

***The Epistemic Justification of Immediate Knowledge of
God from Sadra's Philosophy Perspective***

Dr. Abbas Yazdani*

Abstract

The chief purpose of this paper is to argue for the possibility of immediate knowledge of God through knowledge by presence from Sadra's philosophical perspective. This sort of immediate and direct knowledge can provide justification for belief in God. I shall show how knowledge by presence works in this regard, and how important the role of knowledge by presence is in a religious epistemology. Sadra as a famous Shi'ite philosopher in his new philosophical school, *al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyah*, on the basis of Shi'ite theology, has attempted to employ knowledge by presence to argue for the justification of immediate knowledge of God. I also shall deal with the criticisms of the immediate knowledge of God, that Sadra contended epistemically.

Key words: 1. Epistemic justification, 2. Knowledge by presence, 3. Belief in God, 4. Immediate knowledge, 5. Islamic philosophy, 6. Sadra.

1. Introduction

Sadr al-Din Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra and Sadr al-Muta'allihin undoubtedly is the greatest of the late Islamic philosophers. Mulla Sadra as a famous Shi'ite scholar created a major new philosophical school, *al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyah* on the basis of various sources, particularly, the Islamic revelation along with the sayings of the Shi'ite Imams. In other words, he makes use of logical analysis, as well as intellectual vision and what has been revealed through the Quran and made known to human beings through the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams. Sadra has attempted to employ knowledge by presence to argue for the

* Assistant Professor of University of Tehran E-mail: a.yazdani97@yahoo.com
Date of Receive: 14/10/90 Date of Accept: 3/4/91

justification of immediate knowledge of God. In fact, on the basis of Sadra's philosophy, as a mystical way to perceive God, knowing Him by presence is rooted in Shi'ite theology.

Contrary to the externalist theories of knowledge and justification, some philosophers hold that epistemic justification is internal and immediate, and justifier facts must be directly knowable by the cognitive agent. Chisholm, for instance, said:

The concept of epistemic justification is...internal and immediate in that one can find out directly, by reflection, what one is justified in believing at any time(6,p.7).

Obviously, the approach to epistemic justification should be based upon something like the directness qualification to be convincing. I will show that this directness qualification could be knowledge by presence. Consequently, the fact that the agent can readily know through knowledge by presence could be counted as a justifiers of belief. This knowledge is a priori and not based on any empirical factors from the external world; we are aware of this sort of knowledge by considering our conscious state of mind. Sadra as an Islamic philosopher has attempted to employ knowledge by presence to acquire truth in philosophy, particularly in epistemology. Although, some thinkers before Mulla Sadra² (Sadr al-Din Muhammad al-Shirazi 1571/2-1640) utilised this sort of knowledge, Sadra was the first philosopher who tried to establish a philosophical system for this approach to truth.

In this paper, first I shall explain knowledge by presence from Sadra's point of view, then I shall show how knowledge by presence works for the justification of immediate knowledge of God; and finally I will address the most important criticisms of the possibility of immediate knowledge of God.

2. Knowledge in Sadra's Philosophy

Sadra holds that the most complete knowledge is knowledge by presence. He has remarked "... knowledge of [the reality] is either by presentational observation (*mushahada huduri*) or by reasoning to it through its effects and implications, but then it is not apprehended except weakly" (13, p. 297).

I concur with Sadra that the reality of knowledge is nothing but existence. He says "knowledge is not something negative like abstraction from matter, nor is it a reciprocal relation, rather it is an existential fact ... it is a pure actual being unmixed with

