, we also observe that every system decides for a specific manner of constructing the system, which is defined as its "method"; for example, we can say that Kant's approach in his system utilizes what might be called the "transcendental method". But Spinoza's method is geometrical, and Hegel's dialectical. We may thus ask, what is Sadra's method?

First of all, by their very constitution systems are inevitably speculative and in this sense creative imagination must play a significant role in the method used constructing them. In that case, speculative character cannot make up the method of any system; it rather belongs to the nature of systems. By method then we must understand the manner or the approach the system-builder uses in constructing his system.

Sadra belongs to the mystical tradition, which already delineates his approach. This tradition, some may argue, excludes rationalistic procedures and therefore, cannot be qualified for a study of systems in the philosophical sense. For a system is a rational interpretation of reality as understood by sciences involved in this interpretation. We must realize, however, that Sadra'smystical approach does not end with the use of mystical approach, as his dictum expresses: 'knowledge is a mode of Being.'[6] But 'every instance of reality is a unique individual'.[7] Therefore, Being is the starting point of a system, and the epistemological tool corresponding to this tool is intuition. But this tool is applied by a "rational procedure" as clear in the title of *Asfar, al-asfar al-'aqliyyah*. But there are ways to understand *'aqliyyah*, i.e. "rational"; hence, secondly, as Nasr shows,[8] his is the theosophic tradition as opposed to the purely rational which may exclude experiential knowledge, or even purely mystical tradition that excludes any discursive approach. In this sense Sadra is a rationalistic mystical philosopher. His methodology thus begins with intuition and proceeds with philosophical cognition and ends with the mystical experiential union. It is this methodological approach that Sadra's students rightly term "transcendent theosophy" (*al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah*).[9] This philosophical method is an attempt to capture reality with intellectual vision, which thus came to be used as the designation of Sadra'sschool of thought. It must be for this reason that Sadra included this designation in the title of his *magnum opus*, to be translated as 'The Transcendent Theosophy in Four Rational Journeys'.

Sadra, therefore, lays down his methodology right at the outset of his system as comprising primarily four journeys, each of which has "stations" (*marhalah*, in singular), comprising of levels (*tabaqat*) and so on. This intellectual journey is required by the experiential approach and thus within the theosophic tradition it means that the philosopher is actually in the state of "seeing the truth" as it is, and the disclosing of that experiential vision is what he defines as "rational". This is clear in the way Sadra lays down his method:

"Know that wayfarers (*salikin*) among the Gnostics and Saints have four journeys: one of them is the journey from the creature to the Truth; the second is the journey with the Truth in the Truth; the third journey corresponds to the first one, because it is from the Truth to the creature with the Truth; and finally, the fourth journey in a sense corresponds to the first, as it is with the Truth in the creature."[10]

But in Sadra's methodology historical approach is combined with the theosophic and philosophic methodology, and thus can be called the "transcendent theosophy", but as understood by Sadra, or simply as "sublime wisdom".[11] Accordingly Sadra does not only develop his ideas by this methodology, but he also summarizes, analyzes, and evaluates the ideas of his predecessors. In this way, he actually presents a history of Islamic philosophy as well.

The problem of methodology is usually not discussed by the system builder in a direct manner. It is rather discussed either directly in relation to certain problems within the system or it is manifested throughout the system

by the procedure utilized in handling particular problems within it, and this is the case in Sadra's system as well. For example, whenever he wants to formulate a new theory, Sadra usually examines almost all the theories concerning the subject, not only in Islam but in Greek philosophy as well. When we consider this historical approach in Sadra's procedure, we can describe his methodology as historical approach harmoniously combined with the theosophic and philosophic procedures. We hope that the particular details of Sadra's methodology will be clarified below in our exhibition of the general outlines and structure of his system.

II. The Structure of Systems and al-Hkmah al-Muta‘aliyah

A philosophical system is, as we have seen, an orderly unity. The order in this unity is arranged according to certain principles and rules, which are developed by the system-builder. Since these principles and rules may change from philosopher to philosopher, the structure of a system may also change according to these principles and rules, which we outlined above as “methodology”.[12] Therefore, we will concentrate on the structure of systems in relation to methodology in general and to Sadra’s methodology in particular.

