



## An Epistemological Review of the World of Ideas and Its Role in the Discovery of the Revelation and Dreams in Sadra's Thought

Mahdi Rezazadeh Joudi<sup>1</sup>; Alireza Heydarzadeh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Student of Philosophy and Islamic Theology, Mofid University, Qom, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Art, Tehran, Iran

Corresponding Author: Mahdi Rezazadeh Joudi, Email: [joudi1364@gmail.com](mailto:joudi1364@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

In Sadra's thought, the philosophical elaboration of revelation and dreams is subject to the acceptance of the world of ideas. The question which has been responded in this paper is that how the issue of relation with the world of ideas and its role in discovering and reflecting the revelation and dreams is elaborated in Sadra's thought? The research methodology was a descriptive-analytic one and the findings showed that in Sadra's epistemological system, the world of ideas, is in agreement with the imaginary perception, so the connection to the world of ideas becomes possible through the imagination and abstraction power of this intellect. The results of the research indicate that from Sadra's point of view, the world of ideas and its visible forms have epistemological functions and the knowledge obtained from it is also superior and reassuring. In this paper, first in a general approach, the world of ideas and the role of the faculty of imagination in Sadra's thought are put forth. Then, based on that and exclusively, Sadra's thought on discovering the revelation and dream is elaborated and analyzed through the world of ideas and their reflections in soul.

**Keywords:** *World of Ideas; Faculty of Imagination; Revelation; Dream; Sadra*

### **1. Introduction**

The phenomenon of revelation is one of the most important pillars of the revelatory religions on which the foundations of religious beliefs are based. Revelation is a special link between God and the divine messengers by which, the creator of the universe reveals certain facts to prophets. Dream is also the result of distance of soul from apparent senses and its desire towards inner powers. That means that sometimes in the world of dreams, human attains inner facts and thereby achieves the perception and knowledge of intuitional facts.

In addition, reviewing the verses of the holy Quran, the prophets' dreams are to observe certain facts clearly and an image of divine revelation which the prophets should be obedient towards it. In other words, the prophets' dreams being related to the external world and necessarily are in agreement with the external world. These confirmations have had noticeable roles in inclination of the schools of Islamic philosophy to elaborate revelation and dream and has found a special position in their works.

In Sadra's wisdom system, the world of ideas is one of the three-fold worlds of entity and the philosophical elaboration of revelation and dream is subject to the acceptance of the world of ideas. The issue of the world of ideas is one of the significant philosophical issue which has been discussed in different schools of thoughts. (Bahaei Lahiji, 1993:43).

Farabi and Avicenna as the representatives of the Peripatetic school have insisted on the denial of the world of ideas and have claimed certain faults in connection with the world of ideas. Opposite to the Peripatetic school, there are mystics and philosophers who have defended the presence of such a world with reliance upon their own philosophical system. Of course, according to the belief of some of the contemporary thinkers, Suhrawardi is the first philosopher who has directed the Islamic scholars' minds towards this issue by putting forth and establishing the existential position of the world of ideas (an intermediary limit between the world of material and intellect). (Corbin, 1992:284/1).

But it can be said that finally, Sadra, based on the principles and foundations of Transcendent wisdom, has proved the presence of such a world in a discursive form. The present research, in a descriptive-analytic method deals with the review of the role of world of ideas in discovering revelation and dreams based on Sadra's transcendent wisdom to respond to this question that how and in which way Sadra intends to explain the issue of relation of the world of ideas and discovering the exemplary facts (revelation and dreams) and their reflections in the soul?

So, initially through a general and analytic approach, this paper will deal with the review of the world of ideas and the role of faculty of imagination in the process of receiving the intuitional facts. Then based on it and exclusively, with regard to the main question of the research, the quality of receiving revelation and dream is elaborated and analyzed from Sadra's point of view.