nothingness. Insofar as knowledge is purified from mixing with nothingness, it is all the more knowledge” (Ibid). So, contrary to Avicenna’s theory (4, pp.264-267). That knowledge is to be considered as a process of abstraction from the material, Sadra maintains that the acquisition of knowledge would be possible only when an object is present for our mind. The existential relation between objects and the faculty of imagination entails mental forms of objects. Without this presentational relation no knowledge will be acquired. Since knowledge is a presentational fact, the value of any knowledge is based upon knowledge by presence. However, an account of “presentational knowledge” (*al- ‘ilm al-huduri*) appeared for the first time in the history of the Islamic tradition in Suhrawardi’s illuminative philosophy. Suhrawardi (al-Suhrawardi, Shihab al-Din Yahya 1154-91) has based the illuminative philosophy upon the dimension of human knowledge that is identical with the very ontological status of being human. Suhrawardi’s main question in this regard was: what is the objective reference of “I” when we say “I think”, “I have done it”, and the like. Suhrawardi’s doctrine of knowledge by presence is based on the hypothesis of self-awareness. He maintained that the self must be absolutely aware of itself without any representation. That is to say, consciousness is the knowledge of one’s own existence. Everyone knows himself or herself immediately and consciously. Nobody can doubt their own existence; even the materialists do not deny this kind of knowledge, because it is self-evident for everyone. Accordingly, it seems that Descartes’ argument *Cogito ergo sum*, namely, I think thus I exist, is not correct, because one’s own existence is more evident than thinking, thinking is the result of one’s own existence; and we need nothing to know our own existence, because there is a kind of privileged access to our own states of consciousness. As Chisholm contended, self-presenting propositions are directly evident,

If seeming to have a headache is a state of affairs that is self-presenting for S at the present moment, then S does now seem to have a headache and, moreover, it is evident to him that he seems to have a headache (5.p. 23).

3. Knowledge by Presence and Knowledge by Representation

The notion of knowledge involves at least two elements: a *subject* capable of knowing, and an *object* that can possibly be known. Cognition is the result of a relation between the subject and object of knowledge. In the tradition of Islamic philosophy, particularly Sadra's philosophy, knowledge is divided into two kinds: *Knowledge by presence*, (immediate knowledge), and *knowledge by representation* (mediate knowledge). Knowledge by presence can be attained without any mediation between subject and object, the object is present for the subject immediately. By contrast, knowledge by representation needs mediation to make a connection between subject and object that is called *mental form*.

In other words, knowledge by representation is where the concept and form of the object is present before the subject, like knowledge of external objects, such as tree, sky, car, human etc. Knowledge by presence is where the existential reality of the object is present for the subject, as with knowledge of the self or the mental status of the self. In knowledge by presence the existence of subject and the existence of object are united. In fact there is one thing that is subject and at the same time object, whereas, in knowledge by representation there are three things, subject, object, and mental forms as mediation between the subject and the object. In knowledge by representation, the first thing which the subject finds is the very concept and mental form. These concepts and mental forms have special characteristics that represent the external objects.

Knowledge by presence has all its relations within the framework of itself, without any external objective reference. The subjective object is united with the objective object. In other words, in the case of knowledge by presence the objective object and the subjective object are one and the same. In contrast, in knowing by correspondence, the subjective object is different from the objective object; there is a correspondence relation between these two objects. Contrary to knowledge by presence, the external object plays a major role in knowing by correspondence. Sadra remarked:

The forms of things are of two kinds, one is the material form, the existence of which is associated with matter and position and is spatiotemporal.

With respect to its material condition placed beyond our mental powers, this kind of form cannot possibly be “actually [and immanently] intelligent,” nor for that matter “actually [and immediately] sensible” except by “accident.” And the other is a form which is free and separate from matter, from position, and from space and location. The separation is by a complete abstraction, like an “actual intelligible,” or by an incomplete abstraction such as an “actual imaginable” and an “actual sensible objects” (13, p. 313).

According to Sadra’s philosophy, an object can be essential only if it is existentially united with, and present in the mind. Therefore, there is a difference between immanent and transitive objects. The relation of these two distinct objects is through correspondence, and not identity. The immanent object is without any sensible or imaginable matter and depends on the degree of our mental power of apprehension. The transitive object is an external, material or immaterial form of the object, which is existentially independent of the state of our mentality. One can only communicate with the transitive object through representations in one’s mind. Therefore, since the object is nothing but the immanent and essential, the meaning of the objectivity is the manifestation of the very constitution of knowledge. The transitive object, on the other hand, is constitutive only when the knowledge of the external object is in question. We may call this latter knowledge “knowledge by correspondence”.