Every system is constructed on a theoretical foundation, which is usually a ‘general, or fundamental metaphysics’ and can be called ‘basic system’. The basic system as a ‘general metaphysics’, consists of doctrines, rules and principles that determine all the other parts of the whole system. It thus includes and usually outlines the methodology of the philosopher as well. This fundamental metaphysics is determined by the orientation of the philosopher. For example, a Muslim Philosopher’s orientation is determined by the Qur’anic insight which is God-centered, and thus, God, as the ground of all Being will occupy the central place in the fundamental metaphysics. In that case, if we name any system built by a Muslim philosopher “Islamic system of philosophy”, we can say that such a system will be either theology or ontology oriented. In other words, the fundamental metaphysics or the basic system of any Islamic philosophical system will either be a theology and/or ontology, but not an epistemology.

On the other hand, an Islamic system of philosophy may begin by an epistemology only as a methodology outlined above. This is because it is the type of epistemology, which will determine the orientation of the philosopher to adopt a rationalist theology, or revealed theology and so on.[13] In that case, epistemology cannot be the foundation of an Islamic system. This fact is clearly observed in Sadra’s system, which is clearly ontology-based. It is from this ontological basis that his theology springs. But the methodology, which he adopted, which we have termed, “transcendent theosophy” (following Professor Nasr’s coinage), has already determined his next step to be taken after the fundamental metaphysics.

Usually system builders try to deduce another fundamental doctrine based on their metaphysics. In fact, this process of deduction continues until the whole system is complete; each doctrine deduced from a former one(s) becomes a part of the whole system. In this sense, if we try to outline the structure of philosophical systems in general, we cannot pass on any general conclusion about the part of the system that is deduced immediately from the general metaphysics. But it is possible to call each part deduced therefrom by a general name; ‘subsystem’. Each part of the system, which is based on the fundamental metaphysics can be conveniently classified into super-systems, and sub-systems, according to the positions they occupy within the system. The part of the system that is prior is a super-system in relation to the ones that follow subsequently, which are sub-systems in relation to the immediately former one (or the former ones). It must also be

clear that a part of the system can be both a sub-system and a super-system, depending on the position it occupies within the whole system.

Whatever the fundamental metaphysics may be, therefore, it is the beginning point of the whole, and thus it is the foundation of that system. Then, the other parts of the system follow usually with a different order as a branch of science such as, logic, philosophy of nature, ethics, politics, aesthetics, legal philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophy of man and society, or as sociology. Since each part of a system is a science, the system taken as a whole is a unity of sciences. Philosophy can be conceived as a special branch, which deals primarily with this unity.

On the other hand, since it is the purpose of philosophy as a science to establish systems, the whole system itself is philosophy. In this sense, philosophy is the science par excellence; in other words, it is another general name given to sciences, in a sense it is a "mother science" (*umm al-'ulêm*). Moreover, all the parts of a system taken as a unity, may yield a cosmology, namely a general conception of the universe; if not, then cosmology itself is treated as a sub-system, i. e., an independent science within the system.

Let us now examine the structure of system in relation to its parts with reference to Sadra's system. As an application of his method, Sadra divides all philosophical sciences into four main branches. For this classification Sadra's clue is the mystical movement of human reality, which must pass through four stages. The rational argument that can be deduced for this procedure is his definition of philosophy:

Philosophy is [the endeavour to attain] the perfection of the human soul through the knowledge of the reality of things as they are, and to judge their existence by investigation with demonstrative proof not by accepting with conjecture and blind imitation.[14]

If, therefore, the aim of philosophy is to attain the perfection of the soul by acquiring true knowledge, then the path to knowledge must be the path of the soul, which is identical with the path of knowledge. Hence, the stations of the soul in its journey to perfection are sciences, namely stations of knowledge, which correspond to subsystems in our theory of systems. In this sense, the rational aspect of the soul cannot be separated from its experiential aspect. As Sadra's definition shows clearly his acceptance of the philosophical method as well, i. e. the rational and discursive method, both the rational and the experiential are united in one methodological procedure. We have already given the journeys of the soul described by Sadra; now the corresponding sciences in his system are the following:

The First Journey: Ontology (from the creature to the Truth);

The Second Journey: Natural Philosophy or Cosmology (from the Truth to the creature with the Truth);

The Third Journey: Theology (with the Truth in the Truth);[15]

The Fourth Journey: Philosophy of Man (psychology) and Eschatology (with the Truth in the creature).

