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A Comparative Study of Philosophical Theology in the Thought of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i

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Abstract

One of the most significant issues in philosophy is the knowledge of God, which is regarded as the highest form of knowledge. According to Mulla Sadra, knowledge of the Necessary Being is innate, since human beings, in times of hardship, naturally and instinctively turn toward the Ultimate Cause and the One who facilitates all affairs, even if they are not consciously aware of doing so. From the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i, the knowledge of God is likewise innate to human beings. Through their God-given nature (fitrah), individuals affirm the existence of a Creator for the world who is free from all imperfections. Knowledge of Him further requires that one not regard oneself as independent in one's actions, but rather as fundamentally dependent upon Him. This study seeks to provide a comparative evaluation of innate knowledge of God from the perspectives of two prominent Muslim philosophers, Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i, employing a descriptive-analytical approach. Mulla Sadra's account of innate knowledge of God exhibits considerable affinity and conceptual proximity to that of Allameh Tabataba'i, although certain differences may also be discerned. The findings indicate that both thinkers, through their acceptance of such principles as the Primacy of Existence, the existential poverty of contingent beings, and the complete ontological dependence of the effect upon its cause, adopt a largely convergent approach to the innateness of the knowledge of God. Furthermore, both regard the ultimate purpose of creation as humanity's attainment of nearness to God. Nevertheless, they differ in their explanations of this issue, particularly with respect to their interpretations of the Proof of the Truthful (Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn) and their understanding of the affinity between cause and effect.

Keywords: Knowledge of God, Allameh Tabataba'i, Innate Knowledge, Mulla Sadra.

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1. Introduction

The knowledge of God, as the most fundamental branch of ontological inquiry in Islamic philosophy, has always occupied a central position in the thought of Muslim philosophers. Among the issues discussed in this field, the innateness of the knowledge of God is one of the most significant, as it bears a profound connection to humanity's understanding of itself, the world, and the ultimate source of existence. Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy (al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah), grounded in such principles as the Primacy of Existence, the Gradation of Existence, and Substantial Motion, provides a novel framework for interpreting human nature (fiṭrah) and the manner in which human beings attain knowledge of the Divine Truth. Likewise, Allameh Tabataba'i, through his profound reflections on *the Qur'an* and Islamic philosophy, advanced a distinctive account of humanity's intrinsic knowledge of God, emphasizing the monotheistic nature of fiṭrah and a self-oriented approach to understanding the Divine.

The principal question addressed in this study is: What are the points of convergence and divergence between Mulla Sadra's and Allameh Tabataba'i's conceptions of innate or intrinsic—knowledge of God, and how have the particular philosophical principles of each thinker shaped their respective explanations of fiṭrah? Employing a descriptive-analytical method, this article seeks to undertake a comparative examination of these two perspectives and, while elucidating the philosophical foundations of both thinkers, clarify their areas of agreement and disagreement regarding fiṭrah and the knowledge of God.

According to the late Professor Morteza Motahhari, human beings, by virtue of their existential nature, have always been in search of their Lord and have directed their entire attention toward the Almighty. Through reason, they intuitively realize that they exist under the governance of an absolute Lord and Omnipotent Being in whom no deficiency or need can be found (Motahhari, 1998, p. 503).

Within this context, Mulla Sadra advances several noteworthy arguments—including the Primacy of Existence, the doctrine of complete ontological dependence ('ayn al-rabṭ), existential poverty, and the affinity between cause and effect—to demonstrate the innate character of the knowledge of God. Allameh Tabataba'i, likewise a disciple of the school of Transcendent Philosophy, establishes the innate nature of belief in God's existence through his formulation of the Proof of the Truthful (Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn).

A review of the existing literature revealed no study bearing a title identical to that of the present research. Nevertheless, a number of scholarly works may be regarded as relevant antecedents to this study, including *God in Human Life* (Motahhari, 2014), *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Armstrong, 2006), and *An Exposition of the Proofs for the Existence of God* (Javadi Amoli, 2013).

Furthermore, numerous specialized studies have been conducted on the subject of innate knowledge of God. For example, in the article "An Examination of Innate Knowledge and Belief in God Based on the Foundations of Sadrian Philosophy" by Najafi-Afra and Heydari (2015), innate knowledge of God is explained exclusively on the basis of Mulla Sadra's ontological principles, such as the Primacy of Existence and existential poverty, within the framework of immediate and acquired knowledge. Likewise, in works such as "The Theory of Innate Knowledge of God and Innate Religion in the Thought of Allameh Tabataba'i" by Ghafouri-Nejad (2012), Allameh's views concerning the perception of dependence upon the Necessary Being and humanity's innate inclinations are examined independently through a textual-rational approach.

The originality and contribution of the present study lie in its movement beyond one-sided descriptive accounts toward the adoption of a "comparative-structural" approach to analyzing the relationship between these two intellectual systems.