## ***2. Semantics of the World of Ideas***

The word of ideas semantically means 'similar', 'example' and as likes. (Ibn Manzur, 1416 A.H:13-23). It is also the form of something whose attributes are embodied in the mind or expresses a frame and a sample like a thing or mentions a part for the explanation of a rule and brings it to the beginner's mind. (Saliba, 1987:574). In philosophy, it has many meanings including the followings:

1. Exemplary ideas or model in Platonic philosophy means an abstract form and a rational fact which is eternal, fixed and substantive which does not take change, corruption and annihilation. Plato believes that in many of his speeches, Plato mentions that the creatures have an abstract form in divine universe and it likely that he has named them as divine ideas. These exemplary ideas do not take annihilation and corruption. They remain and what takes annihilation and corruption are these world creatures. (Farabi, 872-950 AD: 105). Of course putting forth the plan of the world of ideas, Plato faced a problem in creation of a link between that world and the physical world, so that he was forced to put forth a middle and a passive world that in his philosophy is the very world of mathematics. (Copleston, 2001:250/1). However, it is necessary to pay attention that neither the Platonic World of Ideas and nor his Passive World (World of Mathematics) have any kinship with the world of ideas or imagination in the Islamic world. But there is a similar feature between Farabi's world of ideas and world of mathematics and that is both of these worlds are serving as the connector between the world of intellect and the world of material.
2. Exemplary ideas in the terminology of Kant, is a full rational form which passes through sense data and mind perception and there is nothing in the world of experience which could be its representative and it is only possible to consider it as the rule and command of thought and practice. (Saliba, 1987:574).

For the purpose of elaboration of the world of ideas and other words, Sadra puts forth the issue of doubt on the ranks of existence in which the ranks are resulting from each other in longitudinal form. Thus, there is first, the world of intellect, then the world of ideas and afterward the world of materials (sensible world). (Mulla Sadra, 1989: 244/7). Elaborating the world of ideas, he believes that this world is an intermediary between the world of materials and the pure abstract world and it is possible to establish link with the two other worlds. Because in one side, it is the effect of the world of intellect and on the other hands, the cause of the world of materials. For this reason, it has certain similarities and difference with those two.

That is to say that the world of ideas is a world which does not have materials but it has material effects such as shape, color and volume and from this point of view, it is similar to the material world. But it does not have other features such as change, time and place and from this perspective, it is different from the world of materials and is similar to the world of intellect. (Mulla Sadra, 1983:388, Hassan Zadeh, 2008:687/3)

Therefore, from Sadra's point of view, there are three distinctive, related and resulting worlds over each other. The rational, ideas and material worlds that corresponding with these three worlds, there are three different sensual, imaginative and rational perceptions in human. (Mulla Sadra, 1989:228/9).

In addition, in Sadra's point of view, the world of ideas is divided into three descending and ascending ideas. The world of ideas which is the intermediary of God's favor and attention from the world of intellect to the world of the nature is descending ideas. After that, the ranks of existence in the curve of ascending, returns to the divine origin reversely. The world which takes the function of intermediary in ascension, rise and perfection course of the world of nature towards the world of intellect is called ascending ideas. (Mulla Sadra , 1989:45/1)

Sadra believes that the descending ideas is the place of figuration of universe forms, i.e. the configuration and shape of material affairs and phenomena in the descending world of ideas are in form of forms and due to the connection of the abstract faculty of imagination with these images, certain unveilings occur to an individual. This faculty with the condition of filtration and purification is able to observe the facts in the descending word of ideas. (Mulla Sadra, 1979:45/9).