Before we proceed to outline Sadra's philosophical system in a general manner, we need to elucidate one more point with regard to systems in general. This is the fact that besides a general metaphysics, super-systems,

and sub-systems, certain theories and doctrines construct a system. A theory is a formulation given as a solution to a certain problem. Therefore, a theory usually involves only one particular problem. A doctrine, on the other hand, may involve more than one problem. Thus a doctrine may be constructed out of a number of theories. In that case, a doctrine is a formulation of how we understand a certain state-of-affairs, or a more complex problem that may involve some other problems as well. We may thus classify the major components of a system into five elements:

1. Theories, constructed usually by axioms, or postulates, presuppositions, hypotheses, and concepts previously defined. All these are interconnected by argumentation to formulate a theory.
2. Doctrines, constructed in a similar manner as theories, which are also used in turn for this construction.
3. General metaphysics, or basic system.
4. Super-systems;
5. Sub-systems; all these parts are constructed in the same way, but in somewhat a different manner than theories and doctrines.

In the first journey, which is from the creature to the Truth, Sadra begins formulating his doctrine of Being, which becomes the basis of his ontology, which in turn becomes the basis of his whole system. In doing so, he utilizes many theories, such as his theory of philosophy, which outlines his conception of philosophy; then his theories of essence, necessity, possibility, non-existence and mental existence.

Moreover, his ontology develops his theory of *j'al*, which brings in view gradation of existence. Here he outlines his theory of cause and effect as well. Then all other ontological concepts are elucidated within his doctrine of Being; such as quiddity, genus, species, difference, form and matter. The most important theory that emerges as a result of this discussion is his theory of movement, which for the first time in the history of philosophy introduces the idea of changing substances (*al-harakah al-jawhariyyah*).

His ontology ends with a discussion of the Prime Mover, which logically brings into view the question of God-world relationship and the problem of Creation. This is in line with the general methodology of Sadra because according to this methodology the first journey of the soul brings us from the creation to the Truth, i.e. God. But here we need a reverse move, namely although the mystical movement continues with the Truth in the Truth, the rational counterpart of it must first explain how we can reach God from the creation. Therefore, the third journey replaces the second one as a logical deduction. Hence, the second journey continues from the Truth to the creation but now with the Truth, which corresponds to the philosophical science of physics or natural philosophy.

It is clear that Sadra's ontology is the fundamental metaphysics of his whole system. Since his natural philosophy is directly deduced from this fundamental metaphysics, it is the super-system in relation to the subsequent parts of his whole system. Other than what is required by Sadra's novel doctrine of Being, we do not find much originality in his physics, which is Aristotelian throughout. It thus begins with the theory of ten Aristotelian categories, and continues to elaborate them one by one.

Physics as a super-system in relation to the subsequent parts, but as a sub-system in relation to the fundamental metaphysics, ends with the discussion of perpetual movement; transient nature and its continuous renewal, in relation to *creatio ex-nihilo*, and the problem of the eternity of the world. Sadra's physics yields his theory of the hierarchical order of the universe, which ends in the Truth, i.e. God. His physics has shown how the rational counterpart of the experiential journey can reach God. Hence, logically the next journey, which is in the philosophical sense a station of knowledge and thus as a sub-system, is theology, which is the movement now within the third journey, with the Truth in the Truth.

Here we find his solution to many theological problems discussed within Islamic civilization. First, the idea of God as *wajib al-wujêd* is elaborated, then proofs of His existence, His Unity and simplicity are discussed. His doctrine of attributes and their relation to God's *èhat* is presented; God's knowledge of the world, attributes of *qudrah* and *iradah*, then the attributes of *hayat, sam'* (hearing), *takallum* are elucidated.

This journey ends with a discussion of Providence (how the divine Will acts in the world; the problem of good and evil), and Divine *af'al* (acts), which brings in the theory of grades of manifestation. The issues of Providence and Divine manifestation naturally suggest the idea of man in relation to God. From this one can easily deduce the logical sequence of psychology, which is linked with Sadrian eschatology. Therefore, the fourth journey, which is the movement with the Truth in the creation, presents two sub-systems in relation to the former parts of the system, psychology and eschatology. It is here that we find the roots of Mulla Sadra's moral theory, as well as his doctrine of the soul.

First a definition of the soul and proofs for its existence are given, then the divisions of the soul are discussed as animal soul, vegetative soul and human soul. The faculties of the animal soul as external and internal senses are introduced. The problem of *tajarrud* (catharsis), soul's independence from matter, genesis of the soul, higher states of perfection possible for the human soul are the problems, which are explained. These higher states are deduced from the Qur'an as a result of the doctrine of bodily resurrection; concepts of *akhirah*, such as *al-sa'ah, sir, jahannam, jannah, 'adhab al-qabr*, and eternal bliss are what make up Sadra's eschatology, which is thus the end of his system.