Whereas previous studies have primarily focused on establishing the claim of innateness within each philosophical framework, this article, by defining specific analytical criteria such as the formulation of the Proof of the Truthful, the relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge of God, and the interpretation of complete ontological dependence ('ayn al-rabṭ), investigates the fundamental differences in the modes of reasoning and philosophical formulations employed by the two philosophers. In this way, the study addresses a significant gap in comparative scholarship by demonstrating how ontological foundations shape differing formulations of innate knowledge of God, thereby reexamining this concept not merely as a general principle but as a distinctive element within the unique structure of each philosophical system.

2. Comparative Framework and Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive-analytical method and a comparative approach to examine the philosophical foundations upon which the concept of innate knowledge of God is grounded in the thought of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i, as well as the manner in which each thinker formulates and explains this issue. The comparison undertaken in this article extends beyond a mere exposition of their views and is instead conducted on the basis of the foundational principles that constitute the philosophical systems of these two philosophers.

Accordingly, several key dimensions have been identified as the principal criteria of comparison:

1. Ontological foundations, including the Primacy of Existence, the Gradation of Existence, and existential poverty;
2. The manner in which the dependence of beings upon the Source of existence is explained through the doctrine of complete ontological dependence ('ayn al-rabṭ);

3. The conception of monotheistic *fiṭrah* and its role in making the knowledge of God possible;
4. The place of self-knowledge in the process of attaining knowledge of God;
5. The particular formulation of the Proof of the Truthful (*Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn*) within each philosophical system.

On the basis of these criteria, the views of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i are analyzed and compared in order to clarify how the ontological foundations of each philosopher influence his explanation of innate knowledge of God. Within this framework, Mulla Sadra, through his analysis of the degrees of existence and the ontological dependence of contingent beings, provides the basis for understanding the innate nature of the knowledge of God. Allameh Tabataba'i, by contrast, formulates this issue in a different manner through his emphasis on monotheistic *fiṭrah*, the immediate knowledge of the self, and his distinctive interpretation of the Proof of the Truthful.

Accordingly, the conclusions of this study will likewise return to these comparative criteria in order to elucidate the structural differences between the two formulations at the level of their underlying philosophical foundations.

3. Elucidation of Fundamental Concepts

Several fundamental concepts play a central role in the comparative analysis of the thought of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i undertaken in this study:

Gradation of Existence (*Tashkīk al-Wujūd*). In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the gradation of existence refers to the unity of the reality of existence alongside the diversity of its degrees in terms of intensity and weakness, perfection and imperfection (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 480). Allameh Tabataba'i likewise accepts the principle of gradation, although in his theological formulation he places greater emphasis on the analysis of the reality of existence and its self-evident nature (Tabataba'i, 2008e, vol. 2, p. 30).

Complete Ontological Dependence (*'Ayn al-Rabt*). In Sadrian philosophy, the doctrine of complete ontological dependence signifies that the effect possesses no independence whatsoever from its cause; rather, its entire reality consists in its dependence upon its source (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 480). A comparable notion can also be found in Allameh Tabataba'i's thought through his emphasis on the intrinsic poverty of contingent beings and their subsistence through the Necessary Being (Tabataba'i, 2008e, vol. 2, p. 30).

Existential Poverty. Existential poverty denotes the fact that a contingent being, in the very reality of its existence, depends upon another and stands in need of the Necessary Being. Mulla Sadra analyzes this poverty within the framework of ontological dependence and existential relation (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 461), whereas Allameh Tabataba'i regards it as one of the implications of contingency and the absence of existential independence (Tabataba'i, 2008e, vol. 2, p. 29).

Monotheistic *Fiṭrah*. In the present study, monotheistic *fiṭrah* refers to humanity's innate inclination toward, and general awareness of, the Supreme Origin. However, the two philosophers explain this concept differently. Within Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, it is primarily interpreted in relation to the existential structure of the soul and its process of development and motion (Mulla Sadra, 2008, p. 146). Allameh Tabataba'i, by contrast, understands it in terms of the soul's immediate awareness and the human being's inward inclination toward Absolute Reality (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 16, p. 280).

Accordingly, the comparison between the two perspectives is conducted not merely at the level of terminology, but rather on the basis of their differing interpretations and philosophical understandings of these concepts.

4. The Nature of Knowledge

Various definitions and interpretations of *ma'rifah* (knowledge) have been proposed. In some accounts, *ma'rifah* is defined as the cognition of particulars in contrast to *'ilm* (knowledge), which is regarded as the cognition of universals. Others have considered it synonymous with conception (*taṣawwur*), whereas *'ilm* is associated with assent (*taṣdīq*). Furthermore, some scholars have defined *ma'rifah* as a form of cognition that, after affecting the soul and leaving an impression upon it, is subsequently recognized again in the mind (Sajjadi, 2000, p. 463).

