

ŞADRĀ AND GERMAN IDEALIST PHILOSOPHY: ON THE PROBLEM OF INTELLECTUAL INTUITION

By:

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Abstrak

Makalah ini adalah suatu usaha untuk memperlihatkan aspek persamaan atau titik pertemuan yang boleh ditemui dalam falsafah Mullā Şadrā dan Idealis Jerman. Ia berupa satu pemerhatian konteks sejarah dan sistematik bagi dua falsafah; falsafah Islam di Timur dan pemikiran pada era revolusi Eropah khususnya aliran Goethe Jerman. Perbincangan berkaitan isu epistemologi, alam tabi'i, kebebasan dan Hakikat Mutlak (the Absolute) diketengahkan untuk dilihat kiranya terdapat titik persamaan antara dua tradisi falsafah ini.

Introduction

At the present stage of international scholarship we are entering into what we may call "global research and scholarship". This is part of a process known as globalization. This process took on its formative aspects in the 1990s and finds itself in an inauguration stage in the beginning of the 21st century. We are entering in a truly global stage of interaction between peoples and their respective civilizations. The internet, the satellite television and telephone, or mobile phone makes this globalization possible, even for the

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non-elite and common people. The present essay proposes research and scholarship possibilities that had been unthinkable during the undergraduate years (the 1960s) of the present writer. This includes philosophy. Although philosophy has always had a "universal outlook", still, philosophers develop their perspectives and researches in their respective cultural context. Western philosophers had absolutely no idea about Islamic philosophy conducted in Safavid Persia.¹ It was a matter of Medieval philosophy: a philosophy that was considered historical and for a few specialists. Developments in the Near East and other areas of the globe made it clear that such kind of ignorance can not be tolerated anymore. In the process of globalization historical elements of any civilization turns out to be of vital importance for understanding and coming to terms with contemporary process of interaction between parts of the world. Mullā Ṣadrā and the German Idealist philosophy tradition is a topic as part of the globalization process.² Ṣadrā, a contemporary of Descartes, never knew of Cartesianism, nor did Descartes at the end of his life in Stockholm, instructing Queen Christina of Sweden, have any idea of Ṣadrā and the Isfahan of 'Abbās II. Imagine a meeting

¹ The Europeans were familiar with the western part of Islam (e.g. Mahgrib, Egypt, The Levant, Osmanli), but not with the eastern part (e.g. Safavid Persia). Max Horten, Professor of Semitic Philology and Philosophy at the University of Bonn, Germany, was the first scholar who published a monograph on Sadra in a European language. S.H. Nasr and the late Fazlur Rahman, in their respective books on Ṣadrā, that is *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī and his Transcendent Philosophy*, Tehran: Academy of Philosophy, 1979, by the former and *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, New York: SUNY Press, 1975, by the latter, honour Horten in the Preface. Horten's books on Islam, highly original and not dogmatic, have never been translated into English or French.

² It is not accident that contemporary Iranian thinkers find a kind of affinity to classic German idealist philosophy. Among German Indo-European philologist with a philosophic leaning there had always been keen interest in Persia's philosophic themes expressed in poetry. However, even among German scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries Islamic-Persian philosophy was not well known. An exception was the German dissertation on *The Metaphysical Philosophy in Persia* by Muḥammad Iqbāl (who studied in Munich and received his Dr. Phil.

between the two, first in Amsterdam, then in Isfahan? Likewise, representatives of the German idealist philosophy school, Fichte, Schelling, the poets Novalis and Hoelderlin, the theologian Schleiermacher and the literary critics the Schlegel brothers, had some idea of Persian poetry and culture, yet little, if not ignorant of Şadrā and the Isfahan school of philosophy. Again, imagine a meeting of the German idealist and Şadrā? Needless to say, these are ideas of the imagination that were not possible in historical reality; yet, in our world they are possible as virtual reality. And virtual reality is a reality of the 21st century.

In this essay we not only observe historical and systematic contexts of Islamic philosophy in the East, but also the scenery of 18th century revolutionary Europe, especially the Germany of Goethe. The center of attention for all Europeans at the times was the French revolution and then the Napoleonic wars. Even more important was the onset of industrialization of Western Europe. Economically and politically England and France responded, yet, it was Germany that conceptualized the change of the times in the form of philosophy, to use a metaphor from one of its towering thinkers of the times, namely Hegel. Classical German philosophy, as it is now known, was another fortunate event in the history of philosophy, equal to that of the Classical Greek philosophy that formatted the modern mind. Not only that, it searched the dark corners of the human mind as to provide positive impulses to new generations of master thinkers. We need only to think of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, or Einstein.³ These are the modern

from Munich University with this dissertation; see Annemarie Schimmel on 'Iqbal and the mystical tradition in Islam'. Also of interest John O. Voll, "Changing Western Approaches to Islamic Studies and Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Vision", in Mohammad H. Faghfoory (2003), *Beacon of Knowledge*, Louisville, Kentucky: FONS VITAE.