III. The Function of Systems and the al-Hikmah al-Muta‘aliyah

Since the time of Hegel, philosophers have not addressed the concept of system directly. Of course philosophically speaking this is not an ambiguous concept, and as such we continually use it and apply to our studies, especially in the history of philosophy. But it is a concept, which must be evaluated from an epistemological perspective, and with regard to the structure of systems. I believe that this is especially pertinent for the Muslim thinkers in our times, if they are interested at all in reviving Islamic philosophical thought. In order to show this, we need to elucidate the functions of systems. We shall thus raise in this context a question: what is the function of a system, if any at all? I shall try to argue that systems basically have two functions; one is epistemological, and the other is social. Our evaluation of these points shall clarify the relevance of Sadra’s philosophical system to the Islamic civilization in our times. In the meantime, as I try to develop this theme concerning the epistemological and social functions of systems, I hope to shed more light on this concept especially in relation to Sadra’s system as outlined above.

a) The Epistemological Function

The epistemological function of systems is similar to that of worldviews, which is a perspective from which the individual views the universe and the things in it. Therefore, no one can evaluate any question or a problem without first assuming a worldview of a sort. In fact human mind works only within the context of such an architectonic whole.

We may say in this respect that every human activity emerges out of an observable and non-observable foundation. We mean by “foundation”, ‘the reasons and intentions underlying the act, disposition of the agent and whatever justification may be given for his action’. A foundation of an action is, therefore, ‘all the observable and non-observable phenomena assumed to be taking place in relation to that action in the mind, body and surroundings of the person in question, either at the time of his performing the action, or at times prior to its performance’. Whatever preceding action, behavior, disposition and events given as either reason or condition for the action performed are the observable phenomena, which we term the “observable foundation”. On the other hand, all the mental operations and dispositions leading to that action considered as either justification for it or causes of it are the non-observable phenomena, which can be called the “non-observable foundation”.

In order to clarify this, we may give the following analogy: a student who cheats may be said to be cheating because he is selfish, dishonest, and because of the circumstances which led him to that undesirable action. We consider all these and similar motives or circumstances underlying the act to be the observable foundation, because they can be observed either directly or indirectly within the action itself. Yet there are also certain other mental conditions that lead him question to his action, such as his conception of cheating and the placement of that concept within his worldview. As these

are the non-observable foundation for his action, they can only be inferred discursively.

As it is seen in our analogy, the development of these foundations in the individual's life must take place in different ways, but in relation to each other. The mental framework, for instance, which we take to be the worldview of the individual, does not develop instantly, though the action itself is performed at an instance. Even the environmental and physiological conditions may develop right prior to the action itself, yet in relation to the mental framework and the performance of the action. In fact, the mental framework is the general perspective, which includes the totality of concepts and mentalities developed by the individual throughout his life, and as such it constitutes what we call "worldview".

Since every related concept and event is evaluated within a certain worldview before a decision is taken to perform the action, it must be the prior most condition of any action. A worldview is, therefore, that vision of reality and truth, which, as an architectonic mental unity, acts as the non-observable foundation of all human conduct, and as the general framework out of which follow scientific and technological activities.

Since we take worldview to be the prior-most foundation of any action, we conclude from this that every human action, including scientific and philosophical activities, is ultimately traceable to its worldview; and as such it is reducible ultimately to that worldview. But this foundation of human conduct cannot be perceived by observation directly and as a result, it can be over viewed easily; in order to emphasize this fact we called a worldview the "non-observable foundation", or to use our other term, the "environment" of human actions. It must have become clear by now that by the environment we do not mean the physical surrounding.

On the contrary, physical surrounding is only the observable environment; whereas the worldview is the discernible environment, and as such it can be termed "non-observable foundation of human activities", including, of course, the scientific activities as well. Therefore, it can be termed "the conceptual environment" as well. Our exposition of the concept of worldview thus brings us also to the conclusion that no philosophical problem can be evaluated without such a mental framework; only that such a mental framework is constructed scientifically by the philosopher himself, which we call "system".