### ***3. Elaboration of the Role of Faculty of Imagination in Connection with the World of Ideas***

One of the important topics of interest for Muslim scholars is the quality of connection with the descending world of ideas through the faculty of imagination and receiving the invisible unveilings. As it was stated earlier, in Sadra's ontology, there is a full agreement between the small world (human) and large world and the rank of their existence is identical with each other. According to Sadra, human has three types of perceptions:

1. Sensual perception: In this rank, the form of perceptible exists in the material and the perceptible, perceps its form with the special forms of sensible things.
2. Imaginative perception: The perception of thing is with the same features and qualities of sensual perception with this difference that in imagination, the material of thing does not exist for the apparent senses.
3. Rational perception: It is the perception of a thing that from the viewpoint of its nature in general, there is the news of neither the material nor the feature of material. Thus, the general states of existences, corresponding with human's perception has three ranks:

1. The world of nature which is created and is subject to corruption.
2. The world of imagination, i.e. the world of images, the quantity which is exactly like sensualities with this difference that it is not physical.
3. The world of intelligible which is not material and does not have physical effects (Mulla Sadra, 1987:333, Mulla Sadra, 1989, 394/3), therefore similar to what exists at the three perception stages, has been materialized in the world outside the human.

Given what was already stated, the world of ideas in Sadra's epistemological idea, is in agreement with the imaginative perception, therefore the connection to the world of ideas through faculty of imagination will become possible. It is in this way that the faculty of imagination in human is the reflector of imaginative images in descending world of ideas. For this reason, the humans who have dealt with the inner purification and achieved certain revelations, then certain facts are exposed to them which the ordinary people are incapable to achieve them., The faculty of imagination has a connection with the ascending curve of the world of idea, since after death, the faculty of imagination which has reached abstraction, travels along with the ideas world to the passive world and perceps the affairs. It is worth mentioning that the faculty of imagination as one of the inner perceptive faculty of soul should be an abstract issue to be able to establish connection with the world of ideas which holds a passive abstraction.

In case of considering the faculty of imagination as a physical faculty, the connection with the world of ideas becomes meaningless, since the material faculty of imagination does not have any congruity with the world of ideas which has a passive abstraction and consequently no connection is established.

#### ***4. Mechanism of Discovering and Reflecting Revelation and True Dream in Soul***

##### ***4.1 Theory of Minds***

Sadra like the Peripatetic followers believes in the theory of minds. But in his view, in addition to longitudinal minds, there is a series of latitudinal minds. In fact, putting forth the plan of latitudinal minds, Sadra intends to justify the method of generation of material creatures from them (Mulla Sadra, 2001, 339-342). According to his view, the first intellect is generated from the Essential Being that multiplicity has no way into Him. The first intellect is the first intellect from the longitudinal series which has a rank and existence preceding over other minds.

Other longitudinal minds are created in this way that the second intellect is generated from the first intellect from the viewpoint of its relation with God and from the viewpoint of possibility of rationality in his mind, the mass of the remotest sphere and because of its inherent rationality, the moving sphere is generated and this hierarchy continues until it reaches to the last intellect, i.e the tenth intellect (active intellect). (Mulla Sadra, 1975:188-190).

The active intellect transfers knowledge to it through unity with soul. When human's soul from the rank of material intellect -which is the pure power- reaches to the rank of acquired intellect -which is the last rank of theoretical minds- finds capability of unity with the active intellect and at the time of establishing unity with this intellect, this intellect achieves the ultimate level of its perfection.

In fact, the soul of each human which is capable to receive knowledge from the active intellect, through unity with this intellect moves out from the passive state and converts into actual intellect. (Mulla Sadra, 1989:321/3) and it is in the light of this unity that has ability to observe the facts. Sadra considers the active intellect as the very Gabriel. (Mulla Sadra, 1989:143/9).

#### ***4-2 Quality of Discovering and Reflecting the Divine Revelation***

In Sadra's thought, receiving the divine facts is in two general and trivial forms. (Mulla Sadra, 1987: B-455). According to Sadra, in the process of receiving the revelation, the prophet reaches to a rank of existence perfection that he can be connected to the active intellect through faculty of speech and percept the general facts of revelation. (Mulla Sadra, 1987 B: 472).