³ The biography of the modern master thinkers of the Western 20th century, Marx, Freud, Einstein, Adorno and many members of the Frankfurt School of Philosophy have their intellectual roots in classic German Romanticism (e.g. Herbert Marcuse's dissertation was written on the "Bildungsroman" - an educational philosophy genre in German classic literature).

masters that were highly receptive to the ideas of German Idealist philosophy. Needless to say, the enormous task of Mullâ Şadrâ, prepared by Suhrawardî, Mîr Damâd and others intellectually active in Safavid Persia, synthesized the basic positions of Classical Greek philosophy with Islamic thinking in a most original way. Both Şadrâ and the German idealist were synthesizers; they turned contrasting traditions and insight and made them their own, without compromising either one, or the other. The fact that Şadrâ has been rejuvenated especially in contemporary Iran, the fact that the basic idea of the German idealists provided creative impulses on a global level, from the environmental concerns to feminism, from poetic inspirations to formative elements dealing to multicultural discourse, give us ample evidence just how powerful these two traditions really are.⁴ The books needed to assess the contributions of Şadrâ and the Isfahan school of philosophy in conjunction with the representatives of German idealist philosophy have not yet been written and await future generations of thinkers and scholars. Since the fall of the iron curtain many documents and literature by the idealist philosophers and poets have been found and made accessible to scholars. The events in Iran in the last quarter of the 20th century also promoted philosophical research into Şadrâ's work and the school of Isfahan, giving us a better insight into the development of Islamic philosophy in the East.⁵

The present essay intends to focus on the notion of intellectual intuition for the simple reason that it is a concept that serves as a common denominator for both philosophic endeavors: Şadrâ and the German idealist

⁴ Many themes and impulses, from the feminist movement to the ecological concerns, have their direct intellectual roots in Goethe's Germany.

⁵ The revolution in Iran and the Fall of the Berlin Wall promoted new interest in the intellectual heritage of both countries. This is especially the case with Germany, since the eastern part with (East) Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Jena and Weimar were the sites of Germany's classic cultural heritage.

school of philosophy.⁶ Although, at first sight these thinkers do not seem to have much in common, considering their respective cultural and religious backgrounds; yet, a closer look reveals that they do have many significant aspects of philosophic insights in common, one of which is the phenomenon of intellectual intuition. At this point we can only hint at these matters while subsequent researches will provide us more material. In that sense the present essay is to be understood as a sketch of the subject matter at hand. What makes intellectual intuition an attractive focus point relating Islamic philosophy, especially Şadrā and the Isfahan of 'Abbās II, and classical German idealist philosophy, is its interacting potential of thinkers on a global scale that initiated discourses among civilizations. This sort of activity is highly recommended considering the uneasiness with which present day communicators communicate the news of global events to the world. Philosophy understands itself as a global enterprise and is well suited for such a task. Thus, let us start our sketch and try to conceptualize in nutshell philosophic insights developed in Safavid Persia and Goethe's Germany that provided the basic cultural foundation of their respective civilizations.

Historical and Systematic Contexts

At the time of the Latin medieval philosophy, the classical tradition in Europe included classical Greek philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and Neo-Platonism. In the subsequent development of Islamic philosophy we find, likewise, the Greek classical tradition, with emphasis upon Plato and Neo-Platonism, as well as Aristotle and Plotinus. The two different strands developed into highly sophisticated philosophic systems and acumens; yet, never losing sight of the basic dogma of Islam. The metamorphosis of Greek

⁶ It is precisely the concept of intellectual intuition that had been given abandoned in 20th century Western philosophy with the exception of theological oriented views. In classic German Romanticism intuition (intellectual and empathic) comprised the central core of attention (e.g. Novalis, Schelling and the Schlegel brothers).

philosophy at the hand of Islamic thinkers such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, or al-Ghazālī is remarkable. Likewise, the transformation of classic Greek philosophic positions by German idealist thinkers was highly original at the hands of Hegel, of Schelling, of Hoelderlin, or Novalis, not to mention the classic German translation of Plato by Schleiermacher.⁷ Friedrich Rueckert, friend of Goethe with a leaning towards the Romantic aspects of idealist thinking, did the same with classic Persian poetry: he made Ḥāfiz speak beautiful German. The legacy of the Romantic period of the German idealist thinkers, that included not only philosophers, but also poets, translators, literary critics, not to mention pre-modern feminists like Caroline Schlegel (later Schelling), Dorothea Veit, or Henriette Herz, give us ample testimony that idealist thinking was alive and well in Goethe's Germany until it resurfaced in the 1960s of the 20th century and reshaped the psychology of Western societies.⁸

There is a shared historical dimension between Islamic philosophy and German idealist thinking, namely, classic Greek thinking, especially Plotinus and Neo-Platonism. This is especially true if we focus on intellectual intuition. Yet, this common denominator has only recently been rediscovered during subsequent conferences that included thinkers from the East and the West. By the Late Latin medieval times the formerly shared common denominator was no longer the case. As soon as the West rediscovered

⁷ Again, there seems to be an analogous development between Islamic and classic German idealist philosophy in their respective modes of thought, transforming classical Greek philosophy into a theomorphic structure in the former case and an anthropomorphic structure in the German case. Plato and Plotinus seemed to have received a more favorably readings and interpretation in the Islamic world, while Aristotle celebrated his success in Hegel and Marx's philosophy. However, it was in German classic romanticism that Neo-Platonism remerged mixed with the mystic Meister Eckhardt's vision. These matters must be researched more in detail.

⁸ Very little noticed until the 1960s and subsequent humanist versions of feminist thought (e.g. Hanna Arendth). The intellectual roots of the emancipation of women in the West can be found in German romanticism (e.g. Caroline Schelling, Rahel Varnhagen, Henriette Herz).

how to read original classical Greek again, western European students forgot about the commentaries of Averroes and were encouraged to look into the classical Greek writings of Plato. Of course, there were avid translation activities in Medici Florence such as Ficino later to be incorporated into the Neo-platonic perspective of Nicolas Cusanus and then Schelling.⁹ Cartesianism took the Arts faculties in western European universities by storm initiated in Leiden and Amsterdam, while many universities in southern Europe, under the watchful eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, continued with classical Aristotelianism adopted for the church faithful by Thomas Aquinas. The eastern part of Islam, especially Persia, was basically unknown and of no great interest. The scientific revolution did the rest to break the link between classical Greek tradition between the West and Islamic East.

