



Rationality, Intuition, and Revelation: The Mystical Epistemological Structure of Mulla Ṣadrā in al-Asfār al-Arba‘ah

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Abstract

The epistemological framework of al-Ḥikmah al-Muta‘āliyah has generally been examined from the perspective of ontology and metaphysics, while its epistemic architecture as an integrated system of knowledge remains comparatively underexplored. This article investigates how Mulla Ṣadrā constructs a mystical epistemology through the dynamic integration of rationality (‘aql), intuitive unveiling (kashf), and revelation (shar‘) in al-Asfār al-Arba‘ah. Employing a qualitative library-based approach, the study applies philosophical hermeneutics to reconstruct the internal logic of Ṣadrā’s epistemological system and to examine its implications for the formation of the spiritual subject. The analysis demonstrates that knowledge, in Ṣadrā’s philosophy, is neither exclusively rational nor solely intuitive, but emerges from the dialectical integration of demonstrative reasoning, spiritual intuition, and revealed truth. This epistemological synthesis culminates in ‘ilm ḥuḍūrī (presential knowledge), understood as the highest mode of cognition in which the knower and the known attain existential unity. Furthermore, the framework of the four spiritual journeys (al-asfār al-arba‘ah) reveals that epistemic development is inseparable from ontological transformation, whereby intellectual perfection simultaneously entails ethical refinement and spiritual realization. This study argues that Mulla Ṣadrā’s epistemology transcends the conventional dichotomy between philosophy and Sufism by offering a holistic theory of knowledge that integrates metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. The findings contribute to contemporary discussions on Islamic philosophy by demonstrating the continuing relevance of Ṣadrā’s epistemological paradigm for understanding the relationship between reason, spirituality, and religious knowledge in the modern intellectual context.

Keywords: Mulla Sadra, mystical epistemology, ḥikmah muta‘āliyah, asfār al-arba‘ah, hermeneutics.

Abstrak

Kerangka epistemologi *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah* selama ini lebih banyak dikaji dari perspektif ontologi dan metafisika, sementara arsitektur epistemiknya sebagai suatu sistem pengetahuan yang terintegrasi masih relatif kurang mendapat perhatian. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana Mulla Ṣadrā membangun epistemologi mistik melalui integrasi dinamis antara rasionalitas (*'aql*), penyingkapan intuitif (*kashf*), dan wahyu (*shar'*) dalam *al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan menerapkan hermeneutika filosofis untuk merekonstruksi logika internal sistem epistemologi Mulla Ṣadrā serta mengkaji implikasinya terhadap pembentukan subjek spiritual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengetahuan dalam filsafat Mulla Ṣadrā tidak dibangun semata-mata melalui penalaran rasional ataupun pengalaman intuitif, melainkan lahir dari sintesis dialektis antara demonstrasi rasional, intuisi spiritual, dan kebenaran wahyu. Sintesis epistemologis tersebut mencapai puncaknya pada konsep *'ilm ḥuḍūrī* (pengetahuan presensial), yaitu bentuk pengetahuan tertinggi ketika subjek yang mengetahui dan objek yang diketahui berada dalam kesatuan eksistensial. Lebih lanjut, kerangka *al-asfār al-arba'ah* menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan pengetahuan merupakan proses transformasi ontologis yang tidak dapat dipisahkan dari penyempurnaan intelektual, pembentukan etika, dan realisasi spiritual manusia. Artikel ini menegaskan bahwa epistemologi Mulla Ṣadrā melampaui dikotomi klasik antara filsafat dan tasawuf dengan menawarkan teori pengetahuan yang holistik melalui integrasi dimensi metafisis, epistemologis, dan etis. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi konseptual terhadap kajian filsafat Islam kontemporer dengan menunjukkan relevansi paradigma epistemologi Mulla Ṣadrā dalam memahami relasi antara rasionalitas, spiritualitas, dan pengetahuan keagamaan di era modern.

