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## THE EXTENT AND SECRET OF THE IMAGINATIONS' EVIDENTNESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MULLA SADRA AND DESCARTES

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### ABSTRACT

*The philosophers' efforts in line with the finding of a robust essence for cognizance have led to the locating of learnings recounted as being evident. Now, what is evident; how much it is extended and what is the scale for the learnings' evident and improvised nature? These are questions that the present article tries finding answers for them from the perspective of Mulla Sadra and Descartes in the area of the evident imaginations. The investigations indicated that, although there are some differences in regard of the knowledge by presence and lack of trust in the sensory concepts, these two philosophers' answers are very close such as concerning the acceptance of the science's division into evident (intuitive) and subjective (deductive), adequacy of sufficiency to the "paying of attention to the certainties" in evident-intuitive cognizance, exclusiveness of the evidentness to the intellectual intuition (Descartes) and pure intellectual concepts (Sadra) as well as the acceptance of the extendedness as a scale and secret of the evidentness in the evident imaginations.*

**Keywords:** Mulla Sadra, Descartes, imaginations, evidentness, extent of evidentness and secret of evidentness.

### INTRODUCTION

Logics tells us that, if we want to transform an uncertain concept into a known and certain concept, we should define it. And, if we want to ensure the existence of an object, we should offer reasoning. In response to the claim that it leads to the vicious circle if we demand definition for the understanding of every concept and require reasoning for the justification of every statement, the logicians have divided the concepts or imaginations or statements and confirmations into two parts, namely the evident and the subjective ones, and believe that the subjective concepts and statements are based on the evident concepts and statements but the evident statements and concepts are inherently clarifying and needless of clarification.

Having accepted this logical classification, the subsequent logicians, the epistemologists and the Muslim philosophers have dealt with the extent and limits of the evident imaginations and confirmations as well as the secret and key of the evidentness. They say that "if the evident imaginations are the foundations of ever definition and if the evident confirmations are the foundation of the reasoning, two questions need to be answered: the first is pertinent to the extent and limits of the evident imaginations and confirmations meaning that how much are the imaginal and confirmatory evidences extended? The second question pertains to the scale or secret of evidentness, i.e. what are the properties and secrets of some of the concepts and

statements that make them needless of definition and justification? Naturally, the two questions can be answered in both the areas of the imaginations and confirmations in separate.

Efforts will be made in the present article to find answers to the two aforesaid questions only in the area of the concepts and imaginations and that from the perspectives of Mulla Sadra and Descartes, to wit we would like to find answers to the two following questions: how extended are the evident imaginations from the perspective of Mulla Sadra and Descartes? And, in what thing(s) do Mulla Sadra and Descartes see the secret and mystery of the imaginations' evidentness?

But, this that why the present article tries investigating the perspectives of these two philosophers who have been active in the intellectual-cultural domain about the secret of evidentness, two reasons can be presented: 1) their contemporariness because both of them lived nearly at the same time and 2) both of them have founded a special way of thinking and initiated a particular scientific movement in the two intellectual domains and, in the meanwhile, they both believe that they have found a sure and unmistakable way of thinking for the achievement of cognizance. For more clarity and the achievement of an answer to the two abovementioned questions, several concepts should be explained.

#### *A. Imagination and Confirmation*

Firstly, science has been divided in to knowledge by presence and knowledge that can be acquired. For example, Mulla Sadra has the following words about the distinction between these two sciences: the existence of a science is knowledge by presence if it is an exact and objective existence and it is an acquirable knowledge in other cases (Sadra, 2002, p.43; Sadra, 1981, p.108). In this definition, the approach is towards the visage of a science and its existence not the narrative and epistemological countenance thereof. Having a glance at Sadra's definition from the narrative perspective, the science or knowledge can be defined in the following form: the knowledge by presence is the science that is just the basis of its own discovery for the scientist but the acquired science is the knowledge that, besides being the basis of its own discovery, is also the basis for the discovery of another object, as well (Obudiat, 2014, 2/19-22).

Then, the acquirable science is divided into imagination and confirmation with each of which being further dividable to evident and subjective because the discussion on evidentness can be posited in the limits of the acquirable science, the certain truth is present before the scholar in the knowledge by presence hence dividing of the science to evident and subjective is insensible. Mulla Sadra defines imagination and confirmation in the following words: imagination includes the acquisition of the object's form in the mind disregarding the observation of the principle and confirmation includes the acquisition of an object's form which is objectively a principle or entailing one (Sadra, 1981, p.51).

Although Descartes has adopted a special method in philosophical discussions and questions the Aristotelian logics (Descartes, 1997, pp.216-217), he has paid attention in the course of his discussions to imagination and confirmation. According to Descartes, imagination is the very object forms imagined in the mind. Besides the concept imagined for a thing, confirmation constantly adds another thing thereto (Descartes, 2002, pp.53-54). It is evident that Descartes tries making a particular distinction between the imagination and the other actions of the ego. In Descartes's mind, the mere having of a concept of a thing is imagination but the later



contributions to this concept make a principle added thereto which causes it to be called confirmation and this is the very definition of Sadra for imagination and confirmation.

The explicators of Descartes's ideas believe that imagination and confirmation differ in Modarresi's philosophy from the Descartes's; Modarresi's philosophy differentiates the mere perception of the content of a theorem and a principle based on trueness or falseness. However, Descartes emphasizes on the essential role of will in confirmation or non-confirmation: "to rule and make a principle, we need intellect because we cannot issue a sentence about what we cannot at all perceive. However, in order to make a judgment, besides the intellect, the will is also needed so that, as soon as we succeeded in perceiving a thing, we can confirm or reject it" (Descartes, 1997, p.248; Cottingham, 2011, p.172). Disregarding the difference or non-difference between the ideas proposed by Descartes and Modarresi in their philosophies, the thing that can be understood from this saying is the agreement of Descartes and Sadra about imagination and confirmation.