4. Some Main Characteristics of Knowledge by Presence

Now I will deal with some characteristics of knowledge by presence. One of the main characteristics of knowledge by presence is its freedom from the dualism of truth and falsehood, because there is no correspondence between the knower and external object. In fact, there is no external object in the case of knowledge by presence. The principle of correspondence that has been widely accepted as the criterion for truth can be applied only in the case of knowledge by correspondence. The dualism of truth and falsehood requires the correspondence relation between the subjective-essential object and the objective accidental object, whereas there is no application for such a dualism in knowledge by presence, thus there is no mediation in this sort of knowledge.

But in the case of knowledge by correspondence, as mentioned earlier, there is a twofold sense of objectivity; one is a

subjective object, and the other is an objective object. In this sort of knowledge the subjective object represents, by means of conceptualizing, the reality of the external object. Since the correspondence relation is accidental, our knowledge may or may not correspond with external reality, according to the logical dualism of truth and falsity. If our subjective object truly corresponds to the objective object, our knowledge of the external world holds true and is valid, but if the condition of correspondence has not been obtained, the truth of our knowledge will never come about. Therefore, knowledge by presence is incorrigible, whereas knowledge by representation is corrigible. That is to say, one of the divisions which has been widely accepted by the Islamic epistemologists is the distinction between “subject” and “object”, the knower and the thing which is known. Again one of the logical consequences of this distinction was the distinction between “subjective object” – mental object- and “objective object”- external object. The term “subject” refers to the mind that performs the act of knowledge and the term “object” refers to the thing or the proposition that is known by that subject. The term object has two different senses, one is immediate and dependent on the existence of the knower; and the other is mediate and independent of the existence of the knower.

Another characteristic of knowledge by presence is that this knowledge is not subject to the distinction between knowledge by conception and knowledge by affirmation. Avicenna has made this distinction in his *Kitab al-Najat*:

Every piece of knowledge and apprehension is either by conception (*tasawwur*) or affirmation (*tasdiq*). Knowledge by “conception” is the primary knowledge which can be attained by definition or whatever functions as definition. This is as if by definition we understand the essence of human beings. Knowledge by “affirmation” on the other hand is that which can be acquired by way of “inference”. This is as if we believe the proposition that “for the whole world there is a beginning”(3, ch.2).

If one say knowledge by presence can be expressed in the form of propositional knowledge, as I am aware of myself (knowledge by presence). I can form the concept of my ego, “I” (conceptual knowledge) and express it by saying that I exist (propositional knowledge) I would say that to say that knowledge

by presence can be expressed by propositional knowledge is not to say that it is subject to distinction between knowledge by conception and knowledge by affirmation, because conception and affirmation are two characteristics of conceptualism which belong to meaning and representation. But the alleged reality of knowledge by presence does not involve any sense of conceptualism and representation.

Knowing by presence is personal, but this is not to say that it is private, for all humans are able to have such knowledge although in a great diversity of levels. Knowing by presence is non-transferable. This is to say that I cannot have your awareness and you cannot have mine. However, we may have similar awareness which we can describe to one another. Knowing by presence admits of degrees and development. This is illustrated in that it makes sense to speak of knowing something or someone better. Many people may have a minimal knowledge of metaphysical objects presentationally, but the maximum level of this sort of knowledge can be acquired by those who have special insight and practice. The Mystics have maximal knowledge of God by presence, for instance; they might see God's hand in their lives, and might see God's presence everywhere in the universe.

In knowledge by representation, the reality of knowledge is different from the reality of object; when we have knowledge of a certain building, for instance, the reality of knowledge is the mental form of that building, while the reality of object is the reality which exists in the external world independently from our existence. But in knowledge by presence, the reality of object is the same as the reality of knowledge; the existence of the object is the same as the existence of knowledge.