Kata kunci: Mulla Ṣadrā; epistemologi mistik; *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah*; *al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*; *'ilm ḥuḍūrī*; hermeneutika filosofis.

Introduction

The debate regarding the relationship between rational knowledge and spiritual experience has once again taken centre stage in contemporary Islamic discourse.(Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020) This dynamic has become increasingly apparent as the development of Sufism and Islamic philosophy intersects with the need for a more integrated reading, both in the context of modern intellectualism and the changing social reality. Amidst this atmosphere, interest in philosophical Sufism has shown consistent growth. Many circles see the spiritual approach as a way to understand religious phenomena, ethical issues, and the process of subject formation in greater depth.(Habib & Ullah, 2025) This direction of development is also

evident in discussions of Islamic epistemology, which emphasise the importance of re-establishing the relationship between intellectual knowledge, inner experience, and the authority of revelation.(de Diego González, 2025) In this intellectual landscape, Mulla Sadra (1571–1640 CE) gained strong relevance due to his ability to synthesise the Peripatetic, Illuminationist, and Sufi traditions into a philosophical construct he called al-Hikmah al-Muta‘āliyah.(Athiyah et al., 2025)

So far, research on Sadra has mostly focused on the ontological side of his thinking, especially the principle of aşālat al-wujūd and the theory of substantial motion. Studies such as Nasr,(Nasr, 2017) Kalin,(Kalin, 2010) and Leaman(Leaman, 2009)tend to place Sadra in the realm of metaphysics and cosmology. Meanwhile, the epistemological dimension of his thinking often appears only as an additional part in a broader metaphysical reading. Studies that examine al-asfār al-arba‘ah generally understand the text as a map of spiritual journey, without adequately discussing the structure of knowledge that supports and drives that framework. As a result, the relationship between reason (‘aql), intuition (kashf), and revelation (shar‘) as a mutually supportive epistemic network has not been systematically mapped.

This situation indicates that there is still a gap in research. To date, there has been no comprehensive study that thoroughly describes Sadra's mystical epistemology. The integration of reason, intuition, and revelation has not been analysed as a coherent knowledge structure, and al-asfār al-arba‘ah has not been seriously read as an epistemic model that describes the process of the subject's existential transformation. Based on this gap, this study poses two main questions: (1) how did Mulla Sadra formulate a mystical epistemology that unites reason, intuition, and revelation; and (2) how does al-asfār al-arba‘ah map the process of knowing as an ontological journey. By positioning Sadra within the landscape of contemporary Islamic philosophy studies, this research attempts to present a more structured and conceptual reconstruction of the epistemological dimensions of al-Hikmah al-Muta‘āliyah.

Academically, this study has its own significance. In addition to broadening our understanding of Islamic epistemology, this research shows that Sadra offers a form of knowledge that does not stop at the theoretical level, but functions as a practical process that shapes and transforms the self. This article also clarifies Sadra's position in the

debate surrounding the relationship between philosophy and Sufism, particularly with regard to the place of intuitive experience within a rational framework. The focus on epistemological aspects is expected to provide new space for the development of studies on the relevance of Transcendent Theosophy in interpreting Islamic spirituality in the modern era.(Fouz Mohamed Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024; Ritonga & Saputra, 2025)

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach through library research, focusing on textual and hermeneutic analysis of the works of Mulla Sadra, particularly *al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*, *al-Hikmah al-Mutaʿāliyah*, and his treatises on *ʿilm ḥuḍūrī*. Data was collected through the identification of epistemological themes, the sorting of key concepts (*ʿaql*, *kashf*, *waḥy*, and the structure of *al-asfār*), and the examination of secondary literature from modern scholars such as Nasr, Kalin, and Rizvi. The analysis was conducted by reducing the relevant parts of the text, grouping concepts into main themes, and interpreting the entire data using a hermeneutic-philosophical approach to systematically reconstruct Sadra's epistemological structure. The validity of the findings is maintained through source triangulation and analysis traceability. As a literature study, this research adheres to academic ethics through accurate citations and methodological transparency.(Gillo, 2021; Patterson & Williams, 2002)