### ***B. Evident and Subjective***

The Muslim philosophers and logicians have various interpretations about evidentness and subjectiveness, including evidentness and subjectiveness (Lahiji, 1998, p.55; Sabzevari, 2001, p.323; Tabataba'ei, 1984, p.158; Mozaffar, 2009, p.21), necessary and acquisitive (Helli, 1999, 2/62), necessary and subjective (Qotb Al-Din Razi, no date, p.323; Tabataba'ei, 1992, p.136) and innate and non-innate (Sohrewardi, 1993, 2/18; Sohrewardi, 1993, 1/5). Mulla Sadra sometimes uses the terms evident and acquirable (Sadra, 2002, pp.43 & 59; Sadra, no date, p.39); occasionally inherent and acquirable (Sadra, 1983, p.3; Sadra, 1999, p.6) and, some other times, innate and acquirable (Sadra, 1981, 3/419). Terms like superior and acquired, intellectual and non-intellectual, subjective and non-subjective and superior and optimum have also been applied by him.

In the words of the sages and logicians, there are two definitions observed for evident and subjective.

1) The following is the more prevalently opined definition amongst the Muslim logicians and philosophers: "evident is the thing that does not need thinking and acquisition and subjective is the thing that cannot become known without thinking" (Khorasani, 2003, p.9; Yazdi, 2003, p.31; Mozaffar, 2009, p.21; Tabataba'ei, 1984, p.158, Mesbah Yazdi, 1999, 1/329).

An example of such a definition can be seen in the words of Hakim Sabzevari: "the acquired evident is the certain thing in need of thinking and ideation and the necessary evident is the certain thing not in need of acquisition and ideation though requiring fostering or feeling or experience or other things ..." (Sabzevari, 2001, 1/84). These definitions have been written nearly in all the texts intending to offer an evident definition.

2) The second definition that is understood from Mulla Sadra's sayings is that if the knowledge of a certain thing needs nothing other than paying attention to it, it is evident but if the obtainment of that certain thing be in need of attention thereto, it would be subjective; in other words, if the certain is found always present in the mind, it is evident otherwise subjective.

Mulla Sadra realizes the true science as being of three types, namely Elm Al-Yaqin, Eyn Al-Yaqin and Haq Al-Yaqin; the knowledge obtained through proofs is an example of the first; the knowledge obtained by internal observation is an example of the second and the unification of



the ego and the separate intellects is an example of the third type of knowledge. Next, he realizes the evident cognizance as one example of the unification of the ego and the separate intellects and states that “cognizance obtained from the very beginning of the creation from the general teachings shared by all the people is called the evident cognizance” (Sadra, 1981, 3/518). He writes elsewhere that “perceptions are of two kinds: the imaginations or confirmations that are known to the ego internally and inherently and the imaginations or confirmations that are attained through acquisition” (Sadra, 1981, p.419).

In Mafatih Al-Qaib, Mulla Sadra states that “know that the rationalities can be divided into three kinds in terms of the possibility or impossibility of acquisition: one type is the evident things the seeking and search of which is neutral due to their presence and garnishment in the mind; the second is the evident things that cannot be achieved or sought due to their concealment and difficulty of achievement and the third one is the certain things that the seeking of them is possible in one respect and impossible in another. The categorization of the evident and certain things into these three kinds is as explained in the following words: the evident things are either present in an actual manner or in a potential manner in the mind. The second kind is the very acquirable things” (Sadra, 1984, p.300). He continues with realizing the evident things as the intrinsic priorities institutionalized in the human nature hence impossible to acquire because they are present in the mind and the acquisition of what has already been acquired is improbable (Sadra, 1984, p.300).

The second definition can be also perceived from the explanation of the Mawāqef (stations): “the knowledge by presence is the knowledge required for the creature’s self in such a way that it cannot find a way to get separated thereof” (Iji, 1991, 1/98).

Sadra’s expressions on the definition of the evident things indicate that he has chosen the second definition and his intention by the evident and innate is the imaginations that are the inherent properties of the intellect and have no attribution to the things other than the intellect (Motahhari, 2003, 6/261). It has to be noted that the intention of the innateness is not naturalness and non-voluntariness (Javadi and Gharbagh, 2008, 6/8) rather the rationalities are intended that can be gradually obtained by everyone (Motahhari, 2003, 6/261).

Anyway, the Islamic logicians and philosophers believe that the one cannot follow the endless path of logical deduction and reasoning. If one is supposed to resort to a prior cognizance for the justification of a new one, a sort of cognizance should be attained that is independent in its knowledge otherwise no cognizance can be grasped (Sadra, 1981, 3/443).

## **EVIDENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DESCARTES**

The perception of Descartes’s intention by the evident and subjective is based on the understanding of his intention of the terms clarity and distinction as well as the term intuition which will be briefly explained below.

### ***A) Clarity and Distinction***

The two terms “clarity” and “distinction” are amongst the essential and pivotal concepts in Descartes’s philosophy. The achievement of his intention is rather difficult or even impossible without illuminating Descartes’s intention of these two terms. The terms “clarity and distinction”



have been always discussed by critics and interpreters of Descartes as the rules of access to the truth in his ideas.