The epistemological function of worldviews is, therefore, to act primarily as general schemes through which we perceive everything, including ourselves. In this respect, their function is to put our conception into a unified whole. Whenever we philosophize, or construct a theory, we inevitably and necessarily, by the very nature of our mind, presuppose a worldview. But the philosopher gradually departs from this conceptual environment to the one, which he elaborates on the basis of that worldview; the architectonic whole at which he arrives is called "system". Of course, not every philosopher builds a system, but every philosopher by the very nature of our faculties of knowledge necessarily works within such a previously built philosophical system; for it is not possible to solve any

problem or discuss it philosophically without a system, just as it is not possible for the layman to conduct his daily life without a worldview.

b) The Social Function of Systems

Besides the epistemological function systems play a different role in the society. A system gives certain dynamism to its society, out of which it flourishes. The most important dynamism it provides to its society is a systematic worldview. In fact, one may reasonably claim that it is the system developed by a thinker, or thinkers, that dominates the major worldview in a society. Whitehead points to this fact so adamantly:

"...The mentality of an epoch springs from the view of the world which is, in fact, dominant in the educated sections of the communities in question."[16]

Therefore, since concepts, terms, and problems are well-defined, they are clearly and distinctly expressed in systems. A worldview can be made so systematic by the philosophical expression that it may be presented as a system too. But of course, as this is reflected in individual minds within a society, it is never a system, but always a worldview. When a worldview is thus influenced by a system, its concepts, views, ideas and outlook acquires a certain degree of clarity and distinctness. Although this degree of clarity and distinctness is possible for a worldview in the mind of an individual who is not a system builder, it can never acquire the systematic unity of a system. On the other hand, this extent of clarity given by the system to the worldviews in a society is sufficient to activate individuals towards its concepts, terms ideas and insights.

These concepts ideas and insights may also be ethical, political, economic, and educational attracting thus individuals with some dynamism towards the implementation of these with a certain degree of effectiveness. It is this dynamism that is vital for the progress of a society; and it is this progressive development of a society that we call the "social function of systems". Since a system gives dynamism to a society it will always result with social progress, provided that there are no impediments in that society which hinder the influence of a system (or systems). The way systems function as such in a society is very complex; therefore, instead of going into details, let us see how systems work their way into individual minds as shaping their worldviews.

The continual combination of our experiences in our daily lives by the mind according to its rules and principles gradually forms in the mind a framework, which is first identifiable as the life structure, and then as it further develops to such an extent that it can manifest certain mentalities, it can be entitled "worldview".

The worldview thus becomes the mental environment within which the mind operates, and without which it cannot function at all. Therefore, our concept of worldview refers to the conceptual totality as an attempt to grasp the universe, and as such a worldview is an architectonic whole, in which notions, ideas and beliefs are so interconnected that together they form a network of organized concepts. This network forms a coherent mental structure naturally, thanks to the constitution of our mind. It is clear, therefore, that the individual does not necessarily construct a worldview, but

rather it arises in the mind of the individual necessarily. It is in this sense that we shall claim its disclosure to be a natural process, rather than a conscious effort to build an architectonically whole perspective.[17] For a worldview is, in fact, a perspective from which the individual views everything.

A worldview is, therefore, a coherent network of ideas, conceptions, beliefs, and aspirations in which all that make it up are organized in a coherent manner, but not necessarily in a systematically interconnected network (which is called "system" in the philosophical sense). Therefore, by calling the process out of which a worldview comes to arise in the mind of an individual "natural", we do not mean that this process is governed by natural means. On the contrary, it is for the most part regulated by education and society, and in the case of the Islamic worldview primarily by religion. Hence, by the natural process we mean the natural operations of our mind that begin to take place right after we are born, and as we grow, through this process we begin to acquire the knowledge that makes up the constitution of our worldview.[18]

As we have indicated, the major factors leading to the rise of a worldview in the mind of an individual are mainly religion, cultural environment and education. Other factors that are also dominant in the disclosing process of a worldview are the psychology of the person, language, natural environment and other social conditions. Since these are precisely the major factors that form a worldview, through the natural operations of the mind, the individual does not have to make a conscious effort to construct a systematically organized worldview. The individual's effort is only to find answers for certain questions that either arise in his mind or he simply comes across them in an accidental manner in his daily life. But we do not mean that the individual has absolutely no conceptual effort in the process of the emergence of his worldview.

On the contrary, he contributes to this process in his effort of obtaining knowledge. What he is not conscious of is the actual formation of the worldview itself, an act of reaching an architectonic totality in the epistemological sense, which primarily and naturally belongs to the mind. Hence, a worldview is formed by our mind as a matter of habit that is dominant in our daily life. This formation is either through (1) culture, technology, scientific, religious and speculative ideas that we acquire through education and other means, or (2) a conscious effort to acquire knowledge, or (3) in both of these ways.