Knowledge by presence is the origin of all knowledge. That is to say, there is a faculty in human beings whose function is to take a picture of external objects. All of our mental forms which are recorded in our memory have been taken by this faculty so that 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 causes the soul to know the reality through knowledge by presence. In fact, the faculty of imagination converts the knowledge by presence to knowledge by representation. In other words, when the soul finds the object presently, the faculty of imagination creates a mental form of it (knowledge by presence) and transfers it to the memory. Therefore, the origin of all knowledge is knowledge by presence. Moreover, our knowledge of mental forms is knowledge by presence, not knowledge by representation. There is no mediation between subject and mental form; otherwise there would be a fallacious regress. That is to say, if our knowledge of mental form needs another mental form, and the second mental form needs another one, then the third mental form needs another one, ad infinitum. As a result, we could not reach any knowledge.

5. The Truth of Knowledge by Presence

One of the best arguments to show the truth of knowledge by presence is through self-awareness. If we consider the awareness of the self, we would know that we have immediate knowledge by means of the awareness of the self. When I consider myself, I will find that I am truly aware of myself in such a way that I can never miss myself. This state of self-certainty indicates that it is the very performance of "I" as the subject in the reality of me who knows me. If the subject "I" is known to itself, and it is the knowing subject who knows itself immediately, then the knowing subject knows itself by presence. This point entails that knowledge by presence has creative priority over knowledge by correspondence.

Descartes also remarks that "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am); in rejecting scepticism, he said; "I am really doubting; whatever else may be doubtful, the fact that I doubt is indubitable"(11, p. 170). By this Descartes means that the existence of the self is knowledge by presence. Before Descartes, Sadra was aware of this issue; he held that the awareness of the existence of the self is prior to the existence of any phenomenal state of mind; in his *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyya* he said:

No particular sense-perception or phenomenal state of mind, even though in the form 'I', can ever bear witness to the truth value of the existence of myself. This is because any phenomenal event which I attribute to myself, such as my feeling cold, warmth, or

pain etc., must be, and is presupposed by an underlying awareness of myself, with this underlying awareness alone can I appropriate cold, warmth, pain, pleasure, etc, to myself. If I suffer from severe cold weather, or escape from the flame of a burning fire, it is only because I already am aware of something which, in one way or another, belongs to myself(13, v. 3, p. 3).

As we may understand from Sadra's view here, we can argue for personal identity through knowledge by presence. Accordingly, to know the existence of the self we need no representation of the self such as doubt, feeling, or knowledge of others; rather we are aware of the existence of the self immediately through knowledge by presence without any mediation. Sadra also argues:

Were it the case that I, through my own action, whether it is intellectual or physical, could become aware of myself, it would be as if I should bring forth from myself evidence to bear witness to myself. It would obviously be a vicious circle in which the knowledge of my action functions as a cause of my knowledge of myself which is itself already implied in, and serves as the cause of the knowledge of my own action(13, v. 3, p.3).

6. Perceiving God through Knowledge by Presence

The God whom I mean here is the God of the main world religions, that is a person with necessary being, who is immaterial and eternal, is omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good, and the creator of the universe. We human beings can have innate and immediate knowledge of God. This immediate knowledge and our awareness of such immediate knowledge is through knowledge by presence which is infallible. As we have knowledge of the self, of our conscious states, and of our actions presently and consciously and there is no room to doubt, we can also have knowledge of the Transcendent Being, that is, God presently and consciously; this knowledge is incorrigible and certain. In responding to the question of "can belief in God be self-evident?", we may argue that belief in God is self-evident, even with respect to the classical foundationalist criterion we may take belief in God as self-evident.