In order to understand Descartes's understanding of these two terms, we need answers to these two questions: 1) what are clarity and distinction? And, 2) is there another criterion needed for the recognition of clarity and distinction? In response to the first question for explaining the terms clarity and distinction, Descartes states that "I call clear a sort of perception that is present and accessible for the meticulous mind exactly when we say that a thing is considered clear if it is present before the eyes and influences them with sufficient strength and penetration. However, distinct is what that is so precisely different from the other things that it only expresses the very thing vividly present to the meticulous onlooker (Descartes, 1997, p.254).

In an answer to the second question, Descartes's intention of the proposition of these two words should be investigated. It is clear that Descartes offers these two words as a maxim for the perception of the truth: "apparently, I can now call it a general axiom that everything I can perceive with clarity and perfect distinction truly exists" (Descartes, 2002, p.51). If his intention of the positing of this maxim is that the rule is the result of the exertion of a method that doubts the intellectual intuition, discovery of the impossible, the secret of the imagination's evidentness should be in this case sought in the intellectual intuition because the concepts that perceived through intellectual intuition would be clear and distinct concepts but if his intention of putting forth this maxim is that this axiom is the inherent property of some of the imaginations and ideas, the properties of such imaginations should be investigated in lieu of investigating the criterion.

With this presumption that the human mind is a unit structure, Descartes offers objective methods by the implementation of which every individual can reach common ideas wherein there is no room for doubt and, as put by the Islamic philosophers, are evident. This means that if a person can doubt about an imagination, it cannot be anymore deemed as sure. Thus, Descartes tries establishing all our cognizance on the evident affairs in such a way that if we explore any cognizance thereafter, we can achieve a sure foundation sourcing the certainty and truth of that imagination.

Can clarity and distinction be considered as synonym to evidentness in the Islamic philosophy? It seems that Descartes's response is positive because his definition of the concepts clear and distinct is consistent with the Islamic philosophers' definition of evidentness, i.e. the concept needless of definition.

### ***B) Intuition***

This word has been derived of "intueri" meaning looking or examining in the ancient Latin language. Descartes claims that the mind has an innate faculty at the time of getting freed of the interventions by the sensory stimulations and this innate faculty can be used for observing the truths put inside us by the God meaning that they can be perceived in a non-intermediated manner (Cottingham, 2011, p.169). Descartes has the following words about intuition: "my intention of intuition is neither the shaky testimony of the senses nor the misleading principle drawn on the wrong combinations of the faculty of imagination rather I mean the concept offered by an penetrative and lucid mind with certainty and distinction in such a way that the accuracy of what has been found cannot be at all doubted and, put differently, institution



includes an undoubted concept belonging to a transparent and penetrative mind and only stemming from the light of intellect” (Descartes, 1997, p.97).

The application of the word “intuition” in the philosophy of the west has been rising and falling since Descartes’s time. Descartes has used this word with the meaning of the “intellectual evidentness”. Forughi writes that “the essential point is that Descartes realizes as real and evident the thing that is evident before the intellect and, in doing so, he has adopted terms that can be called consciousness, discovery or intuition. He continues with saying that “the sure thing should be perceived by the intellect through intuition; (the necessary) science is that the intellect can conscientiously perceive the evident things in the same way that the eyes see things; the thing that is credible in the world is the “intuition by the intellect” not the sensory and imaginal and hallucinatory perceptions because senses may make mistakes but the thing perceived by the intellect through intuition and became evident for it would be surely correct. Conscience is the innate and natural issue that can perceive the truths without any need for thinking and reasoning (Forughi, 1965, pp.139-140).

In explaining the perspectives of Descartes, he also states that “the human beings only have two ways for the acquisition of sureness: the first is the intuition or conscience in regard of the absolute plain things and the issues close to them; the second is the deduction about the distant compound issues and the certitude is achieved through this second means when the above-presented instructions are acted out (Forughi, 1965, p.142).

It becomes clear in this way that the thing perceived by intellect through intuition from the perspective of Descartes can be enumerated amongst the evident things hence, from his viewpoint, the process of deduction begins from intuition and the evident affairs.

Descartes believes that there should be evident concepts and statements needless of reasoning so that the course of reasoning does not lead to endlessness. Descartes realizes the number of the evident beings as being very few and believes that “these should be carefully studied because they are the very realities we call the plainest objects in every unit series. All the other objects can be deduced from these same plain objects and this deduction is either direct and non-intermediated or through two, three or several stages in deduction practice” (Descartes, 1997, p.111).

The result that can be obtained from the positing of the concepts is that each of the two thinkers firstly divide the science into imagination and confirmation and, secondly, further divide each to evidentness to which subjective sciences end. Of course, the term intuition can be a close equivalent in Descartes’s philosophy for evidentness in Sadra’s philosophy.

### ***1. Extent and Limit of the Imaginations’ Evidentness from the Perspectives of Mulla Sadra and Descartes***

Amongst the Muslim thinkers, Khajeh Nasir Tusi has dealt with the classification of the evident imaginations more clearly than the others. He writes that “the meanings imagined in the intellects and minds are either per se illuminating and needless of the acquisition or not. The first set is comprised of the pure rationalities such as the existence and the necessity and possibility or denial; tangible things perceived either by the apparent senses such as the heat and chill and black and white and light and dark or based on the internal senses and conscience of the ego such as happiness and sorrow and dread and satiation and hunger” (Tusi, 1996, p.306).

The late Tusi states in explanation that “the intention by the pure rationalities is the general forms that cannot be perceived by the senses; the intention by the tangibles perceived by the apparent and internal senses is the general concepts abstracted by intellect from the details” (Tusi, 1996, p.306). As it is clear, Khajeh Nasir Al-Din finds the examples of the evident imaginations amongst all the intellectual concepts, internal senses and apparent senses. In other words, he realizes some of the secondary logical rational and philosophical concepts and some of the primary rationalities as being evident.