Results

Reconstructing Mulla Sadra's Mystical Epistemology

Mulla Sadra's epistemology emerges from a creative synthesis of three major intellectual traditions within Islamic philosophy: the Peripatetic rationalism of Ibn Sina, the Illuminationist framework of Suhrawardi, and the metaphysical mysticism of Ibn ʿArabi. Through this integration, Sadra develops a system of knowledge that emphasizes not only conceptual accuracy but also the existential transformation of the knowing subject. Within the framework of *al-Hikmah al-Mutaʿāliyah*, knowledge is not merely the accumulation of abstract information; rather, it constitutes a spiritual ascent (*taraqqī wujūdī*) that enhances intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacities. This section

reconstructs Sadra's epistemological structure by outlining the hierarchical and interdependent roles of reason ('aql), intuition (kashf), and revelation (shar') as the central pillars of knowledge.(Goodman, 1982; Kalin, 2010; Leaman, 2009; Nasr, 2017)

1. Rationality as the Foundation of Philosophical Inquiry

In Sadra's epistemic structure, reason ('aql) serves as the initial and indispensable instrument for the pursuit of knowledge.(Khorassani, 1976) Sadra retains Ibn Sina's demonstrative method (*burhān*) as a means of attaining conceptual knowledge ('*ilm huṣūlī*'), wherein the mind operates through abstraction, definition, and logical argumentation to form representational understandings of reality.(Rizvi, 2005; Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

Nevertheless, Sadra draws a firm distinction between *conceptual truth* (*ṣidq taṣawwūrī*) and *presential truth* (*ṣidq ḥuḍūrī*). Rational knowledge, though valid, remains mediated—dependent on concepts rather than the reality of things as they truly are. This inherent limitation prevents reason from serving as the ultimate horizon of epistemic perfection.

For this reason, Sadra critiques Peripatetic thinkers who elevate reason as the sole criterion of knowledge. He argues that intellectual inquiry must be situated within a broader spiritual horizon in which rational pursuit is accompanied by the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and moral discipline. Thus, rationality constitutes an essential yet preliminary stage in the journey toward true knowledge.(Kalin, 2002)

2. Intuition (kashf) as Presential Knowledge

The second tier of Sadra's epistemology is intuition (*kashf*), which yields presential knowledge ('*ilm ḥuḍūrī*'). Unlike rational knowledge, which operates via conceptual mediation, presential knowledge arises through inner refinement and an elevation of the subject's existential state. At this level, the knower no longer apprehends objects through representational forms but through their direct presence within the soul.

Sadra understands presential knowledge as an ontological unity between the knower ('*ālim*) and the known (*ma'lūm*). For this reason, intuitive knowledge is infallible, as it arises from existential union rather than mental interpretation. In this sense, Sadra's epistemology culminates in ontology: to know is to *be*.(Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

Yet intuition does not function independently of reason. Sadra maintains that authentic *kashf* can only be attained by a soul that has

undergone spiritual discipline and freed itself from material attachments. Intuition thus emerges as a natural continuation of rational activity that is grounded in moral and spiritual cultivation, not as a rejection of rationality.(Fouz Mohamed Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024)

3. Revelation as the Pinnacle of Knowledge

In Sadra's epistemological system, revelation (shar‘) occupies the highest level of knowledge. Prophetic knowledge transcends the achievements of reason and intuition because it encompasses all levels of reality directly. Revelation has ontological and epistemological advantages because it originates from absolute divine truth and is not limited by human capacity.(Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

Therefore, Sadra asserts that true philosophy must be muta‘aliyah—transcending the limitations of pure rationalism by integrating the intuitive and revelatory dimensions. Revelation is not opposed to philosophy, but rather a horizon of meaning that allows philosophy to transcend human conceptual limitations.