In the first case, a worldview is not constructed, but rather it is formed naturally by the individual in a casual manner. We shall thus refer to this kind of a worldview as "natural worldview", because the acquisition of its major components is regulated by the natural operations of the mind. But in the second and third cases, the worldview arises in the mind by a conscious use of the natural operations of the mind. As a result, the basic components of the worldview come into existence in the mind through investigation and search for knowledge. That is why many of the basic ideas, beliefs, outlooks and conceptions in it are clarified to the person trying to search for

knowledge. Obviously this kind of a worldview is completely different from the natural one; we shall thus refer to it as "transparent worldview".

A transparent worldview may also arise in two different ways: first, in an environment in which the dissemination of knowledge within the society takes place quasi-scientifically; second, in a society where scientific knowledge regulates the dissemination of knowledge. In order to make this point clear, I would like to elucidate how scientific knowledge may regulate the dissemination of knowledge, which will shed light on both cases at the same time. Then, on the basis of that I will attempt to clarify the first case.

First of all, in order for scientific knowledge to regulate the dissemination of knowledge, there must be a sophisticated mechanism for the production of scientific knowledge. This mechanism, above all, requires a well-equipped scientific conceptual scheme,[19] and a worldview that is suitable for the development of this scheme, assuming that this mechanism works well in a given society then some sophisticated scientific activities begin to exist. Obviously through time there will be an accumulation of scientific knowledge in that society. Besides this there will be a group of people, called "scientists" (i.e., the *'ulama'*). But the knowledge put forward by those scientists utilizes a special language, in which many of the everyday words are not used anymore in their daily meaning; a specific scientific meaning is attached to them.

Moreover, in certain disciplines, such as philosophy and theology, the concepts used are abstract. As a result, the general masses are unable to understand this knowledge, to which we have referred as "scientific knowledge". But the community of scholars well understands the scientific knowledge and if an adequate network of communication is established between them, knowledge disseminates at this level directly and rapidly. Thus is formed the first stage in the process of the dissemination of knowledge which we shall call the "abstract level". This group of scientists are called *'ulama'*[20] in the Islamic sense, but generally speaking they are the *'ulama'* like Mulla Sadra forming systems to make up such dynamic frameworks in the minds of scientists.

Secondly, either there will be or there arises, as a result of the emergence of scientific knowledge, in such a society, a group of people called "intellectuals", such as men of literature, artists, architects, teachers and educators, who are educated and are able to understand the available scientific knowledge. The intellectuals are not scientists, nor are they scholars, but rather illuminated personalities who develop a transparent worldview within an environment of scientific activities. Therefore, they are able to express and clearly define terms and concepts that occupy a prominent place in their worldview; such concepts may be, for example, God, the universe, knowledge, science, the meaning of life, good, evil, freedom, justice, and many other moral, religious, political, educational and social terms. At this level, since the intellectuals are able to understand the scientific knowledge developed by the *'ulama'*, they will naturally reflect it in their works, because their worldview is already shaped within that knowledge. Hence, we may term this level in the dissemination of knowledge the "concretized level". Since the works of the intellectuals are

usually of a concrete nature, the scientific knowledge is concretized and thus handed down to the general masses who can understand the concrete ideas more easily.

Finally, at the third stage, the knowledge thus far produced enters into a massive dissemination through the educational institutions and mass media. This is possible through the work of scientists and intellectuals, because all the educational institutions are formed in accordance with the knowledge put forward by them. When the scientific knowledge thus disseminates from the top level of abstraction to the bottom level of concretization, it reaches to the masses and begins shaping their worldview according to its well-defined and systematically developed concepts, ideas and doctrines, namely, according to a system, developed by the *'ulama'*. When a transparent worldview is thus formed in accordance with the system developed by the *'ulama'*, it is called "scientific worldview"; and this way of worldview-formation we call "scientific worldview-formation". Therefore, by the scientific development of a worldview, we mean the inculcation of its major components, i.e., its concepts, ideas and beliefs, to the individuals of the society through clear and transparent definitions and a systematically organized body of knowledge.

Conclusion

How can we evaluate Sadra's system on the basis of our system theory? First of all, we must note that the scientific worldview-formation, discussed above, is not the only way in which transparent worldviews may be formed in the minds of the individuals. For there may be other ways for the rise of such worldviews in the minds of individuals. We shall not discuss all such possible ways here, but only allude to one of those ways in which historically speaking it occurred in our civilization. This is the Islamic worldview as established by the Prophet in Mecca, through the Revelation. Since the Muslim community as such did not exist at that time, we cannot talk of any scientific knowledge within the newly emerging society. As a result, the formation of the transparent Islamic worldview took place differently. This process of the Islamic worldview-formation was very much similar to the scientific worldview-formation, and as such can be called "quasi-scientific worldview-formation".