According to Allameh Tabataba'i, "*ma'rifah* is perception following prior knowledge" (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 2, p. 372).

From Mulla Sadra's perspective, complete knowledge is attained when all things become known to us together with the causal relationships that exist among them, whether directly or indirectly (Mulla Sadra, 1983, p. 219).

5. Innate Knowledge of God

The term *fiṭrah* is a verbal noun denoting a particular mode of creation and is generally employed in reference to human beings (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012, p. 63).

Innate knowledge of God may be divided into two categories: acquired (rational) and presential (intuitive). Acquired innate knowledge of God refers to the human capacity to recognize the existence of God through the exercise of an innate, God-given intellect. With only a modest degree of reflection, one can arrive at the knowledge of God's existence without the need for complex demonstrations or extensive intellectual effort. Presential innate knowledge of God, by contrast, refers to the profound and intrinsic bond that human beings possess with their Creator by virtue of their existential constitution. In the depths of their being, they experience a form of immediate and intuitive awareness of God (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012, p. 75).

Accordingly, within the framework of innate knowledge of God, human beings are capable of recognizing God's existence effortlessly through acquired innate knowledge and of experiencing His presence in the depths of their being through presential innate knowledge (Motahhari, 1998, vol. 4, p. 40). Presential innate knowledge of God, or what may be termed the *fiṭrah* of the heart, signifies that human beings, by virtue of their spiritual constitution and through the faculties of the heart and soul, directly perceive the existence of God and maintain an inner relationship with Him (Motahhari, 1998, vol. 6, p. 934).

As illustrated in Figure 1, innate knowledge of God may be understood in two forms: presential and acquired.

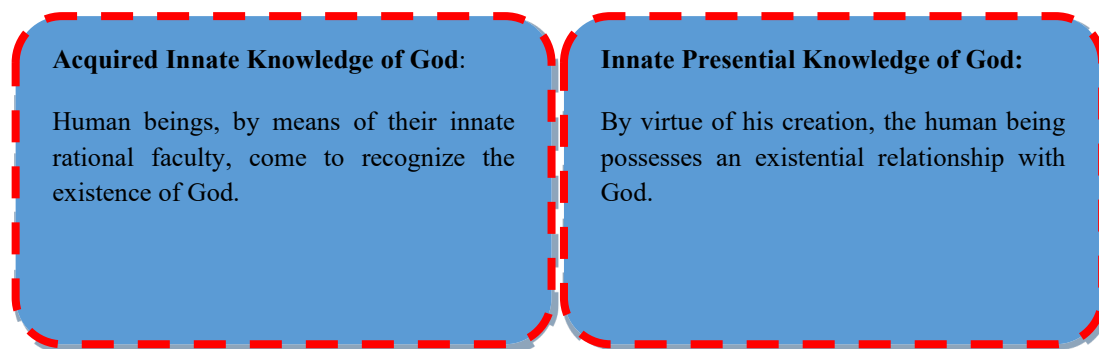


Figure 1: Dividing Innate Theology Into Two Structures: Presence and Acquisition

6. Innate Knowledge of God in the Thought of Mulla Sadra

Knowledge of God the Exalted is an innate matter, for human beings, in times of hardship and adversity, instinctively and often unconsciously turn toward the Cause of Causes and the One who relieves difficulties, placing their trust in Him (Mulla Sadra, 1999, pp. 22–23).

Knowledge of God must precede the knowledge of all other things, for He is the One who manifests all beings and is the source of the entire chain of existence. He is therefore referred to as the Light of Lights (*Nūr al-Anwār*). Since God is the principle of manifestation for all existent things, He must be the most evident of beings and the most radiant of all lights (Lahiji, 2007, p. 594).

If the lower form ascends by the ladder of knowledge It becomes one with its very origin.
(Hedayat, 1961)

Knowledge of God the Exalted and recognition of Him, which consists in affirming His existence, also bears witness to His unity, as He Himself declares: “Allah bears witness that there is no deity except Him” (*Qur’an* 3:18) (Hosseini Ardakani, 1996, p. 623). Furthermore, knowledge of God, which serves as the means to attaining true happiness or rather constitutes true happiness itself and the Absolute Good—is superior to and more exalted than all other forms of knowledge (Mulla Sadra, 2002, p. 58). In other words, from Mulla Sadra’s perspective, that which secures genuine human felicity is the attainment of profound knowledge of the Divine Essence. Such knowledge surpasses all other sciences and guides human beings toward authentic happiness and ultimate goodness.

It should also be noted that God cannot be known in a manner fully commensurate with His reality, for He occupies the highest degree and ultimate limit of perfection, whereas our finite cognitive faculties are incapable of comprehending infinite perfection (Hosseini Ardakani, 1996, p. 590). Moreover, the more our knowledge of the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) increases, the greater our longing for Him becomes, giving rise to intensified striving and spiritual movement. As a result, ever deeper dimensions of divine knowledge are disclosed to us (Mulla Sadra, 2002, pp. 117–118).