Thus, Sadra's mystical epistemology offers a significant contribution in responding to various modern Islamic issues. Amidst the strengthening of rational reductionism, fragmentation of knowledge, and secularisation tendencies, Sadra's paradigm provides an alternative epistemic model that reaffirms the unity of reason, intuition, and revelation. This integration is relevant in addressing the tension between modern science and Islamic spirituality, as well as providing a framework for criticism of positivism, which ignores the inner dimension of humanity.(Leaman, 2009)

By positioning the existential transformation of the subject at the core of epistemology, Sadra offers a conceptual foundation for rethinking Islamic education beyond mere cognitive acquisition, emphasizing moral and spiritual formation. Moreover, his epistemology functions as a critique of positivism and secular epistemic regimes that neglect the inner dimension of human existence. In this sense, Sadra’s framework not only retains theoretical importance but also provides a meaningful direction for revitalizing Islamic spirituality in response to modern human concerns.(Marcuse, 2016)

The Structure of al-Asfār al-Arba‘ah as a Model of Knowledge

In the tradition of philosophical Sufism, al-Asfār al-Arba‘ah is commonly understood as a map of a salik's spiritual journey. However, a philosophical hermeneutic reading allows us to see this text not only

as a mystical narrative, but as a complete epistemic model. The four journeys formulated by Mulla Sadra describe how the subject acquires knowledge, internalises truth, and then articulates it in social life. Thus, *asfār* maps ontological and epistemological transformations simultaneously. At this point, Sadra's epistemology appears as a performative epistemology: to know means to move, change, and continually transcend the boundaries of previous existence. This reading is highly relevant to the contemporary context, particularly when Muslims are confronted with the fragmentation of modern knowledge and the search for a renewed relationship between reason, spirituality, and public ethics.

1. First Journey: The Search for Truth (*al-safar min al-khalq ilā al-ḥaqq*)

The first journey describes the initial stage of human search, moving from empirical reality to the source of truth. In Sadra's framework, this process is characterised by the use of reason ('aql) and discursive reasoning as fundamental instruments. The subject enters this stage through logic, philosophical study, and intellectual disciplines that form 'ilm ḥuṣūlī, knowledge that is still representational in nature. (Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

However, Sadra refuses to consider this stage as a purely cognitive process. He asserts that purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is an epistemological prerequisite that is as important as logical argumentation. Without moral transformation, the mind is easily trapped by material biases and unable to grasp the truth clearly. The first journey, therefore, is a phase of methodological and spiritual preparation—a stage that solidifies the foundations for further epistemic transformation. (Kamal, 2016; Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

Read in the contemporary context, the first journey reflects the importance of the ethics of knowledge, an awareness that knowledge cannot be separated from morality. This relates to the critique of instrumental rationality that developed in modernity: reason works, but without adequate ethical orientation. (Kalin, 2002)

2. Second Journey: The Unveiling of Meaning (*al-safar fī al-ḥaqq bi al-ḥaqq*)

The second journey is a point of transition from representational knowledge to present knowledge ('ilm ḥuḍūrī). At this stage, the subject no longer understands reality through mental concepts, but through direct observation (*mushāhadah*). Knowledge becomes intuitive

because it occurs through inner illumination and the presence of reality within the subject. (Riyadi et al., 2025; Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

In Sadra's view, intuition is not a vague subjective experience, but a form of objective knowledge achieved through the elevation of the subject's *wujūd*. The ontological unity between the knower and the known makes intuitive knowledge internally infallible. This journey marks a radical shift in the way of knowing: from representation-based epistemology to presence-based epistemology.