As we know from history each time a new Revelation came, the Prophet explained it to his community and each term and idea thus revealed found a clear definition and a proper place within the Islamic worldview. Hence, since the way the Islamic worldview was established in its original form in the first Muslim community is similar to scientific worldviews, we may call all worldviews that arise in this way in the minds of individuals "quasi-scientific worldviews".

What distinguishes the transparent worldviews from the natural ones is the dynamism they induce to the individuals in whose mind they are formed. This is clear from the historical world phenomenon exhibited by the early Muslims who once possessed the Islamic worldview they became world leaders in culture, science and civilization. But the worldviews these people had before Islam can be defined as natural, which lacked the adequate dynamism to give to the individuals of that society. In such a mental framework no scientific activity would have ever been possible. We must also point out that what makes worldviews dynamic, invigorating and stimulating is the continual renewal through scientific or quasi-scientific activities of the same kind which established the original Islamic worldview. If these activities of renewal cease to exist the transparent worldview can gradually turn into a natural worldview in which scientific and civilizational activities also cease.

Sadra's system falls within the mainstream of this philosophical tradition, which is unfortunately long forgotten in Islamic civilization. That is why today Muslims cannot meaningfully contribute to the advancement of sciences within their own civilization. When we consider what we have said concerning the functions of systems I think the crucial significance of Sadra's system comes fore. We need not elaborate on this any further, except indicating also to the historical importance of Sadra's system for our civilization, Nasr's remarks are meaningful:

"Mulla Sadra studied his past fervently, not as a dead past, but as permanent intellectual perspectives that continued to be relevant within the living tradition of Islam. Having absorbed these teachings thoroughly, he then set out to create a synthesis and a new intellectual dimension, the

‘transcendent theosophy’ (*al-hikmat al-muta‘aliyah*), which was not just an eclecticism, a putting together of different theories and views, but a new school based upon a fresh interpretation of the traditional verities. It was a school that was at once new and traditional, such as can be produced only by a veritable reviver (*mujaddid*) of traditional teachings, who is able to renovate a doctrine because of a new and fresh vision of the transcendent truths which the traditional doctrines reveal and expound. Mulla Sadra was such a *mujaddid*; through the prism of his luminous intellect a new intellectual perspective was born which was at once profoundly Islamic and attuned to both the logical demands of the mind and the requisites of the spiritual vision that is made possible through the opening of the ‘eye of the heart’.”[21]

There is no need to point out that the current state of Islamic philosophy is static. The reason for this is the mechanism of renewal of old systems was broken down. As Professor Nasr[22] indicates above there is no absorbing of these old teachings thoroughly, and ‘then setting out to create a synthesis and a new intellectual dimension, which was not just an eclecticism, a putting together of different theories and views’ creating thus a new school based upon a fresh interpretation of the traditional verities. We hope that Mulla Sadra’s system can be an illuminating guide for us in this respect; so that we study this system carefully and assiduously in order to reach a new synthesis, which is relevant to our time as well.

Notes:

1. This work, for short *al-Asfar*, is edited with commentaries of Sadra's prominent student Sabziwari and al-Tabataba'i by Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar, 9 vols. (Tehran: Matbê'at Haydari, 1383 A.H.; second ed. Qum: Maktabat al-Mustafa, 68). There is also a one-volume lithographed edition of this work (complete) with the commentary of his prominent student 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji in the margins (N.p., 1283 A.H.).

2. Alfred North Whitehead. *Process and Reality* (PR), ed. by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 3.

3. Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by N. K. Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 429; A474, B502.

4. *Ibid*., 556; A 681, B 709.

5. *Ibid*., 653,; A 832-3, B 860-1.

6. *al-Asfar*, 3: 296. [*kull 'ilm huwa nahwun min al-wujêd... Fa'l-'ilm bi-kull wujêd wa tashakhkhus la yumkin illa bi-wajhin kulliyyin 'amin.*].

7. See Alparslan Acikgenc. *Being and Existence in Sadra and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), 58f.

8. Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978).

9. See *Ibid*., especially ch. 5; also see note 11 below.

10. *al-Asfar*, 1: 13.