7. Innate Knowledge of God in the Thought of Allameh Tabataba’i

Reflection upon God is innate to human beings, and there exists an inverse relationship between the knowledge of God and materialism. The truth of the matter is that knowledge of God does not deprive human beings of material concerns; rather, excessive immersion in material pursuits is the principal factor that distances individuals from their divine nature (*fiṭrah*) (Tabataba’i, 2008a, p. 286).

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) stated: “Every child is born upon *fiṭrah*, that is, upon the knowledge that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, is his Creator” (Kolayni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 13).

Accordingly, *fiṭrah* refers to the recognition and knowledge of God and the affirmation that He is one’s Creator. *The Qur’an* likewise states: “And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will surely say: Allah” (*Qur’an* 39:38) (Tabataba’i, 1995, vol. 8, p. 428).

Moreover, evidence of religion and knowledge of God can be found even in the archaeological remains of early human societies. Such evidence suggests that they possessed belief in and commitment to a reality beyond the material

world. This indicates that the knowledge of God is innate to human beings and that, by virtue of their God-given nature, they affirm the existence of God as the Creator of the universe (Tabataba'i, 2008b, p. 66). This is because God is the source of all external existents in the world, and without Him nothing would come into existence. Likewise, the knowledge of God serves as the foundation of all forms of intellectual knowledge, for without knowledge of Him, nothing can truly be known (Tabataba'i, 1955, p. 29).

In other words, human beings living in this world often become absorbed in everyday concerns and material pursuits, continually seeking the fulfillment of worldly desires and aspirations. Yet if they apprehend God in accordance with the requirements of their divine nature, they will be able to distinguish the path of felicity from that of misery and thereby attain salvation.

The first question that arises in this context concerns the relationship between the knowledge of God and religion or religiosity. The answer is that the knowledge of God constitutes the first stage of religion, for one who has not come to know God has not yet entered into religion. Thus, the knowledge and recognition of God represent the initial step on the path of faith (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 6, p. 136).

Table 1. The Stages of Divine Knowledge

1. Awwal al-dīn ma'rifatuhu — The first step of religion is the knowledge of God.
2. Wa kamāl ma'rifatihi al-taṣdīqu bih — The perfection of the knowledge of God lies in affirming Him.
3. Wa kamāl al-taṣdīqi bih tawhīduh — The perfection of affirming God lies in professing His Oneness.
4. Wa kamāl tawhīdihi al-ikhhlāṣ lahu — The perfection of Divine Unity lies in sincerity toward Him.
5. Wa kamāl al-ikhhlāṣ lahu nafy al-ṣifāt 'anhu — The perfection of sincerity in monotheism lies in negating attributes from Him (Seyyed Razi, 2000, p. 32).

Based on Table 1, it may be inferred that monotheism and the knowledge of God attain purity only when one recognizes God alone as the Eternal Necessary Being, attributes no partner to Him, worships Him with complete sincerity, and follows the Straight Path.

The statement, "The perfection of Divine Unity lies in sincerity toward Him," indicates that when a person reaches this degree of knowledge of God, he comes to realize his own inability to attain a knowledge of God that is fully commensurate with His true reality (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 6, p. 134).

It should also be noted that, for a realistic and rational human being endowed with the capacity for sound reasoning, knowledge of God is an innate and inevitable matter, since the signs of God's existence and power are manifest throughout every aspect of the universe (Tabataba'i, 2008b, p. 199).

This is because wherever human beings turn within the world in which they live, they never transcend the boundaries of this magnificent cosmos. At every moment they encounter its extraordinary beauty and, through it, perceive the greatness of its Creator: "Whatever palm trees you cut down or left standing upon their roots, it was by Allah's permission" (Qur'an 59:5).

Therefore, once knowledge of God has been attained, human beings should not regard themselves as independent or self-sufficient in their actions. Rather, they must recognize that their agency and ownership of action exist only through divine bestowal and authorization (Tabataba'i, n.d., p. 268; Tabataba'i, 2010).

A heart illumined and purified by knowledge, In everything it beholds, first beholds God.
(Shabestari, 2003, Section 4)

8. Commonalities Between Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i in Innate Knowledge of God

In this section, an attempt is made to explore the knowledge of God through an examination of the shared perspectives of these two eminent thinkers concerning innate knowledge of God.

8.1. The Primacy of Existence and Existential Poverty

The Primacy of Existence (Aṣālat al-Wujūd) is one of Mulla Sadra's most significant philosophical doctrines, according to which the entirety of reality constitutes a single unified existence. Likewise, the doctrines of existential poverty and the complete ontological dependence ('ayn al-rabṭ) of beings represent some of his most innovative philosophical contributions. Mulla Sadra and his followers uphold the theory of existential poverty. According to this doctrine, if one asks why an effect is dependent upon a cause, the question itself is misplaced, for the very reason for the effect's dependence is its existential poverty. The effect possesses no essence apart from its need for the cause; indeed, "the effect is nothing but pure relation and dependence upon the cause" (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 461). Allameh Tabataba'i concurs with Mulla Sadra on this point. The discussion that follows further clarifies this issue.