The second journey resonates with the spiritual quest of modern society. As technical knowledge develops rapidly but leaves a void of meaning, Sadra reminds us that the experience of presence—not just information—is the essence of human knowledge. (Paya, 2016)

3. Third Journey: Knowledge Descending into the Empirical Realm (*al-safar min al-ḥaqq ilā al-khalq bi al-ḥaqq*)

The third journey begins when the subject returns to the empirical world after experiencing metaphysical witnessing. This 'return' is not a regression, but rather an epistemic articulation. The subject brings the intuitive knowledge he has acquired and translates it into conceptual, ethical, and practical forms. Knowledge that was previously present must be expressed and distributed through rational language in order to be understood by society. (Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

This stage affirms the communicative character of Sadra's epistemology. True knowledge is not only stored as an experience within the inner self, but must be given form so that it can contribute to intellectual and social life. Here, a creative dialectic between intuition and reason is created: intuition provides depth, while reason provides articulation. (Jambet, 2006)

Its relevance to the present day is clear. Amidst the challenges of unguided and low-value dissemination of knowledge, the third journey serves as a reminder that spiritual or philosophical knowledge must be realised in public praxis that is accessible to society.

4. Fourth Journey: Guidance through Knowledge (*al-safar fī al-khalq bi al-ḥaqq*)

The fourth journey is the stage when the subject transforms into a guide for society. At this point, Sadra's epistemology reaches its most mature form: knowledge does not stop at individual contemplation, but is realised in social service. The subject becomes a witness and mediator of truth, embodying metaphysical insights into pedagogical actions, moral guidance, and social reform. (Sadra & ibn Ibrahim, 1981)

This journey unites all dimensions of Sadra's epistemology—rationality, intuition, and revelation—in practical action. The fourth journey affirms that the essence of knowledge does not lie at the peak of mystical solitude, but in ethical engagement with fellow human beings.

In the contemporary context, this journey speaks volumes about the crisis of moral leadership in modern society. Sadra shows that knowledge-based leadership is only valid if it is rooted in inner transformation and manifested in social service. Thus, knowledge not only makes a person 'able to know,' but also 'worthy of guiding.' (de Diego González, 2025; Zarrabi-Zadeh, 2019)

Knowledge as Ontological Transformation

In Mulla Ṣadrā's epistemology, the act of knowing is never conceived as a purely mental operation taking place in an abstract space. For Ṣadrā, to know is always an ontological event—a movement that transforms the very quality of the knower's being. Knowledge is not merely the content of the mind; it is a dynamic unfolding of existence (*ḥarakah wujūdiyyah*) that elevates the soul from one level of being to a higher one. Epistemology, therefore, cannot be separated from becoming: to know is to change, and such change is possible only when the soul moves toward its own perfection.

This perspective becomes clear only through a hermeneutical-philosophical reading of the theory of substantial motion (*al-ḥarakah al-jawharīyah*). The theory asserts that all of reality—including the human soul—is constantly journeying toward a more complete actualization. Within this framework, Ṣadrā's epistemology is no longer a theory of representation that explains how a subject grasps an object; rather, it emerges as a spiritual-ontological structure that integrates moral, existential, and cognitive dimensions.

Such a viewpoint acquires particular significance in contemporary life, where knowledge is often reduced to information, technical skill, or data detached from any ethical orientation. In this context, Ṣadrā's thought serves as a strong reminder that knowing is not merely the accumulation of information but a reorientation of how one inhabits the world and deepens one's inner life.

1. Knowledge and Substantial Motion

Within the framework of substantial motion, the human soul is not a static entity, as assumed by much of the Peripatetic tradition, but

a reality that advances gradually (*tadarruj*) toward higher degrees of existence. Every act of knowing is an inherent dimension of this movement.(Alsalamy, 2021) When a person acquires knowledge, the shift occurs not only on the mental level but also within the inner structure that defines the quality of his or her being. In this sense, Sadra's epistemology simultaneously constitutes a spiritual anthropology: human beings possess an innate capacity to transcend themselves through the very act of knowing.(Rizvi, 2013)

Substantial motion positions knowledge as an ontological energy rather than a purely mental operation. Each intellectual attainment refines and intensifies the soul's being, rendering it more immaterial, more luminous, and closer to higher realities. At this point, Sadra distances himself from rationalist traditions that locate knowledge primarily within the operations of the mind; for him, knowing is an existential ascent (*taraqqī wujūdī*). To know is not merely to fill the intellect with concepts but to expand the very scope of one's being.