As for the intellectual concepts, Mulla Sadra has very clear statements; he realizes as evident some of the intellectual concepts like the existence, object, acquisition (Sadra, 1981, v.3, p.443), necessity and possibility of existence (Sadra, 1981, 1/27 and 83) and knowledge (Sadra, 1981, 3/278; Sadra, 1984, p.261). The late Sadra realizes the concept of existent as being superior and precedent to the other concepts amongst the evident intellectual concepts (Sadra, 1975, p.10). Mulla Sadra’s words about the sensory concepts needs further investigation. At least, he explicitly points to evidentness of some of the imaginal concept perceived based on the apparent senses. “Every intellect knows it by him or herself that some of the imaginations and confirmations are acquired by him or her such as the imagination of heat and cold” (Sadra, 2013, 2/35).

Mulla Sadra’s complete approach to the evidentness of the tangibles can be better clarified by explaining about Sohrewardi’s perspective. About sensory-visual concepts, Sohrewardi believes that the concepts obtained by the mind through senses are plain and, since, in his mind, the plainness is the criterion and scale for the evidentness, the sensory concepts should be evident (Sohrewardi, 1993, 2/104). He realizes concepts like black as being plain not compound so that their other parts might be uncertain when contemplating about them. He is of the belief that it is impossible to define black for the person who has not seen it and it is needless of definition for he who has observed it (Sohrewardi, 1993, 2/73). He realizes the evidentness of the tangibles as being superior and he objects to the followers of Masha’ei school for they consider existence as being superiorly evident. In his idea, the existence realized by Masha’ei’s as being needless of definition has most of its problems stemmed from the tangibles (Sohrewardi, 1993, p.104).

The main discussion between Sadr Al-Mota’allehin and Sheikh Eshraq about the evidentness of the imaginal concepts tangibly perceived by the apparent senses is due to the reason that the latter does not make a distinction between the mental imaginary concepts and the tangible external realities but the former discusses about the tangibles in two respects: one based on the idea that they are existential identities hence evident because the existential identities are undefinable. The colors black and white cannot be defined in that they are existential identities and they are perceived through the establishment of an existential relationship with the outside world. That is because the external truth does not feature existence, material and difference. The second is based on the idea that they are concepts. He orders that the abstract concepts obtained by means of sensing the details do not reject definition because definition is specific to the typical concepts not the existential identities (Sadra, 1993, p.392). He realizes Sheikh Eshragh’s problem as stemming from the idea that he knows existence as a relational issue and considers nature as being original thereby to rule the evidentness of the plain tangibles (Sadra, 1993, p.392).

In explaining the statement by Sheikh Eshragh that “nothing is more vivid than the tangibles”, Mulla Sadra states that “If sheikh’s intention of the tangibles is the tangibles and their tangibility,



i.e. the things perceivable for the means of senses which are not passive in their perception, these affairs are not the most evident in this regard rather they are the most hidden to the intellect because the general issues are more well-known to the intellect and the detailed issues are more well-known to the imagination and senses. Furthermore, these issues are not amongst the basics of proof and components of limit; and, if the abstract meanings of the tangibles are intended by tangibles, although these meanings are known to the intellect, their intellectual components are more well-known” (Sadra, 1993, pp.392-393).

It can be conceived based on the sum of Mulla Sadra’s words that the senses cause a given doer to gain brief cognizance about the essence of a tangible thing but, in order to be able to gain insight about the essence of the tangibles in a detailed manner, another route should be taken in such a way that the intellect realizes the essence of a tangible thing as being comprised of issues that are considered as norms by the intellectuals so although the essence of the compound whiteness is briefly evident, its components are more superiorly evident to the intellect (Sadra, 1993, p.394).

Therefore, from the perspective of Mulla Sadra, a distinction should be made between brevity and detailedness meaning that the general concept should be evidently imaginable in the position of brevity but the imagination should need thinking and ideation in the position of detailedness (Yazdanpanah, 2017, p.44).

Based thereon, his idea about the concepts obtained from the internal senses should be also perceived because if the intention by the truth and existence of the hunger be pain, sorrow and happiness, it is perceived in the form of knowledge by presence but if the intention is the abstract concepts, the components of them are more well-known to the intellect though they are briefly evident.

It was made clear based on the discussions by Mulla Sadra that he divides the concepts existent in the mind into three parts: the intellectual concepts obtained from the apparent senses and the concepts obtained from the internal senses. According to him, some of the intellectual concepts are evident but, in sensory concepts, including the apparent and the internal ones, these concepts cannot be enumerated amongst the evident things in terms of their details even if being evident in terms of their generalities and wholes.

Descartes divides the imaginal concepts into three sets, namely innate, accidental and fabricated (Descartes, 1997, p.54). Innate concepts include issues like God, time, ego and continuity that exists in the ego before the potential experiences. The accidental concepts are things like color, light, odor, taste, heat and sound that apparently originate from outside and they are vague concepts and they do not exist outside in the same way they are perceived. However, the concepts made and processed by mind are imaginary such as Chimera or monster (Descartes, 1997, p.156).