The systematic context, of course, is quite another matter. Şadrā is a philosopher, or theosopher, whose philosophical system is clearly theomorphic in structure and intent. The German idealists aim at an anthropomorphic scheme that wants to enquire into the nature of the subjective conditions of human knowledge. The aim of the idealists is to know humankind, while Şadrā's aim is to know the divine essence.¹⁰ Both schemes claim comprehensive insights on a holistic level. In Şadrā's scheme we find different sorts of methods of inquiry that employs Revelation, angels, miracles, intellectual intuition, and reason. In the idealist project we find, aside intellectual intuition, dialectics, poetics, and discursive exercises into what we may call deep subjectivity. Şadrā's journey, following the hints of the master of illumination philosophy, namely Suhrawardī, leads us into the oriental sphere of the world. It is the world of the East, the Orient, or the Light.

⁹ The relation between the Italian Renaissance Neo-Platonism of Medici Florence and Nicholas Cusanus to Schelling is evident.

¹⁰ We repeat the asymmetrical epistemological structure between Islamic philosophers (including Ghazālī or Ibn Rushd) and classic German idealist visions (from the early Fichte to the late Schelling).

in Ṣadrā's oriental journey show upward visions towards the light in the name of Revelation. The German idealists too are on a journey namely into the West, or what may be called the occidental journey into the innermost dark corners of the human soul. These two journeys are, in a way, complementary.¹¹ Darkness and lightness complement each other as to reveal the absolute of the known and the unknown. In spirit the oriental and the occidental journey seem opposite, yet, a closer look will reveal that they are actually one. This needs to be explicated in the future. In this case imagination will have to do the job. Both reveal hierarchical structures of reality: in the Islamic tradition we speak of Divine Essence, Universal Intellect, or Pure Being, or spirits and the transcendent world encompassed by imagination and psychic entities, while world affairs are conducted by bodies of the material world. For Ṣadrā, with this respective background, the idea of unity is primordial adding the perpetual gradation of being. He entertains the original idea of trans-substantial motion, while the knower and the known form a unity and the imaginative faculty leads its own life apart from the body. Revelation, prophecy, reason and intellectual intuition are epistemic cornerstones of Ṣadrā's thought.¹²

To be fair to both sides, this essay will not consider all categories of thought entertained by Ṣadrā nor the German idealist, but concentrates on a specific category, namely intellectual intuition. It has the advantage of a shared category and positive promotion of creative synthesis in

¹¹ This reiterates the main thesis of the paper that with a certain creative "virtual reality" imagination THE JOURNEY takes different routes; it's not black or white, but neither is what it is, without the other.

¹² Revelation and prophecy is necessarily a component of the theomorphic structure in Ṣadrā's vision. This is not the case in German philosophy, however, the later Schelling did lecture on Revelation (mainly Christian that is) at Berlin Humboldt University. Ironically some of the students attending were the young Kierkegaard, the young Engels and the anarchist Bakunin. See F.W. Schelling (1975), *Vorlesungen über Offenbarung* (Lectures on Revelation), edited by Manfred Frank, Frankfurt a.m.: Suhrkamp.

both journeys. Dealing with other categories, such as revelation, for instance would need a special study and yields potential research projects for the future. Plotinus especially, as recent researches by German Schelling scholars such as Walter Schulz and Werner Beierwaltes have shown, had a decisive influence on Schelling and the poet-philosopher Novalis.¹³ More precisely, the Plotinus-aesthetic-connection, as we may call it, was very specific in its paradigmatic intent. In other words, we find the aesthetic contemplation of the Absolute, the mirror world we find in the *Ennead*, transformed in the works of the later Schelling, especially in his philosophy of art and the poetics of Novalis. The initial critique of Kant by the German idealist of the Romantic Movement such as Schelling, Novalis and the Schlegel brothers, was done in the name of Plotinus and Neo-Platonism. Kant's concept of experience limited the epistemological inquiry into a Newtonian mechanical world and could only make sense if there is a complementary scheme such as sensibility and conceptuality. This is the meaning of the famous dictum: "Perception without concepts are blind, concepts without perception are meaningless". This claim can be considered legitimate if we limit our understanding of what we mean by experience, i.e. experience in the sense of empirical science.¹⁴ As Şadrâ pointed out in his *al-Asfâr*, meditating on the psychological

¹³ Cf. the works by the late Professor of Philosophy at Tubingen University, Walter Schulz and Munich University Professor Werner Beierwaltes. Especially the works by Beierwaltes on Plotinus and Neo-Platonism must be emphasized, see Beierwaltes, Werner (1972), *Platonism und Idealismus*, Frankfurt a.M.: Klosterman Verlag.