He takes assistance on the details of revelation from the world of ideas and believes that prophets observe the imaginative and detailed images of revelation due to the connection with the world of ideas. It is in such a way that initially, through the world of mind, the facts are received, then the form of phenomena are embodied in the world of ideas and are observable to the prophet in details. In fact, the observation of forms in the world of ideas by the prophet through the faculty of imagination is the result of reflection of images in Prophet's apparent senses and for this reason, in Sadra's view, prophet finds an ability to observe the angle and or hear its words. (Mulla Sadra: 472).

Here, the sacred faculty of intellect of the prophet has a pivotal role in receiving revelation from the world of minds. Furthermore, the faculty of imagination in this elaboration has only an instrumental and intermediary role and that is at the limit of conversation of general facts into imaginative and ideas images.

While having belief in this idea that the receiving the revelation by the prophet is obtained from the unity of the prophet's sacred intellect and active intellect and the faculty of imagination is involved in detail-making of divine knowledge, with regard to the rule of unity of intelligent and intelligible, considers an independent role both for the world of imagination and receiving the divine facts.

In Sadra's viewpoint, the world of imagination can obtain the divine facts far from the prophet's sacred intellect and put it at the disposal of the prophet. In explanation of this issue, Sadra states that there are three perceptive faculties of sensual, imaginative and rational in the universe. In one side, prophet is an individual who has achieved perfection in all sensual faculties and is able to establish connection with the heavenly world. He believes that any kind of perception of preceptor should be united with the object of perception, so that the prophet's faculty of intellect establishes unity with the rational images and the prophet's faculty of imagination with the imaginative images.

That means that using his own intellect, the prophet percepts the world of intellects and the imaginative world by his imagination and is able to acquire the knowledge which exists in the world of creatures. Sadra believes that the divine facts, in addition to having a general aspect, includes detailed and specific facts and the place of these facts is in the world of ideas. In other words, the transcendental or divine affairs which are found in the world of intellect, exist also in the world of imagination.

Thus, whatever the prophet observes in the world of intellect, can also observe its imaginative form in the world of imagination. (Mulla Sadra, 1983:538). Finally, Sadra believes that when the divine facts are transferred into the world of imagination, they will come into the world of sensible and the prophet will have this possibility to observe the mentioned facts in a sensible way by using his apparent faculties, i.e. eyes and ears.

#### ***4-3 The Quality of Discovering and Reflecting the True Dreams***

Dream is another area whose place is the world of ideas. In the holy Quran, there are talks of dreams which shows that these dreams have links with the external world and in a way have had an objective function. (As-Safat /150, Yousef/4, Al-Fath/27). Of course, the dreams which have been stated in the holy Quran are mainly about the prophet's dreams. In these dreams, sometimes, the events which would occur in the future are shown to them (Al-Fath/27, Isra /60), sometimes the realities are appeared in the dreams in another way (Anfal/43) and sometimes, certain instruction have been given to the prophets which they have been pursuing to perform them. (As-Safat /102-103).

Now the main question is that how is the mechanism of individual link with the world of dreams in the true dream?

In Sadra's point of view, the images which are observed in dreams depend on two factors: 1. Action of faculty of imagination in a common sense, 2. Connection of soul to the exalted origins. Then, depending on the holder of dreams, who might have a strong soul or a weak soul, what he sees in the dream will be either in form of rational and ideas images or imaginative forms. The reason for this state is that the one who holds a high soul, necessarily will observe images which is from that world and the one who has a weak soul and adherent to the physical world, has an inclination towards the world of sense and nature, so that whatever is appeared to him from the world of sense will be the imaginary images. (Mulla Sadra, 1975:470)

Sadra believes that if the simulation of the faculty of imagination to be performed proportional with images, its interpretation is easy, but if imitations are not made proportional with images, its interpretation will be complex and sometime impossible. True dreams are the obvious example of this connection through which certain images are portrayed in the mirror of soul. Now, these images either remain in memory and are remembered during awakening, that in that state, dream is clear and is not in need of interpretation or the faculty of imagination, due its control over perceptions, expressed them in other form and in that state, dream is in need of interpretation. (Mulla Sadra, 1983: 467-458).