2. Intuitive Experience as Self-Transformation

For Sadra, intuitive knowledge whether in the form of *kashf* or *'ilm ḥuḍūrī* can emerge only in a soul that has undergone ethical and spiritual transformation. Sadra's epistemology is therefore normative as much as it is performative: knowledge does not simply arrive to a passive subject but presupposes a process of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), spiritual discipline, and the cultivation of proper intention as integral components of epistemic methodology.(Fuady et al., 2025)

Sadra insists that truth cannot manifest within a soul clouded by lower traits. Moral transformation is therefore not a by-product of knowledge but an ontological condition for the presence of knowledge itself. This position serves as an implicit critique of modern epistemologies that often detach knowledge from the formation of character. In Sadra's view, intellectual depth is attainable only for a subject whose inner structure has been aligned with the proper moral and spiritual orientation.(Rahman, 2024; Rizvi, 2013)

3. The Unity of Subject and Object in Knowledge

The apex of Sadra's epistemology lies in the unity between the knowing subject (*al-ʿālim*) and the known object (*al-ma'lūm*). In knowledge by presence, the epistemic distance between them dissolves. The reality of the object is not mediated through mental representations but is present within the subject's existence as it truly is. This

conception rejects the subject–object dualism that undergirds much of modern Western epistemology. For Sadra, knowledge is not a representational relation but an ontological one—an existential unity that enables the subject to know through the mode of presence rather than through conceptualization.(Ritonga & Saputra, 2025)

This epistemology is grounded in the principle of the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). Because existence is the most fundamental layer of reality, the highest form of knowledge is the intensification of existence, not the formulation of concepts. The unity of knower and known (*ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa al-ma‘qūl*) is therefore not merely a mystical experience but a metaphysical thesis that supports the entire structure of Sadra’s theosophy.(Moris, 2013)

view offers a significant critique of contemporary epistemic paradigms that often sever the relationship between human beings and the objects of their knowledge, resulting in fragmented and mechanistic modes of understanding. Sadra’s model proposes a more integrated and profound account of the relation between the human subject and the world—an account rooted in existential depth rather than technical mastery. In an age marked by epistemic fragmentation, his paradigm invites a return to the insight that genuine knowledge requires integration, depth, and a relational wholeness that moves beyond the limits of objectivism.(Abitolkha, 2016)

4. Synthesis: Epistemology as a Path of Subject Formation

When the three principal dimensions of Ṣadrā’s epistemology are placed side by side—the substantial motion that draws the soul toward perfection, the intuitive knowledge that appears only in a purified inner state, and the unity of subject and object that marks the summit of knowing—what emerges is a broader picture: in *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta‘āliyah*, knowledge is not merely a matter of the intellect but a process of forming the subject. Ṣadrā does not imagine *knowing* as an isolated cognitive act; for him, knowing is inseparable from *becoming*. Every genuine act of knowing reshapes the way a person inhabits the world—how they interpret meaning, orient their will, and cultivate their inner life. Knowledge, in this sense, is not only a representation of reality but a form of existential participation in a wider order of being.(Shaker, 2018)

This construction introduces an emphasis that feels somewhat foreign within modern regimes of knowledge, where information is often detached from ethics and character formation. The dominance of

instrumental rationality in many spheres of contemporary life has produced subjects who are adept at accumulating data yet frequently lose their moral bearings. Ṣadrā offers a corrective note to this tendency. In his framework, knowledge that does not elevate the quality of one's being remains incomplete; it stops at the surface. For this reason, Ṣadrā's epistemology carries an ethical ethos: intellectual labor ought to be accompanied by inner purification, depth of sensibility, and orientation toward the good.(Faruque, 2018)