Sadr al-Muta'allihin established the core of his metaphysical system upon the doctrine of the Primacy of Existence. He regards the whole of reality as a single truth that exhibits unity within multiplicity and multiplicity within unity. The remarkable capacity of Transcendent Philosophy to resolve philosophical problems stems precisely from this profound metaphysical insight (Zakavi, 2011, p. 111). From this perspective, the single reality underlying all existence is none other than the Living and Self-Subsisting Existence of God. The existence of all other beings, which is characterized by existential poverty, is nothing but complete ontological dependence upon the Necessary Being. In other words, beings are not merely one side of a relation; rather, their very reality consists in that relation itself.

According to Allameh Tabataba'i as well, "on the basis of the Primacy of Existence, existence is existent in itself, whereas quiddity (māhiyyah) is existent only through existence" (Tabataba'i, 2009a, vol. 1, p. 80). The meaning of this statement is that, according to the doctrine of the Primacy of Existence, existence serves as the intermediary through which existence is attributed to quiddity. By "intermediary" it is meant that when two things are united, the mind metaphorically extends the judgment belonging to one of them to the other. Accordingly, based on the Primacy of Existence, existence is existent primarily and essentially (bi al-dhāt), whereas quiddity is existent only accidentally and derivatively through existence. Quiddity, therefore, is merely a conceptual and non-fundamental consideration.

8.1.1. The Relationship Between the Primacy of Existence, Existential Poverty, and Innate Knowledge of God

According to the philosophical principles of the Primacy of Existence and existential poverty, contingent beings—including human beings—derive their existence from the Necessary Being and possess neither existence nor independence in and of themselves. They come into being only through the bestowal of existence by the life-giving Cause. Within this framework, the effect is existentially dependent upon its cause and, more precisely, is nothing other than a case of complete ontological dependence ('ayn al-rabt) upon it. Such total ontological dependence entails that the effect can never be separated from its cause under any circumstance and is perpetually present before it. This continuous presence, although not necessarily accompanied by a complete comprehension of the reality of the cause, gives rise to a form of presential and intuitive awareness of the life-giving Cause at the very level of the effect's existence. From this perspective, it may be argued that, by virtue of being entirely dependent upon God, the human being possesses a form of innate and presential knowledge of the source of his existence.

Within the framework of Transcendent Philosophy, Sadr al-Muta'allihin establishes a form of human presential knowledge of God through a philosophical exposition of the existential relationship between cause and effect. He maintains that an existential connection between cause and effect is necessarily accompanied by a kind of presential awareness, for whenever a mode of existence is established between two beings and consciousness accompanies that relation, presential knowledge is realized. In Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, the human being, as an effect of God and devoid of existential independence, possesses an existential connection with God. It is precisely by virtue of this connection that presential knowledge of God becomes possible for human beings.

Accordingly, through philosophical arguments grounded in such principles as the Primacy of Existence, existential poverty, and the complete ontological dependence of the effect upon its cause, it is possible to arrive at a form of presential innate knowledge of God rooted in the very existential structure of the human being. Such knowledge of God is not merely the product of discursive reasoning; rather, it arises from humanity's constant presence before its life-giving Cause. It demonstrates that human beings, by virtue of their innate nature (fiṭrah), have always been oriented toward and aware of the source of their existence.

8.2. Attainment of Divine Nearness as the Ultimate Purpose of Creation

Within the intellectual tradition of Muslim philosophers, the question of the ultimate purpose of human creation has always occupied a central place among foundational philosophical discussions. One of the fundamental points of agreement between Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i is their conviction that the ultimate goal of creation is humanity's attainment of nearness to God and the realization of true servitude through the knowledge of Him. In the view of both thinkers, the highest perfection of the human being can be achieved only through an existential and contemplative connection with the Divine Truth (al-Ḥaqq). Human development is thus understood as a movement from imperfection toward absolute perfection and from heedlessness toward presence and spiritual witnessing. Nearness to God is not merely an ethical or religious objective; rather, it constitutes the ontological and existential end of human life, arising from humanity's innate nature and cognitive constitution.

According to Mulla Sadra, the purpose of human creation and the primary reason for the creation of spiritual realities and unseen beings is the knowledge and recognition of God and the attainment of true and complete knowledge of Him (Mulla Sadra, 1999, p. 146). In other words, attaining nearness to God through knowledge of the Divine Essence and through the purification of the soul from blameworthy characteristics constitutes the principal purpose of the creation of the world and the laws governing it (Mulla Sadra, 2002, p. 66).