Amongst the concepts existent in the mind, Descartes realizes the innate concepts as true concepts but he proposes two considerations regarding the accidental concepts like Mulla Sadra: one is the consideration of the concept in itself and, i.e. as feeling or thought, in which case these concepts are really evident; the second is in terms of their being signifiers of the material objects outside the mind. In his mind, these cannot be evident but confused and ambiguous in this case (Descartes, 1997, p.270). The invented concepts, as well, are the ones made in and processed by our brains. Based thereon, from his perspective, dividing of the concepts into evident and subjective can be posited for the innate things. In order to clarify his intention, it is necessary to



pay attention to the innate concepts. Descartes believes that the God has placed the clear and distinct concepts of the world in the human nature. “I have encountered laws in the world that have been established so by the God in the nature ... after sufficient contemplation, we cannot doubt the exact observation of these laws in every existent thing or in everything that occurs in the world” (Foroughi, 1965, p.215; Cottingham, 2011, p.163). Descartes’s perspective about the existence of the innate things in the ego from the very beginning of birth or this that the human beings are ready and have the background for these affairs is not so much clear. It can be understood from some of his words that the innate affairs are inherent (Cottingham, 2011). As for the innate affairs, Descartes writes in a letter to Hopperspistes that “exactly in the same way that the adults have the concept of God and the concepts of all the truths we call evident when not paying attention to them [in their minds], the children’s minds have them in themselves; the children do not acquire these concepts later on and after growing up. I do not doubt that the children could find these concepts inside themselves upon getting rid of the jail of the body” (Cottingham, 2011).

Based on this same understanding, John Locke objects to Descartes’s innate imaginations: “in my mind, it is paradoxical if we state that there are truths inscribed in the soul which is not itself the composer of them” (Locke, 2002, p.31). Descartes’s answer to such objections is that “the ego or the thought have been so busy in the body during the first years that they could have not recognized anything in a distinct manner even with the existence of many of the clear-cut perceptions” (Descartes, 1997, p.255).

This is while some of his expressions indicate other things. In explaining about the innate affairs, he states that “it is based on the accustomed customs and habits that we say there are certain diseases inherent in some special families and this does not mean that the children of these families have been sick when being a fetus inside the mother’s womb rather it means that they are born with a special talent and readiness for infliction with these diseases” (Copleston, 2000, 4/108). It seems that Copleston is right about this statement that Descartes has not provided a clear and acquirable expression about the nature and evolution of the inherent imaginations (Copleston, 2000, p.109; Descartes, 1997, pp.55&56).

Although it is not possible for us to reach a clear-cut idea about the human talent for the innate concepts or their actual actualization, this discussion does not make any difference in the evidentness of some of the innate concepts from the perspective of Descartes. After dividing the imaginational concepts into three sets, namely innate, accidental and fabricated, he only accepts the innate concepts as the superior basics or the superior causes of the imaginational recognition. Anyway, concepts like though, I, God, continuity, time, mathematical concepts and so forth are examples of the evident concepts in his opinion (Descartes, 1997, pp.260-261). From the perspective of Descartes, the accidental and fabricated concepts and imaginations are non-reliable. It appears that the general point made by Descartes is that the sensory impressions, including the internal and external senses, can be explicitly conceptualized as far as they are purely imaginational. But, when these concepts want to narrate from the things beyond themselves, they are so portionless of the clarity that these feelings’ equivalents rule that they are really incapable of perceiving their own intentions (Descartes, 1997, p.270).

Although Descartes does not make a specific reference to the acquirable knowledge and knowledge by presence but two kinds of certitude can be concluded from his proposed discussions: the first one is the perception by presence every person has of him or herself; it is



seen in this regard that Descartes occasionally develops the essence of his cognizance, i.e. the thought, in the following words: “I understand everything from the term “thought” and we are aware of them to the extent of our awareness of them in regard of the idea that they occur inside us (Cottingham, 2012, p.83). The second is the plain concepts or essences. Plain things are those perceived evidently, intuitively and conscientiously; they are very simple and vivid and distinct issues and our minds know nothing more vivid and more distinct than them. Shape and movement and dimensions are amongst the materially plain imaginations; literacy, illiteracy, certitude and doubt about the unit existence are amongst the intellectually plain imaginations (Forughi, 1965, p.140); continuity, cause, parity and unit (Descartes, 1997, p.110) are amongst the commonly plain imaginations.

The investigation of the extent and limits of the evident concepts indicates that Sadra and Descartes have agreements and disagreements: 1) considering Sadra’s division of the science into the knowledge by presence and acquirable knowledge, his standpoint is clear in regard of the idea that the knowledge by presence lies outside the circle of the discussions on evidentness whereas Descartes has not clearly stated such a distinction; 2) both of the researchers realize as evident the plain intellectual concepts like existence, unity of science and so forth; 3) both of the researchers realizes as non-evident the sensory concepts with the difference being that Mulla Sadra believes in an essential role for the sensory perceptions and even realizes them as evident in generalities and considers them as not being evident only because they are defined according to the concepts of their details but Descartes pays attention to the concepts (including the sensory concepts and imaginations) from two perspectives. These concepts are evident and clear in one respect which is the consideration of the concept in itself and they are not only evident but also non-credible in another respect which pays attention to their narration.

The following statements can be made about Descartes’s words: 1) in the first respect, the concepts of an objective reality exist in the mind and they are in this regard enumerated amongst the examples of the knowledge by presence so no discussion should be posited about the evidentness of these concepts because evidentness or non-evidentness can be either put forth in line with the proper understanding of these concepts or in respect to their narration of the external realities but, when the discussion comes to the existence or nonexistence of these concepts in the mind as Descartes proposes them, the discussion about evidentness or non-evidentness would be fruitless because there remains no room for discussion about the evidentness and non-evidentness in the world due to the presence of the truths and their exact concepts in the minds. 2) The discussion on the imaginations is the discussion about the proper understanding of the concepts. When talking about the evidentness of the imaginations, it means whether a known subject has a correct understanding of the concept or not. Some of the concepts have very clear meanings and do not need definition but there are some others that need definition due to complexity. The first set of the concepts are called evident and the second set is termed subjective. In the Islamic philosophy and logics, the discussion on the imaginations is concentrated on the definitions but the attention is paid to the concepts’ narration in Descartes’s philosophical system.