In some cases, during dreaming, the soul creates images due to faculty of imagination, which have no similarity in the external world. The creation of these images is made by the faculty of imagination and such images and forms are not interpretable. In fact, such a kind of dreams, are named scattered and disrupted dreams. (Mulla Sadra, 1983: 477-478: Mulla Sadra, 1987 B: 471).

Concerning the reflection of images in soul, Sadra believes that this reflection, like taking role by images in a mirror which is located opposite to another mirror and there is no barrier between them. But if there is a barrier between these mirrors, the images are not made. Now concerning the soul, something similar to the performance of mirrors occur in which certain barriers are made between minds and soul in receiving the images, but these barriers can be removed. Some of the factors to remove these barriers include the purification of soul based on the nature, performing scientific and practical mathematics, voluntarily death (exclusive of sages) and the natural death. (Mulla Sadra 1987 A: 364/2, Mulla Sadra, no date: 468).

Therefore, when the soul in the dream is free from the experimental affairs and thinking about the data of senses, it will become capable to be connected to the rational jewel and also to the heavenly souls which have the images of details in them. So, certain moments happen when covers and barriers are removed from the page of soul and the soul can observe the word of ideas, and in this state, the images which have congruity with soul will appear in it.

## ***5. Analysis and Review***

In Sadra's point of view, the ways to attain knowledge in human are different, but the gate by which a certain knowledge can be obtained is definitely valuable. It is fully clear that the knowledge which is obtained through the gate of supersensible world to the human and following that many horizons of the invisible area of the world are appeared, will be a top knowledge, without intermediary (physical instruments) and reliable.

What is analyzable from this paper out of the total Sadra's words is that, in the Sadra's standpoint, the descending world of ideas as a semi-abstract world has a noticeable role for human in

achieving the knowledge, because the exact elaboration of the two supernatural phenomena of revelation and dream are subject to the full knowledge on this world.

Based on the Sadra balance principle, as the connection with the world of ideas is achieved in human through the faculty of imagination, so the observed images in the world of ideas (descending) are portrayed in the faculty of imagination and after that enters into the common sense – which is the place of apparent five senses, and finally knowledge is obtained for human.

Now if that knowledge is of the category of revelational knowledge, - of course, revelation in the trivial facts like seeing the angle and hearing the words from it does not need any reconsideration, since revelational knowledge is immune of error-.

However, if the knowledge is of the category of dreams, if it is a true dream, i.e. the images which is seen by prophet or one of the saints and is without any interpolation of the possessed faculties, they are in agreement with reality and do not need any interpretation. This is by itself one of the forty-six parts of prophecy. The resulting knowledge of it is an inspirational knowledge which is reliable and holds sufficient argument. But if the interference of possessed faculties in the observed images in the world of dreams is little, in that case, dreams are subject to interpretation and if interferences are too much, then its interpretation is impossible and is considered as a disrupted dream.

## **Conclusion**

According to Sadra, there are three distinctive, corresponding and resulting worlds (rational, ideas and material). Corresponding to these three worlds, there are three different sensual, imaginative and rational perceptions in the human being. The world of ideas and visible images plays an epistemological role and the resulting knowledge is excellent, immediate and reassuring.

On the other hand, in all phases of discovery and reflection on revelation and dream, there is a unity of the imagined object with the one who imagines it and this in itself is an introduction to attain knowledge.

In Sadra's thinking, the images observed in revelation are immune from error and therefore this resulting knowledge is certain. But in the dream state, the observed images take shape in the person's faculty of imagining. If there is no interference in it, the dream is true, in accordance with reality and generates knowledge, but if there is a lot of interference in it, that is, interpretable or of the kind of interrupted dream, unfounded and basically does not reach knowledge.

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