Similarly, from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i, the ultimate objective of Islamic society is genuine human felicity. A sound intellect employs material desires and worldly inclinations as means for attaining the knowledge of God, and this constitutes supreme happiness and the highest form of tranquility, through which all human faculties attain their fulfillment (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 4, p. 159).

Accordingly, the attainment of true rational felicity represents the goal of Islamic society. Human beings should make use of their bodily faculties only to the extent that such use does not hinder them from attaining knowledge of the Truth (al-Ḥaqq). In this way, the body becomes a ladder through which one ascends toward the Divine Reality (Tabataba'i, 2008d, p. 63).

8.2.1. The Relationship Between Divine Nearness and Innate Knowledge of God

One of the most fundamental mystical and philosophical teachings within the Islamic intellectual tradition is that human beings were created with the purpose of attaining nearness to God and achieving His good pleasure (riḍwān). This station represents a degree of existential perfection that can be attained only through knowledge and recognition of the Divine Truth. According to both Transcendent Philosophy and the thought of Allameh Tabataba'i, nearness to God is not merely a spiritual or psychological state; rather, it signifies the realization of a higher mode of existence in which the human being acquires a deeper existential connection with the source of all being. This connection is grounded in either presential or acquired knowledge of God—a form of knowledge that is rooted in human fiṭrah.

Human fiṭrah, as an existential structure, directs the individual toward absolute perfection. Within this perspective, the knowledge of God is not merely an acquired matter but rather an intrinsic reality embedded within the very being of the human person. Although this reality may become obscured through heedlessness and attachment to worldly concerns, it reveals itself once the veils are removed and attention is directed inward. By virtue of this very fiṭrah, human beings seek divine good pleasure and are naturally inclined toward attaining nearness to God. Consequently, the path leading to divine satisfaction passes through the cultivation of this God-seeking nature and the strengthening of one's knowledge of the Divine Truth.

Accordingly, innate knowledge of God serves not only as an epistemological foundation for affirming the existence of God but also as a vital element in spiritual wayfaring and the attainment of divine nearness. The more this innate knowledge unfolds and flourishes, the greater the possibility of approaching the Divine Presence. From this perspective, innate knowledge of God should be understood not merely as a theoretical principle but also as the driving force behind spiritual development and the realization of the ultimate purpose of human creation.

8.3. Worldliness and Materialism as Obstacles to Knowledge

One of the common themes in the thought of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i is their emphasis on the detrimental effect of worldliness and attachment to material phenomena on the attainment of true knowledge, particularly knowledge of God. Both philosophers maintain that love of the world acts as a veil that prevents the soul from perceiving reality and obstructs its access to higher realms of understanding. In their view, material attachments divert human attention from the inner to the outer, and from meaning to matter, thereby obscuring the God-seeking nature (fiṭrah) beneath the dust of heedlessness. Consequently, purifying the soul from excessive attachment to worldly concerns is regarded as a necessary prerequisite for witnessing reality and attaining pure divine knowledge.

Knowledge of God is innate to human beings, and there exists an inverse relationship between knowledge of the Truth (al-Ḥaqq) and immersion in material concerns. This does not mean that striving to attain knowledge of God necessarily deprives one of material benefits. Rather, it is the preoccupation with materialism and absorption in worldly pleasures that lead to heedlessness of God and estrangement from the knowledge of Him (Tabataba'i, 2008a, p. 286). An important point in this regard is that the primary cause of excessive attachment to material things is the weakness of genuine knowledge of God. This, however, does not imply that individuals should neglect their families or refrain from seeking a livelihood to the extent required by necessity, for such matters are themselves religious obligations (Mulla Sadra, 2002, p. 64).

Human beings should always remain mindful that they have a Lord who is both the Owner and Governor of all affairs, and that they themselves are entirely subject to God's sovereignty. If a person becomes wholly absorbed in material pursuits and devotes all attention to the accumulation of wealth in this transient world, he gradually becomes heedless of God (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 1, p. 198). In other words, so long as one remains immersed in material concerns and worldly

pleasures, one becomes oblivious to the true Object of worship and the real Sovereign of the universe. One forgets that all worldly blessings and pleasures have a Creator and that not even a single leaf falls from a tree except by His will and decree.

8.4. Self-Knowledge as a Path to the Knowledge of God

Within the intellectual systems of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i, self-knowledge is regarded not merely as a prerequisite for understanding human reality, but also as a fundamental bridge leading to the knowledge of God. Emphasizing the well-known tradition, "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord" (man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu), both thinkers maintain that the human soul, as a mirror reflecting Absolute Reality and a manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes, possesses the capacity for direct witnessing and presential awareness of the source of existence. In their view, the deeper human beings penetrate into the dimensions of their own existence, the more profound their understanding becomes of their relationship with the Creator. Reflection upon one's own being thus serves as a prelude to the contemplation of Divine Reality.