In today's world, this kind of epistemological orientation gains renewed relevance. We live amid torrents of information—often unfiltered—that produce fast but shallow forms of knowing. Digital polarization traps many people within knowledge that merely mirrors their own convictions instead of opening new horizons. Even artificial intelligence, for all its efficiency, frequently generates a distanced relationship between human beings and the knowledge they engage with. In such a landscape, Ṣadrā's vision of knowledge as an inward deepening serves as a reminder: the task of knowing is not merely to gather data but to reorder the ways we presence ourselves, feel, and act in the world.(Kaukua, 2014)

Ṣadrā's critique of the subject–object dualism also touches on issues that are painfully visible today, especially in the ecological crisis. The modern habit of treating nature as an external object to be exploited has produced a fragile and even destructive relationship with the environment. By situating human beings and nature within a single ontological fabric, Ṣadrā gestures toward a different way of encountering reality: to know is to participate, to be present with reverence, and to assume responsibility. Knowledge, in this register, is no longer an instrument of domination but a path toward realizing our interconnectedness.(Kaukua, 2021)

From this vantage point, the synthetic section functions not merely as a theoretical summary but as a bridge between Ṣadrā's epistemology and the struggles of our time. It shows how *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah* may serve as an invitation to rethink the relationship between reason, morality, and spirituality in everyday life. The knowledge idealized by Ṣadrā is not the kind that makes one simply proficient in processing information; it is the kind that shapes the inner self, sharpens moral discernment, and strengthens social responsibility. In this horizon, Ṣadrā's epistemology speaks beyond its historical context—offering a classical philosophical tradition capable of guiding

contemporary quests for meaning and public ethics in an increasingly complex world.

Conclusion

Through a philosophical hermeneutic reading of *al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*, this article asserts that Mulla Ṣadrā's epistemology in *al-Hikmah al-Mutaʿāliyah* is not merely a theory of knowledge in the technical sense, but a philosophical architecture that unites rationality, intuition, and the revelational dimension in an ontological unity directed towards the formation of the subject. By placing existence at the centre of all reality, Ṣadrā understands knowledge as a transformational movement that carries the soul beyond the limits of its existence. Through the combination of *burhān*, *kashf*, and *waḥy*, he restores the mutually supportive relationship between reason, inner experience, and divine truth—a relationship that in many modern epistemic traditions has been severed by reductionist tendencies.

An examination of the structure of *al-asfār al-arbaʿah* shows that the process of knowing in Ṣadrā's perspective is a gradual ontological journey: beginning with intellectual inquiry, moving towards intuitive witnessing, then returning to the empirical world to articulate that knowledge rationally, until it ultimately manifests as social responsibility. With this framework, knowledge does not stop at contemplative activity; it demands ethics, action, and public involvement. Knowledge that does not refine form, for Ṣadrā, is not yet worthy of being called knowledge in its true sense.

This study also highlights the relevance of Ṣadrā's epistemology in the contemporary context. Amidst the rapid flow of information, digital polarisation, and a growing sense of loss of meaning, the concept of knowledge as self-transformation presents a new critique and orientation: that knowing is not merely the accumulation of data, but a deepening of the way humans experience reality. Ṣadrā's critique of the subject-object distance adds an important dimension, especially when read in the context of the ecological crisis and the ethical problems of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence. By opening up space for more ecological and empathetic epistemic relations, Ṣadrā's ideas present the possibility of a more holistic and responsible pattern of knowledge.

Ultimately, Ṣadrā's epistemology appears as a major contribution to Islamic philosophy—not merely as a legacy of classical metaphysics, but as a useful conceptual offering for reformulating the relationship between reason, morality, and spirituality amid the challenges of the 21st century. In his view, knowledge is a path to existential maturity that sharpens inner awareness, strengthens moral sensitivity, and reinforces ethical commitment in social life. This finding opens up opportunities for further research on the application of Ṣadrā's epistemology in education, public ethics, contemporary spirituality, and various intellectual and moral problems of the modern world.

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