¹⁴ The concept of experience (German: *Erfahrung, Empfinden*) is understood by Kant to apply exclusively to the five senses constituting empirical reality. Kant refers many times to what we consider intellectual intuition as the "non-empirical" or "dark corners" of our soul. Intuition in Kant's thought only made sense as "*Anschauung*" (i.e. the German has a double meaning, on the one hand it "direct perception like seeing a painting") and as 'intuition' in the English meaning. Much has been debated on this translation problem (compare Max Muller with Kempth Smith's translation).

elements of intuition, people sometimes do not think there is a sixth sense in the world. Only secular oriented people seem to deny it. In Newton's and Kant's world there is no sixth sense, except as delusion.¹⁵ Plotinus will help to bridge this gap between Ṣadrā and the German idealist. No doubt, in Suhrawardī and Ṣadrā we find Plato and Plotinus operating in disguise. This is certainly the case in classical German idealist philosophy such as Schelling, Novalis and Schleiermacher who made Plato speak in beautiful German. In Hegel we find a subtle synthesis of Plato and Aristotle, yet, even some of his metaphors in the Phenomenology are certainly of Romantic roots. Fichte is a curious mix of essential Descartes of the Meditation, Kantianism and Platonism. Yet, in a curious way, if Fichte had a chance to read Suhrawardī, no doubt, he would have immediately found his soul-mate.¹⁶ Again, these are general comments and need to be researched in some detail. The language of Plotinus and Neo-Platonism is found in Suhrawardī, Ṣadrā, the Isfahan school, as well as among the German idealist thinkers. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī would have fitted in well with the poetics of Novalis.¹⁷ The metaphorology, to use the late Hans Blumenberg's vocabulary, of East and West in the form of Ṣadrā and the German Idealists are remarkable.

¹⁵ It is mainly due to Newton's mechanistic natural philosophy and Kant's strict understanding of human experience, as exclusively empirical in nature, that intuition as a legitimate source of knowledge has been discredited in subsequent philosophy. Kant's critique of the Swedish mystic Swedenborg makes this clear in his later writings.

¹⁶ Fichte, an early student of Kant, sensed the "weakness" of Kant's concept of empirical experience and attempted, for the rest of his life, to broaden that concept in his project of constructing a human "Ich" (meaning the "I") as a cognitive metaphysical ego, contrary to Descartes's formalistic deductive ego, but closer to Husserl's phenomenological ego with a dialectic twist.

¹⁷ The close affinity (in terms of virtual reality) between Aḥmad Ghazālī (the brother of Abū Ḥāmid) and the poet-philosopher Novalis deserves special attention (e.g. enchantment of the world: *Verzauberung der Welt*, later used by Max Weber in his rationality thesis of the West).

Here too, detailed research must warrant the claim of common cause.¹⁸ The religious dimension of the idealist school comprises Lutheranism, pietism and mysticism along the genealogy of Meister Eckhart. It is secular in the name of religious language; an apparent contradiction, yet, a subtle imaginative project that initiated a very original occidental journey.

Some of the topics that the German idealist dealt with will be handled in a nutshell, again, in view of intellectual intuition. They deal with the apparent contradictions between nature and freedom, with the problem of identity in terms of the subject-object epistemological situation, and not the least with the absolute. Again, decisive differences to the German idealists we find in the theomorphic structure of Şadrâ's epistemology underpinned by the metaphysical foundation of Divine Essence, not to repeat revelation and prophethood, which do not play a decisive role among the German idealist. This is understandable, since Şadrâ's oriental journey operates within the Islamic dimension. Yet, we do see common possibilities of the two journeys meeting: do they not have the common destination, in the long run to the Absolute? Can we not conceive a cognitive possibility of a joint journey on behalf of the Divine Essence?

¹⁸ A colleague of the present author at the University of Munster, Germany (in the early 1980s), the late philosophy professor Hans Blumenberg introduced an interesting alternative discussion in German philosophy in the 1970s in terms of a project he called "metaphorology" analysis. In exquisite German he wrote many literary styled works that would research metaphors found in the intellectual life of German philosophy and literature and traced these systematically (e.g. the usage of the concept "Light" or "shipwreck"). His earlier major work is *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, MIT Press (English translation) 1985 in which he contends that the context of religion has to be considered in the formation of the European enlightenment (especially Nominalism and Cusanus). The Blumenberg method could be used fruitfully for relating Islamic and Western philosophy as a whole.

Epistemic Topics: Identity or the Subject-Object Mode of Cognition

Some of the basic themes entertained by the German idealists was that of identity, of the apparent contradiction between nature and freedom, of the problem of basic principles of guiding research (*Wissenschaft*) towards true knowledge, of the aesthetic element and symbolic value coming to terms with a transcending world, of the possibility of poetic transcending the empirical world (as Novalis stated: 'we transform the world poetically'), and not the least the problem of the absolute (epistemologically speaking). These topics have been researched in detail by Paul Kluckhohn, Manfred Frank, or Dieter Henrich within a European context of perspective, but have not been used to come to terms with, say Ṣadrā, the Isfahan school, or generally Islamic philosophy.¹⁹ It seems that the topics that the German idealists worked on provide a platform to engage especially the Plato, Neo-platonic tradition in Islamic philosophy, not to say Sufism or '*irfān*'. If, as the Malay-islamic scholar Zailan Moris claims, in Ṣadrā's work we find a grand synthesis between Revelation, gnosis and discursive thinking, than Ṣadrā is the right thinker of the Islamic East to enter into a dialogue with the German idealists.²⁰ Needless to say, a new generation of scholars is needed to tackle this sort of prospective project, since, at present, there are hardly any scholars that command the tradition of the German idealists in the Islamic world, while there are very few in the Western world that even handle Islamic philosophy, not the least Sufism, if they are mainstream academic philosophers. What is needed in this coming age of global scholarship is a generation that looks beyond their specific specialties within the context of national and ideological purpose and intellectual traditions, such as the

¹⁹ See Kluckhohn, Paul (1966), *Das Ideengut der Deutschen Romantik*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, Frank, Manfred (1997), *Unendliche Annäherung: Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp and Henrich.