11. Sadra's expression *al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah* causes certain problems in translation; if, for example, we translate the term *hikmah* as simply "philosophy", the mystical contents it was laden by the time of Sadra is lost, and there is no doubt that Sadra has that content in mind in using this term. Following the theosophy of Ibn 'Arabi, the only closest term available in English would be "theosophy". But we must at the same time bear in mind that this theosophy is not devoid of rationality as understood by the great mystical philosophers of Islam. For this reason in the title of his magnum opus this aspect is emphasized as "rational journeys". The term *muta'aliyah*, on the other hand, cannot simply mean "transcendent" especially as understood by Kant. For, according to Mulla Sadra, transcendence is not something beyond the reach of our experiential faculties, though it is out of reach of our sensitive and discursive faculties. In order to avoid this meaning, we may translate it as "sublime", suggested by the late Professor Fazlur Rahman. See The *Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 19. But this is a literal translation of his methodology as "sublime wisdom" which does not pay any attention to the mystical tradition at the root of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, though avoids the already existing and perhaps misleading meanings of both "transcendent" and "theosophy" in English.

12. I think what Whitehead calls "assemblage" largely corresponds to what we mean by "methodology" as we use it in a general sense. See his *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1968, first ed. 1938), 2.

13. For this kind of a fundamental metaphysics, namely basic system, we can give as an example Avicenna's logic as a basic theory of knowledge for his whole system that fulfills the function of a methodology in his system, and thus it is always given at the outset of his system presented in the *al-Shifa* with greater details, and in *al-Nijat*, and *'Uyên al-hikmah* in general outline.

14. *al-Asfar*, 1: 20.

15. If we note here, in the *al-Asfar* this organization is not developed according to the mystical order of the experiential journeys. We offer the explanation that this is because these journeys are rational and that this rationality takes precedence since they are presented in the science of philosophy. Therefore, they are presented here in a rational order, which requires next the discussion of the creation rather than the Truth, as will be explained further below.

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16. This section dealing with the function of systems is based on our previous work *Islamic Science: Towards A Definition* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1997), 7-30.

17. Alfred North Whitehead. *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), vii.

18. In fact if there is such an effort to build a framework systematically, that will be a scientific activity, which is already existing in philosophy. Therefore, the counterpart of the term "worldview" in philosophy is the concept of "system". We thus distinguish these two terms only in this sense. For an elaboration and comparison of the concept of "system" in relation to worldview, see the present author's *A Concept of Philosophy in the Qur'anic Context*, The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, 11: 2 (1994), 170-4.

19. By the natural operations of the mind, we mean the logical principles, such as the law of contradiction, the principle of identity, association, deductive, inductive and similar ways of argumentation that belong to our intellect, and intuition, mental awareness, imaginative creation. These have been discussed in the first section of this chapter. The mind uses these ways naturally to acquire knowledge, and as we acquire any kind of knowledge, our worldview is formed simultaneously from the kinds of knowledge, which we accept. Then, we organize our life on the basis of such accepted knowledge, which is called here "worldview".

20. "Scientific conceptual scheme" is the body of general scientific nomenclature developed by the scientists and scholars, and as such it includes in general five fundamental concepts: knowledge, truth, method, theory and science. These are the general concepts, which every scientific tradition in history seems to have developed. But besides these fundamental doctrinal scientific concepts, each scientific tradition developed in its scientific conceptual scheme many other concepts. We may give the following concepts as example from the Islamic civilization as we observe them also within the system of Sadra: *'ilm, ra'y, ijtihad, qiyas, fiqh, 'aql, qalb, idrak, wahm, tadabbur, fikr, nazar, hikmah, yaqin, wahy, tafsir, ta'wil, 'alam, kalam, nutq, zann, haqq, batil, Sidq, kidhb, wujêd, 'adam, dahr, Samad, sarmad, azal, abad, khalq, khulq, firasah, fitrah, tabi'ah, ikhtiyar, kasb, khayr, sharr, halal, haram, wajib, mumkin, amr, iman, and 'iradah*. For a detailed discussion of this see Islamic Science, op. cit., 60-92.

21. What we mean by the term *'ulama'* (singular *'alim*) is primarily "scholars of Islam", which includes all scholars, such as philosophers, theologians, physicists, chemists and astronomers, who carry out their scientific activities within the Islamic worldview. Therefore, we do not mean merely its contemporary usage, which includes only the traditional Islamic scholars as a class of clergy, which is indeed a corrupt usage.

22. Nasr. *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*, 27.