As mentioned earlier, one of the best arguments to show the truth of knowledge by presence is the argument through self-awareness and conscious states of mind. This conscious awareness is the origin of conscious propositions that are self-evident

propositions, like “I exist”, “I feel pain in my hand”, “I am aware of God.” These propositions originate from knowledge by presence. Accordingly, knowledge of God by presence in the form of “I am aware of God”, or “I perceive God” is self-evident. We need no further evidence and argument for its truth. Since this belief originates from a conscious proposition that is one of the self-evident propositions, it would be contended that belief in God is based upon a self-evident and basic belief, and self-evident belief is itself evidence, the most confident and most certain to show the truth of the belief. Therefore, we have immediate knowledge of God’s presence; however, this knowledge does not include the character of God’s existence or God’s essence. Since this knowledge is accessible to human nature, the belief in God based on such presentational knowledge in appropriate circumstances would be justified. In fact, our presentational knowledge of God is immediate and direct, and this immediacy can provide justification for belief in God. The object in this direct presentation is immediately present to the subject and even more direct than directly seeing or hearing external objects. Alston remarked in his *Perceiving God*: “our own states of consciousness are given to us with maximum immediacy, not given to us through anything” (2). One can reach the high levels of knowledge of God by presence by purifying his or her soul and avoiding sins. An appropriate environment, practical commitment and spiritual practice could help one to reach the target properly, as religious experiences can help believers to have better spiritual life with better purified insight. At the highest level of this knowledge, one feels that there is no distinction between subject and object in immediate and direct awareness of God. Indeed, there is no duality in immediate awareness at all, as William James quoted from *Gulshan-Raz*:

Even man whose heart is no longer shaken by any doubt, knows with certainty that there is no being save only One...in his divine majesty the *me*, and *we*, the *thou*, are not found, for in the one there can be no distinction. Every being who is annulled and entirely separated from himself, hears resound outside of him this voice and this echo: *I am God*. He has an eternal way of existing, and is no longer subject to death (9, p. 44).

Indeed, this level is the highest level of knowledge of God by presence, and that is worth researching, but I have no place to

discuss it here. So, an immediate knowledge of God can be grounded in the direct non-sensory perceptual awareness of God, that is, knowledge by presence. This immediate knowledge is not only basic, because it does not come from other beliefs or sources, but it is also properly basic, because it is acquired in a basic way, and it is accessible to human nature. Thus, if *S* believes *P* based on his innate tendencies and he is aware of these tendencies through knowledge by presence and his natural cognitive system is functioning properly, consequently, his belief is rationally justified. However, one might be ignorant of this presentational knowledge due to inappropriate circumstances or inappropriate mental states. Therefore, if there are some people in some societies either in the past or present that do not have such presentational knowledge of God, then this is due to obstacles and inappropriate circumstances. In other words, the innateness of such presentational knowledge does not necessitate that everybody has this knowledge actually when he is born; rather it means that human beings have this knowledge potentially and are able to actuate it in appropriate circumstances.

7. Criticisms of the Possibility of Immediate Knowledge of God

There might be a number of objections to the possibility of immediate knowledge of God, most of them based on the supposition that knowledge is always represented; knowledge by presence differs from representation. It should be noted that although there are good rejoinders for the criticisms of immediate knowledge of God by presence, I do not contend that there is no outstanding sceptical criticism of this model of immediate knowledge, or there are public philosophical arguments for the model to convince any philosophers, atheist or theist with any attitude. However, my contention is that this model is one of the best explanations of how an immediate knowledge of God can be justified epistemically. This model seems more effective epistemically with fewer problems than other accounts for the rationality of belief in God.

One may ask: what is the reason that one does really have presentational knowledge of God. The view of the possibility of immediate knowledge of God depends on what we mean by reason.

Reason is not restricted to metaphysical and propositional arguments for the existence and nature of God. As we do not seek metaphysical and propositional argument for sense perception to be justified, we do not seek metaphysical arguments for presentational knowledge of God to be justified. As we have immediate knowledge of an external physical object, we have immediate knowledge of God's presence. Immediacy of this knowledge is self-justifying, and so it is basic; no further evidence and argument is needed.

One may object: how do you know the universality of this immediate knowledge? If all human beings have the knowledge of God by presence naturally why do many people doubt such knowledge? I would say that the contention is not that all human beings have this knowledge actually, however, they have this knowledge potentially; the contention is the possibility of actual knowledge of God by presence. Those people whose innate knowledge has not been actualised may deny presentational knowledge of God. So, we do not need to argue for universality of this knowledge, as non-universality of this knowledge does not affect negatively the possibility of this kind of knowledge.