²⁰ Cf. Zailan Moris (2003), *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, London: Routledge Curzon.

Western tradition of philosophy and the Islamic philosophic heritage and seek for the common roots and what they have in coming. And if, we may add, both traditions and perspectives do have plenty in common, we must sift out this commonality and work out platforms for future dialogues and discourses. From there on, perhaps, global philosophy will be possible.²¹

The basic problem of personal identity turned center-stage among the Romantics of the German idealists, especially Novalis and Schelling, and less romantically by Fichte. Yet, the problem of identity has its roots, in the German idealist tradition in problem that Kantian philosophy seemed to have left unresolved. If it is true, as Kant claims that it is the transcendental subject, the subject that constructs the basic categories of understanding and comprehension of the empirical world who, then, is that Self?²² Kant himself seems not have been too much occupied with this question, since the self is enmeshed with the empirical world in terms of space and time, perception being forms of space and time, that we will never find out, or be able to, who exactly this is, "I" the knowing subject. Things in themselves (*Dinge an sich selbst betrachtet*), which is the explicit phraseology by Kant according to the minute research of the Kant scholar Gerold Prauss, cannot be known and that includes the self.²³ No doubt, this put people like

²¹ No doubt the future of philosophy in general needs to be developed on a "global scale".

²² Kant's idea of the "transcendental subject" is a well known concept, but also controversial. Fichte and the early romantics of the Jena circle criticized this very concept as functioning as a "meta-subject" of thought.

²³ Cf. Gerold Prauss (1972), *Kant und die Dinge-an-sich*, Bonn: Bouvier, which is an important work based on Gottfried Martin's statistical analysis of Kant's usage of specific terms. Martin found out that the real phrase of the famous "things-in-themselves" was embedded in the full concept "*Dinge-an-sich-selbst betrachtet*" (things in themselves perceived), i.e. the essence of things, according to Kant are not accessible to sense perception. Again, this is another critique of Kant's epistemological doctrine focused on by Kant critics, from Hegel to 20th century Kant scholarship.

Fichte, then Schelling in a bizarre situation. Would we not know first our self? Of course, at this point, for the sake of presentation, we simplify and point to some of the respective scholars and their works in the select bibliography that follows.²⁴ It is "I", or as the German has it, *das Ich*, that needed to be understood in terms of its structure and constitution. The method Fichte chooses is that of the dialectic. The "I" cannot be apprehended without its negation, the "non-I". Thus, in the dialectic relationship of the "I" and non-I we arrive at a sort of personal identity within the empirical world. It was Fichte's critique of Kant and leads to a profound and engaged thinking not only about the constitution of the "I", but also about the idea of what constitutes basic and fundamental knowledge (*Wissen*) that provides sufficient reason and valid knowledge claims to satisfy rationality at large.²⁵ In this enterprise Fichte engaged himself not only professionally but with great passion and purpose. Fichte lived philosophy and the story of his life, from a very poor family to a celebrated thinker in Weimar and Jena, with some intellectual scandals on the way, ends up the first president of the newly found Humboldt University in Berlin in 1817.²⁶ That university

²⁴ Cf. see Frank Manfred (1997), *Unendliche Annäherung: Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Llewelyn, John (2000), *The Hypo Critical Imagination*, London: Routledge, Lauth, Reinhard (1975), *Die Entstehung von Schellings Identitätsphilosophie in der Auseinandersetzung mit Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre*, Freiburg: Alber Verlag, or Neuhouser, Frederick (1990), *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, Cambridge University Press.

²⁵ It is important to point out to non-German speakers that the German concept *Wissenschaft* is not simply science in the Anglo-American version, but includes the logic of scientific research, be it in the natural sciences (in German: *Naturwissenschaft*), or in the humanities (in German: *Geisteswissenschaft*).

²⁶ Fichte was the first president of the now famous Humboldt-University in Berlin founded in 1812 and emulated by American universities ushering into the American graduate school. Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore was the first full graduate school starting its operations in 1871. Charles S. Peirce was among its faculty and based his now famous community of researchers on the Humboldt model, see Ernest Wolf-Gazo (ed.)(1972), *Process in Context*, Berne: Lang Verlag, especially by the author "American Philosophy as Process Philosophy".

was to be the beacon of intellectual life and scholarship for the rest of the world for a century until Nazi Germany put an end to that.

The young Schelling, student friend and colleague of Hegel and the poet Holderlin, made a name for himself.²⁷ He was a sort of "Wunderkind" in a Mozart style. Brilliant, versatile, ego-centric oriented, yet always engaged in intellectual debate he understood early the problem with which the older Fichte battled. Schelling comes from a Protestant theological background (with swabian pietism) leaning, who had inherited the vast knowledge background of his father who was professor and head of another well-known theological foundation at Waltershausen (Theological Seminary).²⁸ Schelling's father was prolific in Semitic language. How much Schelling knew Arabic we do not know and how much he knew about Islamic philosophy (in those days known as Arabic philosophy) is also not known because no one seems to have any interest in this sort of questions.²⁹ Be that as it may, in the confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with Fichte, Schelling developed his own system of subject-object epistemology that he called Transcendental Idealism.³⁰ This text, published in 1800, amazes any reader: Schelling deals with the newly emerging natural sciences and tries, somehow, to make sense of them in

²⁷ Schelling was the youngest member of the Tübingen circle of students including Hegel and Hölderlin. They celebrated the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 while students at the Theological Faculty of Tübingen University. The French Revolution was the single most important political and social event focused on by classical German idealist thinking.