Mulla Sadra maintains that knowledge of the Truth (al-Haqq) is attained through the soul and through self-knowledge. He draws considerable inspiration from the tradition, "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord" (Majlesi, 1983, vol. 2, p. 32), and accords it a central place in his thought. Mulla Sadra places the human being at the center of his philosophical vision, for the ultimate purpose behind the creation of all beings, as well as the natural, vegetative, and animal faculties, is in fact realized in the creation of the human being (Mulla Sadra, 1999, p. 299). In other words, human existence undergoes an intensifying movement toward perfection and is capable of transcending the stages of vegetative and animal life in preparation for a higher mode of existence. Such a being directs all efforts toward attaining true knowledge and divine nearness. Accordingly, knowledge and recognition of the self constitute the most beneficial of all forms of knowledge.

From the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i as well, the flourishing of the divine fiṭrah and the attainment of the highest degree of knowledge and understanding are achieved through self-knowledge (Tabataba'i, 2008c, p. 168). Put differently, the clear path to the knowledge of God is attained through spiritual wayfaring and knowledge of the soul, and for one who perseveres upon this path without succumbing to weariness, truth and reality will gradually become manifest (Tabataba'i, 2008c, p. 248; 2008d, p. 89).

Accordingly, "the knowledge of God and self-knowledge cannot be separated from one another, for whoever comes to know his contingent and derivative existence has thereby come to know the true existence of the Self-Sufficient God" (Tabataba'i, 2009b, p. 200).

Many have fallen at the threshold of the Beloved's lane, Yet none has risen from that threshold as I have fallen (Savoji, 1992, Qaṣīdah 15)

If human beings carefully contemplate their surroundings, they will realize that everything around them serves as a sign of God's existence. Human beings ought to know God in every circumstance and throughout their spiritual lives (Tabataba'i, 2009c, vol. 1, p. 41).

According to Mulla Sadra, human beings occupy different levels and degrees in their knowledge of the Truth (al-Haqq). Some are immersed in the material world and encompassed by the attributes and accidents of nature. Qur'anic verses that invite people to reflect upon creation, such as: "Do they not look at the camels, how they were created?" (Qur'an 88:17), describe the condition of such individuals.

Others possess an understanding of the principle of the Unity of Existence, yet still reason from multiplicity to unity. Verses such as:

"We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth" (Qur'an 41:53), correspond to their spiritual state.

A third group perceives God through the heart and the inner eye of the soul, listening attentively to the call of Truth. Verses such as:

"And within yourselves—do you not see?" (Qur'an 51:21), And
 "Allah bears witness that there is no deity except Him" (Qur'an 3:18),
 describe their rank and spiritual station (Mulla Sadra, 2008, p. 145).

Based on Sadr al-Muta'allihin's explanation above, and as illustrated in Figure 2, human perception of the knowledge of the Truth in Transcendent Philosophy may be explained in terms of three distinct levels.

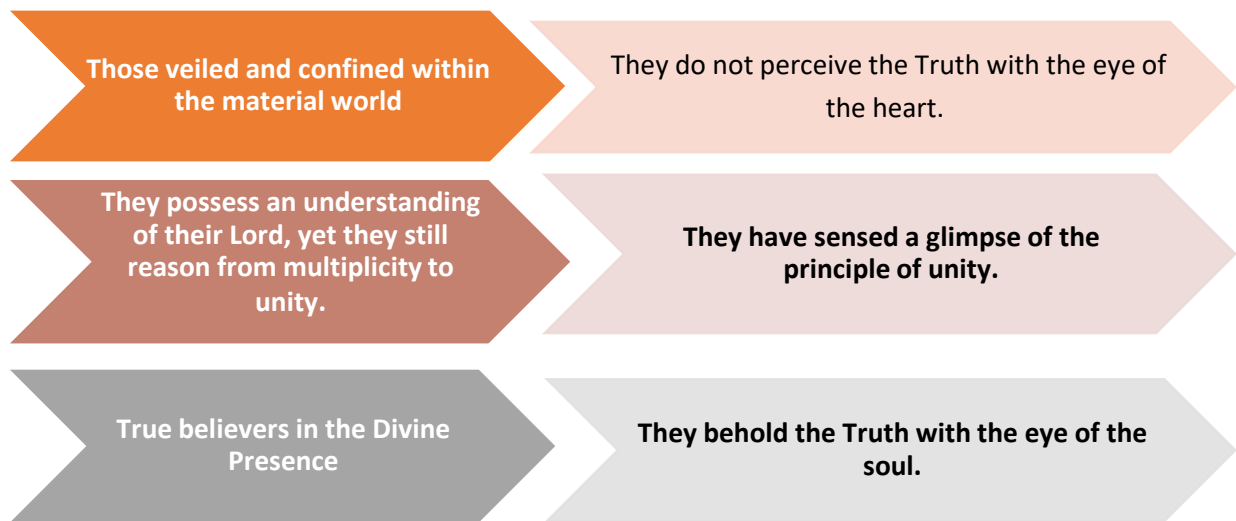


Figure 2. Levels of Human Perception of the Knowledge of the Truth in Transcendent Philosophy