The Secret of the Evident Concepts’ Evidentness from the Perspectives of Sadra and Descartes:

The second question of this article is the secret of the evidentness of the evident concepts. The question is that why some imaginations can be characterized as evident and some others cannot?



In other words, what properties and secrets are there in some imaginations that make them needless of thinking and ideation? The answer would be the secret and code of evidentness.

In response to the first question, Shahid Motahhari realizes plainness of the concepts as the reason for their evidentness (Motahhari, 2003, 5/45; Motahhari, 2003, 6/535&536) and Master Mesbah Yazdi realizes the evident concepts as evident in respect to their reference to the knowledge by presence (Mesbah Yazdi, 1986, pp.78&79).

In discussion on the evidentness of the existence and separating the truth of existence from its nature, Mulla Sadra realizes both of them as being non-definable: the exact copy of the existence in that it cannot be transferred to the mind but the nature of the existence in that it is plain with the plain things being comprised of no material and inseparable (Sadra, 1981, pp.6&7). He sometimes introduces the plainness and generality and popularity as the secret of the evident things' evidentness such as the initial imagination of the existence to which the acquisition series are ended (Sadra, no date, p.23). According to the fact that the plain things are consisted of no components, Mulla Sadra states that "the general concept of existence is the objectiveness and the acquisition and things like that cannot be demarcated by specifying limits because these concepts neither have components nor there are other things more well-known than them" (Sadra, 1981, 3/443). Sadr Al-Mota'allehin realizes plainness as the reason for the evidentness of the existence and writes "this evidently imaginable general concept [the existence] is the title for the truth of the plain light. The concept of the existence is plainer than any other imaginable thing and preceding all the imaginations; the concept "existence" is inherently imagined so the definition of existence to a thing more obvious than that is infeasible due to its emergence and plainness (Sadra, 1975, p.10).

In the first glance, the words narrated from Sadra do not lead to a conclusion because some of them realize plainness as the secret of the evident imaginations' evidentness and some others introduce a combination of plainness, popularity and generality and yet some others pinpoint the reference to the knowledge by presence as the secret of the evident imaginations' evidentness but more scrutiny in his words makes it clear that he makes a distinction between three things: A) an object's truth and exact example: in Mulla Sadra's mind, the reality of the objects is only perceivable through knowledge by presence. In the discussion about the evidentness of the existence, Sadra separates the truth of existence from its nature and realizes both of them as being non-definable. He states that the exact example and reality of the existence are nondefinable in that the truths of existence and the exact example cannot be transferred to the mind through definition. Resultantly, it is only through observation of the presence that the truth of the objects can be understood such as the comprehension of the truth of existence<sup>(2)</sup> (Sadra, 1981, p.6 and 1984, p.7). B) The nature of the object: Mulla Sadra takes another path for the discovery of the secret of evidentness in regard of the nature of the objects. In his idea, the nature of some concepts and imaginations like existence is evident due to plainness because the nature of the existence is plain and the plain things do not feature materiality and separability<sup>(1)</sup> (Sadra, 1981, pp.6&7 and 1984, p.6) Concept of an object: Sadr Al-Mota'allehin believes that the evidentness of an object's concept is due to the popularity and obviousness of that concept. In regard of the inability to offer a formal definition for existence, he states that "the existence cannot be formally defines because the formal definition of an object is due to the popular and known concept thereof meaning that there should be a vivid and obvious identifier whereas the well-known example of the existence is unavailable<sup>(3)</sup>" (Sadra, 1981: 1-25 and 1984:6).



Of course, besides plainness, the nature also explicitly indicates the plainness of a concept in some of the cases, including in the plainness of the concept of existence (Sadra, 1975, p.10). It appears that we will face this question by ascribing the theory of plainness to Sadra that if the plainness is viewed as the scale of evidentness, its prerequisite is that many of the evident concepts like the evident concepts perceived by the internal and external senses should be excluded from the domain of the evident things (Hosseinzadeh, 2011, p.193); now, are Sadra's statements consistent with the absence of evidentness in the sensory concepts or not? In response to this question, it can be accepted that Sadra has presented two kinds of utterance in this regard. In defining movement, he accepts the sensory evidentness (Sadra, 1981, 3/22) but, in criticizing Sheikh Eshragh who asserts that the sensory concepts such as blackness and whiteness are evident due to the plainness (Sohrewardi, 1993, 2/105), he does not accept the plainness and makes a distinction between the existential identities of the tangibles and their conceptual considerations and states that the tangibles are undefinable in the first respect because of being existential identities but they are also undefinable in the second respect which holds that they are abstract concepts hence non-evident (see also Sadra, 2013, pp.392-393).

Based on the prior discussions, a distinction should be made between the details and the generalities in such a way that a general concept might be evidently imaginable in its generality by the assistance of the senses but it might need thought and ideation in regard of the imagination of its details. In explaining Abhari's Hedāyah, he states that "the intellect conceives the concepts by the assistance of the senses and, in this regard, i.e. the consideration of the source of the concept's perception, these concepts are evident (Sadra, 2002, p.104 and Sadra, 1981, 8/203).

Therefore, it has to be stated about the motion and graduality that although the intellect sees the transferring of an object from a place to another by the assistance of the senses in detailed cases and generally figures out what movement is and what turn and graduality is meaning that these concepts are perceived in terms of their source, if we want to perceive these concepts in great details, the intellect needs taking another process meaning that the intellect sees these concepts in compound forms and achieves the combination of its components through detailed perception. The investigation of the collection of the words by Mulla Sadra gets us to this conclusion that the existential truths are beyond the limits of the discussion on evident things because these truths are perceivable by observation of the presence and knowledge by presence but the nature of the concepts is evident in case of being plain.