²⁸ Schelling's father was the Principal of the Theological Institute of Waltershausen preparing young and gifted men to become deacons in the protestant pietist church. That knew Arabic is likely since he was professor of semitic languages.

²⁹ It's not clear whether the young Schelling knew Arabic since no one, as far the author knows, ever asked or was interested in that question in philosophic academic circles.

³⁰ See on this confrontation the work by Lauth (1975) who is considered preeminent among German Schelling scholars.

terms of philosophy, more specifically, casting philosophy into a system of transcendental idealism. At one point he contends that a complete theory of nature would be in which nature could reveal itself into total intelligence. He speculates how natural law could be understood as a complete spiritualization (*Vergeistigung*) of the laws of nature in accordance to the laws that regulate intuition (*Anschauung*) and thinking. These claims force him to take a deep look at exactly how Fichte's "I" is developed out of nature. The "I" as subject must objectify itself in such a way that it can recognize itself as objectified subject. The dialectic relationship between subject and object is clear: the subject cannot understand itself without first objectifying itself in order to "reflect" upon it and is thereby transformed into a state of self-consciousness.³¹ This self-consciousness turns out to constitute a sort of personal identity in terms of "thinking myself as a thinking being". The thinking I in its reflective mode of cognition constitutes a perpetual intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition becomes, as Schelling points out, for transcendental philosophy what space is to geometry. Thus, this kind of intuition (*Anschauung*) is not something static, but a dynamic process of perpetual intuiting and thereby producing the objectified subject as a thinking process. There is a kind of similarity to Ṣadrā's trans-substantial motion: what in Ṣadrā understands is done by the soul, to accommodate form of cognition to the object prehended, Schelling's perpetual intellectual intuition takes on that job. The difference, at this point between Ṣadrā and Schelling is their respective structure of reality. This needs still to be sifted out. The difference between the two thinkers is a contrast in their initial historical and systematic contexts. Ṣadrā "sees" the Divine Essence as the basis of his hierarchy of knowledge, while Schelling is trying, in a more empirical

³¹ The Dialectical paradigm developed by Hegel, especially in his *Phenomenology of Mind* (1806), was applied by the young Marx to social-economic spheres of the industrial revolution, see particularly the Marx of 1844, Paris Manuscripts.

experimental fashion, to work out an anthropomorphic structure of knowledge based upon perpetual intellectual intuition that has, as its primary goal, freedom of the subject in mind.³² Schelling pursues the question already; at the time he spends researching the epistemological foundations of the natural sciences, as to how freedom of the individual thinker is possible. Of course, following Fichte somewhat, Schelling wants to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge and finds it in the free-act of thinking. For Fichte, too, the process of dialectic between the "I" and non-"I" is a matter of action (*Thathandlung*) and not a static affair between two entities. Thinking, for both Fichte and Schelling, is action, or to use, in an analogous fashion to the British analytic philosopher J.L. Austin's concept of speech act, think act.³³ The think act is process, is perpetual intellectual intuiting the thinking self in a dialectic progression. Thus, the principle of all knowledge is expressed in the cryptic statement borrowed from Fichte: the "I" (*das Ich*) is equal to the "I" (*dem Ich gleich*) because it expresses identity and synthesis of a perpetual intellectual intuition.³⁴ The I as self-conscious thinking and reflective activity is paraded in front of the reader of Schelling's writing around 1800. Schelling comes to the conclusion that the alpha and omega of the thinking subject that has emancipated itself in terms of the dialectic between subject-object and in terms of perpetual intellectual intuition is Freedom (*die Freiheit*).

³² This is a decisive difference between Schelling and Sadrā in terms of a theomorphic or anthropomorphic structure of human knowledge. No research has been done on these matters to date.

³³ The analogy can be studied in John Searle's *Speech Acts*, Cambridge University Press (1962), based upon the classic lecture notes of J.L. Austin (1955), *How To Do Things with Words*, Oxford University Press (these are classics in analytical philosophy).

³⁴ Again, the discussion between Bentley (a Dean of the Anglican Church) and Newton was held in respect, but with deep psychological suspicions on both parts; see Friedrich Schiller (1798), *Aesthetic Education of Man*.

Nature and Freedom

Another essential topic dealt with by the German idealists was the problem of the relation between nature and freedom, to be more precise, between natural law and personal freedom. Already Richard Bentley, deacon of the Church of England and friend of Isaac Newton, had inquired by letter how he, Newton, could explain miracle and freedom within his system of mechanical philosophy, or nature is constituted by nothing but laws of mechanics. This specific problem, of course, is raised again in Fichte's critique of Kant, in Schelling, in Schiller and in Novalis.³⁵

In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (B136) we find the passages about the "transcendental synthesis of apperception". This act of thought is still treated in a serious scientific manner according to Newton's mechanical philosophy. The transcendental subject can be explained in terms of the forms of space and time and spontaneity. Nature takes on the sets of laws that are prescribed to her by the transcendental subject. Nature is no longer treated as an English landscape or northern German landscape painting of Casper David Friedrich, Germany's foremost painter of man, nature, and the Divine. Sets of laws regulate events in nature; they are, in fact, nature.³⁶ The Romantic critique, not only by Fichte or Schelling in Germany, but also in England by Coleridge (who paid Schelling a visit on his Continental Grand Tour) and Tennyson has it that apparently the mechanistic universe run blind according to the dictates of natural law; yet, how is freedom and moral values possible? According to natural laws? These problems accompany the tradition in German philosophy from Leibniz to Kant to the older Schelling. The tension remained and provided enormous potential for creative thinking along that line. Here again, we see great potential in a discourse between the German idealist tradition and Islamic philosophy, specifically Ṣadrā and his

³⁵ Also see the relevance of A.N. Whitehead (1925), *Science and the Modern World*.