This model of immediacy is capable of being presented to any community and culture; it is not restricted to a certain religious community, because the basis of the model is the epistemic analysis of presentational knowledge of human nature. Accordingly, belief in God is properly basic and could be rationally justified without any philosophical argumentation; however, the argument and evidence is useful in some circumstances to convince others or to respond to the objections.

One may say that there are many people who fail to have presentational knowledge of God. In other words, this fact that only some have such knowledge suggests that awareness of God is very different from other sorts of knowledge. This difference indicates that there is no stable innate knowledge of God for human beings. We may say that differences in the ability of perceiving God do not require differences in human nature. Differences in religious awareness are thereby cast in terms of differences in the development of certain skills or of practices as they depend upon environments and obstacles.

In responding to the question, whether presentational knowledge of God is subjective, one may say that in order for knowledge of God to qualify as objective, it is necessary that it admits of the veridical-unveridical distinction. Since in this sort of knowledge of God the object is supernatural, there is no way to determine who will have such a knowledge and under what conditions. So, immediate knowledge of God is not even a candidate for being a source of justification for beliefs about any objective reality, because there is no physical body for God so that we can identify Him.

One of the differences between knowledge of physical objects and knowledge of God that shows the disanalogy between these two sorts of knowledge is that in sense perception we encounter physical objects, whereas when the religious believer claims he knows God by presence, it does not mean he has encountered God's body, because God does not have a body. So because of this difference some conclude that immediate knowledge of physical objects is contrasted with knowledge of God. We can use Alston's view here that "the identification of objects of sense perception does not typically involve the sensory presentation of features that uniquely identify the object. Instead we use background knowledge (belief) to connect what is presented with what we take the object to be... I suggest that we use analogous background knowledge (belief) to identify God on the basis of relatively sketchy experiential presentations" (7, p. 892). However, we may say that the criterion of knowledge by presence is not having a physical body, rather it is the presence of the object for the subject immediately, and this is the same in both cases.

This sort of knowledge is subjective, because in order to have immediate knowledge of God it is necessary and sufficient to have a state of consciousness presenting itself to the subject. The view that for knowledge to be truly knowledge it must be objective is not correct. The discussion of justification of belief in God as a religious belief is concerned with the existence of subjects, not objects, and what it is to be a subject can be studied subjectively, not objectively. It is true that the religious environment is an objective phenomenon, and it is an objective aspect of human life, but what we consider as religious beliefs are interpretations of this objective aspect of human life. These interpretations of religious

phenomena are subjective. In other words, our sources to understand and interpret religion are human subjective factors. Even in an external objective analysis we need subjective factors. We come to understand religious beliefs only when we experience them in our own subjectivity as states of our subjectivity. In this approach, we may perceive God through the content of certain conscious states rather than from the activity of God in the human and non-human environment in which we live. It seems to me that the evidence for the rationality of belief in God should be convincing evidence subjectively, even if it might be inadequate evidence objectively. It has to be mentioned that an epistemologist can only talk about the subjective evidence with which one reaches truths, whether it fits with the objective truth or not, as Kant distinguished between grounds for belief as subjective evidence and objective evidence. 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 grounds that are subjectively convincing (10, pp. 645-652).

One may object that the subjectivity of religious beliefs requires merely the private confession of the feeling, attitudes, and ideas without having universal validity. In other words, the inner states of consciousness have no general validity; they are not subject to evaluation. So, there is no possibility of understanding the data of private subjectivity. In responding to this objection, we may say that an epistemological analysis of the nature and structure of human subjectivity can provide such an evaluation. Islamic philosophers like Sadra attempted to show such a general mechanism of consciousness in human nature through the analysis of knowledge by presence which I dealt with in this paper. The minimum level of this consciousness is obtainable for everybody through self-knowledge which has self-justification. As I mentioned earlier, although this approach is personal, it is not private, for all humans are able to have such knowledge, however, in a great variety of levels.