The investigation of Descartes's words indicated that he also realizes plain things as evident. In response to this question that why should we accept the veracity of some of the concepts, he resorts to the clarity and distinctness of a concept. "Furthermore, we need to know that all the things we imagine with clarity and distinction are true in the same way we imagine them" (Descartes, 1997, p.24). After discovering the cornerstone of the certitude, Descartes introduces distinction and clarity as a general maxim based on which one can expand his or her recognition (Descartes, 1997, pp.51-53).

But what concepts are clear and distinct? It was reminded before that the concepts reached by intellectual intuition are clear and distinct from his perspective but why are the concepts discovered through intellectual intuition clear and distinct?

It seems that plainness is more consistent amongst the presented criteria with Descartes's perspective<sup>(4)</sup>. Descartes stats that "some of the perceptions are so clear and vivid and,



simultaneously, so simple [or plain] that they cannot be thought never without the belief in their veracity” (Cottingham, 2011, p.61). In the continuation of the discussion on his four laws, Descartes writes the following words about the question that from where and how he begins the recognition: “and, I easily found out from what things I should start; I mean from what is easier and simpler and more readily understandable and because, amongst all the individuals who have sought truths in the sciences, I have found mathematicians having figured out proofs, i.e. only the mathematicians have obtained documented and evident proofs, I could not doubt that I should start from the very things they have taken into account” (Foroughi, 1965, pp.195-196). In the treatise “the rules of mind’s guidance”, Descartes vividly points out that this method has become one of the main themes of his philosophy and that it is a hierarchical system. He means that the belongings of the cognizance should be ordered in such a way that we can concentrate for a start on subjects that “are the plainest and the easiest things that can be recognized” (Cottingham, 2011, p.271). In axiom five, Descartes states that “if the vague and complex theorems are transformed into simple ones in a step-by-step manner and, then, while starting the research with the intuitive perception of all the theorems that are absolutely simple ... we have succeeded in accomplishing this method” (Descartes, 1997, p.107). For success in this method, Descartes suggests that the objects or the belongings of the cognizance should be divided into two parts of absolute and relative. He introduces the pure and plain essence as being absolute but, of course, he asks the thinker to try to achieve the most absolute by discovering the absolute issues because some of the objects are more absolute from some respects and more relative from some others. He opines that there are a few pure and plain essences that are observed through experience or an internal innate light as a superior not dependent existence. Descartes recommends that these plain things should be taken into consideration because they are realities that are called the plainest of the objects in every unit series” (Descartes, 1997, p.111). Instead of focusing on the vast collection of the forerunners’ teachings and relying on the technical terms, Descartes suggests that one should be in search of plainness, clarity and evidentness (Cottingham, 2011, p.28). In asking question about the idea that whether Descartes realizes the sensory concepts, including the ones perceived through the apparent or internal senses, as being evident or not, his answer is negative. In order to investigate Descartes’s answer, it is necessary seminally to find an answer to this question that how the innate affairs placed inside the human nature can be discovered? His answer is the faculty of intuition.

Descartes points to two trustable mental faculties that seem to be recognizable through the theories and evident things. The first is the intuition that deals with the perception of the evident affairs and the second is deduction which is obliged to perceive the subjective affairs. His intention of intuition is neither the shaky testimony of the evident affairs nor the rules stemming from the faculty of imagination rather the penetrative and clear-cut concept with decisiveness and distinction making its veracity undoubtable at all costs (Descartes, 1997, p.97). Citing Descartes, Cottingham states that “we should doubtfully approach the senses that might seem to us as the most vivid and most non-intermediated chain of the communication with the external realities and, in lieu of the senses, we should trust the truths placed in our ego by the God. The most important of these imaginations is the mathematical concepts that set the ground for the understanding of the continuous physical world” (Cottingham, 2011, p.254).

### *Summarization*



The investigation of the perspectives of Sadra and Descartes shows that these two philosophers have paid attention in search of an unmistakable foundation for cognizance to evidentness (Sadra) or intuition (Descartes) as the essence and robust premise of the mankind's cognizance.

- 1) They have both provided identical answers about what is their intention by evident and intuition and why the evident and intuitive cognizance is necessary for reaching certitude meaning that both of them believe that the mankind's cognizance series should be laid on a robust foundation.
- 2) Mulla Sadra divides science into acquirable knowledge and knowledge by presence and realizes evidentness as capable of being posited in the area of the acquirable sciences whereas Descartes does not pay attention to such a division. Both of the philosophers agree on the dividing of knowledge and science into imaginations and confirmations though Sadra limits this classification to the area of the acquirable science.
- 3) Exercising the method of the pioneers, Sadra divides the acquirable knowledge into evident and subjective but Descartes into intuitive and deductive. Sadra realizes as evident the science wherein there is no need for things other than paying of attention to the certainties but Descartes's intention by self-evident is the very intuition, i.e. the concepts internalized in the human nature and requiring nothing other than attentions to the certainties.
- 4) Descartes and Sadra realize the evident issues as including the purely intellectual concepts and, as Descartes puts it, the intellectual intuition and both of them exclude the sensory issues, including the apparent and internal senses, from the circle of the evident affairs with the difference that Descartes realizes the sensory imaginations as being unreliable while Sadra accepts the realities discoverable through the sensory means due to their being acquired through knowledge by presence but he realizes the abstract concepts as being in need of definition due to their non-plainness.