³⁶ Cf. E.A. Burt (1922), *The Metaphysical Presupposition of Modern Science*.

school. How does human freedom relate in philosophy understood in terms of Islam?³⁷ How does revelation and miracles relate to the tenets of German idealist philosophy? These questions have not yet been asked and need to be treated by a new generation of scholars who have their education in global scholarship. Schelling, as professor of philosophy, actually gave lectures at the Humboldt University in Berlin in the late 1820 entitled: "The Philosophy of Revelation". Here is another moment that must be seized by Islamic scholar to sift out the Schelling version of Revelation within the German idealist tradition. Ironically, during the time of these lectures, attending were Kierkegaard, Bakunin, Engels and many 1848 future revolutionaries. The young Marx, of course, heard about these lectures and was very much immersed in the discussions that surrounded the Idealists. Later, the young Marx of 1844 was to be an empirical version of many aspects that the idealists had entertained.³⁸ Already in a letter to the older Hegel, young Schelling writes to him on 4 February 1795, that whereas for Spinoza the world was object, for him, Schelling the world is the "I".³⁹ Philosophy must proceed from the unconditioned (*dem Unbedingtem*) in the "I" or non-I. That the pinnacle of philosophy is the pure absolute I, which is set up by freedom and not yet transformed by the object. Again, the alpha and omega of all philosophy, as far as Schelling is concerned, is freedom. Consciousness has to be attained in the unity of the thinking subject as an object-subject reflected. Only in this way is self-consciousness possible at all. The big question now appears, how can the idealist, especially Schelling and his friends in the Jena Circle (known in literature as Jenaer Romantiker Kreis), demonstrate this act of freedom as an expression of the high point of

³⁷ An important issue for Islamic philosophy: what kind of freedom is possible for human beings? What are the limits of human freedom, if any?

³⁸ Cf. Robert Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* is an excellent volume in the philosophical Marx for non-German speakers.

³⁹ Again, see Lauth (1975).

philosophy. In fact they did find a demonstrable field of research and speculation, namely aesthetics, art and religion.⁴⁰

Mirror Image of the Cosmos and the Absolute

The older Schelling moved more and more into the area of art and aesthetic consideration.⁴¹ The religious dimension and the influence of Schleiermacher, who published his sermons *On Religion* to the educated and cynics in 1799, provided a forum for Schelling and the Romantics in Jena and Berlin to discuss the problem of the absolute in the mode of aesthetic considerations.⁴² It is here again where we find a link between Neo-Platonism, Plotinus, Islamic philosophy and the German idealist tradition. For Plotinus the artist imitates nature in the sense that the artist recognizes the "mirror image" of the cosmos within himself. Some of these topics we have encountered in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*; yet, it was the works of Plotinus that had a lasting impression on Schelling and Sadrâ. Anyone reading Plotinus, Sadrâ and Schelling, side by side, will immediately "see" that these thinkers relate intuitively concern fundamental philosophy. Plotinus speak of the proto-picture in our self and that we recognize via intellectual intuition the harmony, balance, symmetry of the cosmos as it is expressed in various forms of art and aesthetics. We find in Plotinus the idea of purification of the soul from the body and how the soul takes on beautiful form and comes

⁴⁰ There is a powerful influence by the Jena Circle of romantics on aesthetics, art and religion in classic German culture (known as the Age of Goethe).

⁴¹ Cf. Beierwaltes is the leading Plotinus scholar on the relationship between Platonism and German idealist philosophy, see the work of Werner Beierwaltes (1972) and also Horst Fuhrmanns.

⁴² In Berlin, around 1800s, a few prominent intellectual circles developed entertained by women belonging to the romantic movement in Germany, e.g. Henriette Herz, wife of Dr. Marcus Herz and well known friend of Kant, conducted a famous salon that included people like Schleiermacher, the Humboldt brothers, the Schlegel brothers discussing political, social and artistic questions of the day.

near the Divine Essence which is the source of the mirror image that the soul is able to express. He speaks of the "inner eye" that reveals the beauty and goodness of the cosmos. No doubt, if we follow Şadrâ and the German idealist we see intellectual traces everywhere. It is here that we find a serious trace that we must follow up in order to uncover the "secret affinity" between traditions in Islamic philosophy and especially the classic German idealist tradition.

The religious sphere was introduced into modern critical German philosophy by Hamann, a confidant of Kant.⁴³ Although Hamann admired Kant he, nevertheless, was critical of Kant's dealing with the religious sphere. His critique did influence the Romantic circles. It was art and religion that were treated with respect and seriousness by Schelling and his associates, especially the literary critics Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel. Later when Hegel talked about art, philosophy and religion, towards the end of his *Phenomenology*, being different versions of the same thing he, no doubt, was influenced by the Romantics, despite his critique of their doctrine in his later writings.⁴⁴ The poetic form of critique of the empirical world was also no stranger in Persia. Hâfiz and Saadî certainly understood the contradiction of humankind and the illusory situation of the world of bodies. Not to mention the Sufi poetics of Aḥmad al-Ghazālî, the brother of Abū Hâmid, whose quintessential verses brings to ecstasy the power of intellectual intuition expressed in poetics verse. A man like Novalis would have been overjoyed reading Aḥmad's verses. Novalis's idea to make the world more poetic (*die Verzauberung der Welt*) is a sort of program that would have been endorsed by Sufi thinkers with the exception that the

⁴³ Hamann was another prominent critic of Kant and a proponent of non-propositional epistemology and logic.