One may say that knowledge by presence cannot be counted as reliable evidence, for it is best regarded as feelings or sensations that do not allow one to draw any such substantial conclusion. If we might reach a conclusion about the sensations it is because we

have a secure, justified view about how our sensations, for instance, are shaped by external objects. We have no such reliable referential content for presentational knowledge. It will be answered that the awareness of God's presence is itself a reliable reference, as our awareness of self is a reliable reference. We take such awareness seriously as part of our cognitive faculties until we have good reason against it, as Swinburne remarked: "It is a principle of rationality that (in the absence of special considerations) if it seems (epistemically) to a subject that x is present, then probably x is present; what one seems to perceive is probably so" (16. p. 254).

One may say that there are still some differences between knowledge of God and knowledge of physical objects in ways that make different standards appropriate. Sense experience is universally shared and yields richly detailed results. Immediate knowledge of God, by contrast, is not universally shared: the output of this knowledge is even relative for its devotees. In responding to this objection we may say that undoubtedly there are some important differences between knowledge of God and knowledge of physical objects, but these differences do not require the invalidation of presentational knowledge of God, because there is no reason that "a cognitive access enjoyed only by a part of the population is less likely to be reliable than one that is universally distributed" (2, p. 659). Why should we suppose that a source that yields less detailed and less fully understood beliefs is more suspect than a richer source? Moreover, as mentioned, this sort of knowledge is not private, because the minimal level is accessible for all human beings.

8. Conclusion

The argument here is that according to Sadra's philosophy the epistemic justification of immediate knowledge of God can be provided through knowledge by presence. The approach to epistemic justification is an internalist one. The internalist model of immediacy is capable of being presented to any community and culture; it is not restricted to a certain religious community, because the basis of the model is the epistemic analysis of presentational knowledge of human nature. Accordingly, belief in God is properly basic and could be rationally justified without any

philosophical argumentation; however, the argument and evidence is useful in some circumstances to convince others or to respond to the objections. As we have seen, most of the objections to the immediate knowledge of God are based on the supposition that knowledge is represented; knowledge by presence differs from representation. In spite of the criticisms of the internal model of immediate knowledge, this model is one of the best explanations of the possibility of immediate knowledge of God.

Nots

1. Mulla Sadra is perhaps the single most important and influential Iranian philosopher in the Muslim world in the least four hundred years.

References

- 1- Alston, W. P., (1983), "What's Wrong with Immediate Knowledge", *Syntheses*, Vol. 55, pp. 73-95.
- 2- _____, (1991), *Perceiving God*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- 3- Avicenna, (Ibn Sina), (1938), *Kitab al- Najat*, Logic, ch. 2. Cairo.
- 4- _____, (1960a), *Kitab al-Shifa*, ed. G. C. Anawati. Cairo.
- 5- Chisholm, Roderick. M., (1977), *Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd edition, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- 6- _____, (1989), *On Metaphysics*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.
- 7- Gale, R., (1994), "Why Alston's Mystical Doxastic Practice Is Subjective", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vo. LIV, No. 4, December, pp. 869-875.
- 8- Hairi Yazdi, M., (1992), *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy, Knowledge by Presence*, New York: State University of New York Press.
- 9- James, William, (1902), *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Modern Library.
- 10- Kant, I., (1965), *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's press.
- 11- Russell, B., (1976), *An Outline of Philosophy*, ch. 16, London, 1976.

18 Journal of Religious Thought

12- Shirazi, Sadr al-Din (Mulla Sadra), (1961), *Se Asl*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran.

13- _____, (1981), *al-Hikmat al-Mutaaliyyah fi-al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbaah*. Beirut: Dar ihya al-Arabi.

14- _____, (1982), *Al-Shawahed al-Rubobiyah*, ed. S. Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, Mashhad: Mashhad University Press.

15- Suhrawardi, Y., (1945), *Kitab al-talwihat*. Istanbul.

16- Swinburne, R., (1979), *The Existence of God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

17- Tabatabaei, S. M. H., (1989), *Usul-I Falsafah wa Rawish-I Realism*, with notes by Morteza Mutahari. Tehran: Intisharat-I Sadra.