Amongst the scales offered for evidentness, plainness is the closes criterion and secret of evidentness and it can be attributed to both of them with the difference that Descartes not only realizes the sensory concepts as being non-evident but also non-credible whereas Sadra not only knows them as non-credible but also considers some of them as being generally evident.

## FOOTNOTES

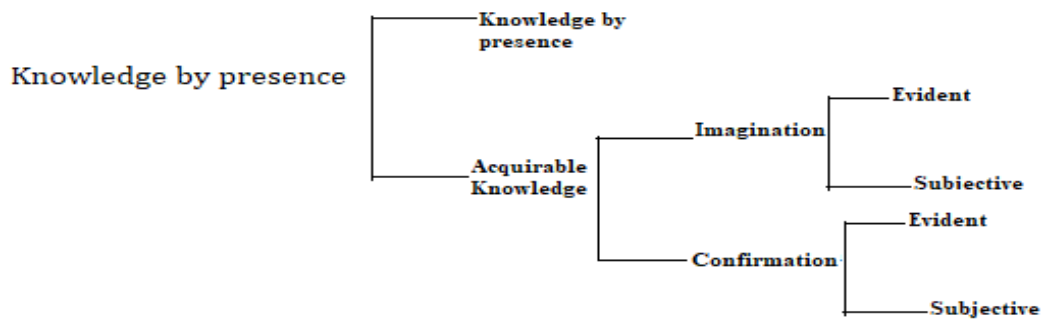
- 1) "Al-Wojūd Lā Yomken Tasavvorohū Bi Al-Had Wa Lā Bi Al-Rasm Wa Lā Bi Sūrah Mosāviyah Ez Tasavvor Al-Shay'e Al-Ayni Ebarat An Hosūl Ma'anāho Wa Enteqālahū Min Hadd Al-Ayn Elā Had Al-Zehn Fa Hāzā Yajri Fi Qair Al-Wojūd Wa Emmā Fi Al-Wojūd Fa Lā Yomken Zāleka Ellā Bi Sarih Al-Moshāhedah Wa Ayn Al-Ayān Dūn Eshārah Al-Hadd Wa Al-Borhān Wa Tafhim Al-Ebārah Wa Al-BAYān Wa Ez Laisa Lahū Wojūd Zehni Fa Laysa Be Kolli Wa Lā Joz'ei Wa Lā Ām Wa Lā Khās Wa Lā Motlaq Wa Lā Moqayyad Bal Yalzemahū Hazā Al-Ashyā'a Bi Hasb Al-Darajāt".
- 2) "Wa Mā Yujad Behi Min Al-Māhiāt Wa Awārezohā Wa Howa Fi Zātehi Amr Basit Lā Yakūna Lahū Jens Wa Lā Fasl" Wa Ammā Ennahū Lā Yomken Ta'arifehi Fa Le Anna Al-Tā'rif Emmā An Yakūna Bi Hadd Aw Bi Rasm Wa Lā Yomken Ta'arifahū Bi Al-Hadd Haitho Lā Jensa Lahū Wa Lā Fasla Lahū Fa Lā Hadd Lahū Emma Al-Awwal Fa Li Annahū Ennamā Yakūn Bi Al-Jens

Wa Al-Fasl Wa Al-Wojūd Li Kūnahū A'am Al-Ashyā'a Lā Jensa Lahū Fa Lā Fasla Lahū Fa Lā Hadd Lahū..."

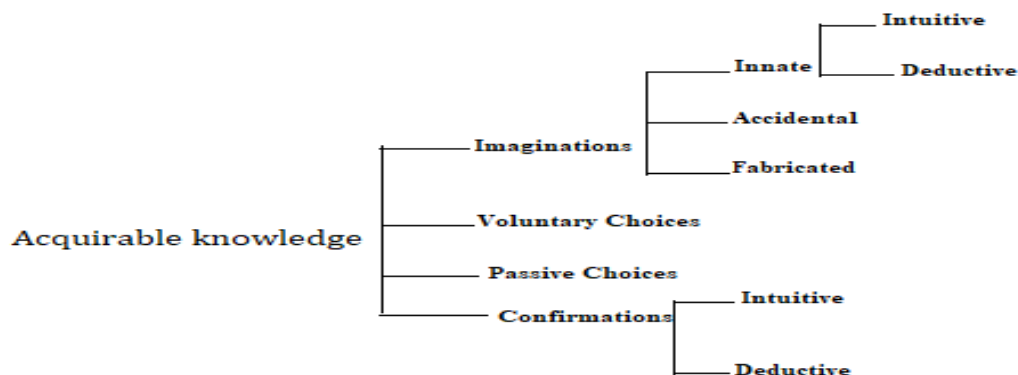
- 3) "Wa Emmā Al-Thāni [Aw Bi Al-Rasm] Fa Li Annahū Ta'arif Bi Al-Orf Wa Lā A'araf Min Al-Wojūd" wa Lā Bi Al-Rasm Ez Lā Yomken Edrākahū Bi Mā Howa Azhar Minho Wa Ashhar Wa Lā Bi Sūrat Mosāviyah Lahū..."
- 4) Descartes makes a distinction between the imaginations themselves and their narrative aspect. He realizes imaginations as mental and unmistakable concepts. However, in regard of the concepts, if attentions are paid only to them and in case that they are not attributed to things beyond them, they cannot be actually considered as being mistaken" (Descartes, 2002, p.54). However, when the narrative aspect is posited, the concepts should be separated from one another. Thus, the discussion on the criterion of evidentness is proposed when the imaginations are considered as signifying the other things.

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From the perspective of Sadra:



From the Perspective of Descartes:



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