⁴⁴ Cf. Otto Poeggeler (1955), *Hegel's Kritik der Romantik* (Hegel's Critique of Romanticism), Bonn University Diss. (recently published by Campus Verlag 2003).

structure of endorsement would take on a theomorphic one.⁴⁵ We must pursue these virtual reality meeting in order to come to terms with difference that are, in hindsight no differences at all, but all contrasts of the same thing. It is our habits and education that made us different, but in essence the matter is the same. Certainly the German Romantic thinkers did a great effort to translate the East into the West, consider Friedrich Ruckert's translation of Hāfiz and Saadī and many other Persian verses.⁴⁶ The Romantic influence was manifest in great lady of Islamic scholarship, the late Annemarie Schimmel.⁴⁷ Art and religion were endeavors which are not treated as "different fields" in the typical academic classification by the Romantics. In fact art and religion comprehend each other. It is not surprise, or unexpected, when the older Heidegger would close one of his philosophic sermons with the words that philosophy is the prayer of secular thinkers.⁴⁸

For Schelling the idea of art was a process of self-consciousness in terms of the identity of the subject and object "revealed" during the course of world history. And during this process of world history we find, as Hegel explicated the matter, the course towards the Absolute, namely, freedom as spirituality. Novalis once pointed out succinctly that we are searching everywhere for the Absolute (*das Unbedingte*), but only find entities (*das Bedingte*). For Holderlin the subject-object was forever

⁴⁵ The idea of "disenchantment of the world" made famous by Max Weber to describe the modern world originated with the poet of the Jena romantic circle Novalis. "*Verzauberung der Welt*" refers to the process of transforming the traditional world into a modern one.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Ruckert was a highly gifted oriental philologist who translated many Persian poets, especially Hāfiz and Sa'adī, into elegant German (Goethe used the Ruckert translations in writing his works that included allusions to Persia). Also see the work by the late Annemarie Schimmel on Ruckert.

⁴⁷ Again we refer to Ruckert (see Google search machine).

⁴⁸ Heidegger entertains a sort of phenomenological romanticism in his effort to discredit the modern world.

separated by the proposition, since they had been united in intellectual intuition. It was the mirror image of the Absolute that haunted the Romantic philosophers of the German tradition. It is no surprise that some of them, among them Ruckert, should find and take recourse to Persian Sufi poetics. Yet, the philosophic aspects of transcending theosophy were too little known to make any impact. Fichte tried to solve problems of transcendence by defining intellectual intuition (*intellektuelle Anschauung*) by the self positing of the self as an act (*Thathandlung*) of self-perpetuation. This intuition is not mediated by an unmediated vision itself. It is epistemic certainty entertained by Cartesian intuition of rules for directing the mind and its native powers. Fichte could not get rid of some Cartesian elements in this thinking that we can study as a synthesis, Descartes and Fichte, in the later Husserl and his project of pure phenomenology. Conceptually, and in this Şadrâ agrees, the Absolute can not be reached except in terms of symbolic representation. Thus, art becomes a vehicle to transfer symbolically propositional knowledge. The rest is silence. In the treatment of art we see Schelling transforming Plotinus ideas into his own system of transcendental idealism. A work of art respects the conditions laid down by transcendental intuition representing eternal beauty and harmony of the cosmos deriving its source from the Divine Essence. The idea of mimesis, made famous by Erich Auerbach in his literary studies researched in war time Istanbul, was taken up by Schelling from the Neoplatonic idea of beauty as the Divine's splendor.⁴⁹ Art reveals proto-images that are revealed in religious symbolism. Here we would turn into the ocean of the Absolute as the form of art.

⁴⁹ Cf. Erich Auerbach and his now famous work MIMESIS (written during World War II in Istanbul) influenced the work of Edward Said (also see the work by another German exile in Istanbul during World War II, Helmuth Ritter).

Preliminary Conclusion

Intellectual intuition is not simply an act of cognition, but a process of transformations from one state into another. It is the journey home, for Eastern thinkers, an "Oriental Journey", for Western thinkers an "Occidental Journey"; yet, in the future it will be a "Global Journey". The true journey will be the one that leads home to the true self; the self that has not forgotten itself during the slavery of alienation. Our intuition tells us that the true self is in search of us along the divine road towards our essential self as spirit. This was one theme we find in Plato and Plotinus. The true self is the divine self in us and striving in the long run to join up with the liberated self. We can attain transcendental self, that self that reaches beyond the empirical world and ushers into divine spirituality. That was one of the messages of the German (Romantic) idealist thinkers. The process of intellectual intuition is a major process in this transformation of the self. This theme is still alive in the mystical tradition of the Christian Church as well as in the tradition Gnosis. Asian religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Taoism reserve a large role for the same process of transforming the empirical self into a spiritual self: the great journey to the unknown home. The European-Mediterranean tradition provided a cultural context that brought philosophic questioning and speculation to sophisticated heights, while Zen Buddhism recommended direct empirical intuition of the self as a purification process.

Dazzling landscape gardening, inspired by Zen spirituality, in Kyoto is another witness to a self turned into nature, aesthetically contemplated.⁵⁰ In the meeting, on a global level, of the Western tradition of philosophy, especially the German idealist school, and the Islamic tradition of the East we see an opportunity to come to terms with powerful currents that may seem antithetic, but upon closer inspection speak the same language.

⁵⁰ Cf. the Zen background of the landscape gardening in Kyoto.