Furthermore, anyone who lacks knowledge of the self cannot attain knowledge of God; and one who fails to know God is no different from the beasts, for the reality of the soul is itself a luminous truth. Therefore, whoever remains ignorant of his own self will have no share in the life of that higher and authentic realm (Hosseini Ardakani, 1996, p. 33). It is in this sense that 'Attar writes:

Let this counsel suffice you in both worlds: Never let a breath pass from your soul devoid of God
Remember the Truth so constantly and so deeply That you become lost whenever His remembrance fades
(Attar, 2007, Section 22)

Knowledge of the self, in addition to being a means for the flourishing of the divine *fiṭrah*, the attainment of knowledge of the Truth (al-Ḥaqq), and the realization of spiritual perfections, is also highly esteemed by God and His Messenger (Tabataba'i, 2009b, p. 242). Indeed, the path of self-knowledge is the path through which human beings may attain genuine knowledge. Along this path, individuals must direct their entire attention toward God and remove all obstacles that hinder their spiritual progress (Tabataba'i, 2008f, vol. 2, p. 59).

From an ontological perspective, therefore, self-knowledge is not limited to awareness of an inner reality; it also constitutes a means of discovering the existential structure of the human being. When the human soul apprehends itself through presential knowledge, it simultaneously encounters a form of dependence and existential non-independence, since a contingent being is not self-subsistent by its very nature. In Transcendent Philosophy, this dependence is explained through the doctrines of existential poverty (*faqr wujūdī*) and the complete ontological dependence of contingent beings (*'ayn al-rabṭ*). Consequently, the soul's self-awareness may also be understood as an implicit awareness of its existential dependence.

Similarly, through his analysis of contingency and the intrinsic neediness of beings, Allameh Tabataba'i demonstrates that the soul's awareness of its own existential need can provide the basis for the intellect's attention to the Necessary Being. Accordingly, the transition from self-knowledge to the knowledge of God is not merely an ethical recommendation; rather, it is the result of a philosophical analysis of the existential structure of the human being.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the stage following self-knowledge is the knowledge of God, which, according to Mulla Sadra, consists of three levels: knowledge of the Divine Essence, knowledge of the Divine Attributes, and knowledge of the Divine Acts. This is because "the reality of the Necessary Being and the identity of the source of existence are simple, and, in terms of the intensity of luminosity and manifestation, infinite; His reality is identical with individuation and determination" (Lahiji, 2007, p. 111).

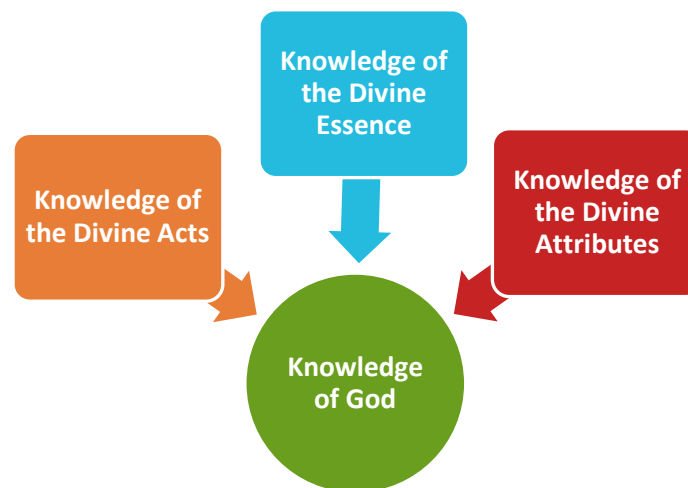


Figure 3. The Three Levels of Self-Knowledge According to Mulla Sadra

8.5. The Relationship Between Self-Knowledge and Innate Knowledge of God

From a philosophical perspective, the human soul is initially potential and imperfect, possessing within itself the capacity to move toward absolute perfection. This inherent potential enables human beings, throughout their earthly lives, to overcome their existential deficiencies through a process of intensification and development and to prepare themselves for the attainment of true life. In other words, worldly life is understood not merely as a means of achieving spiritual perfection in this world, but also as a path leading to the life of the Hereafter and the realization of ultimate reality. According to Transcendent Philosophy, the more deeply individuals become aware of themselves and attain a profound understanding of their own existential reality, the more accurately they are able to comprehend their relationship with the Creator.

Within this framework, self-knowledge and knowledge of the soul function as indispensable stages in the realization of innate knowledge of God. Once individuals attain a genuine understanding of their own nature and *fiṭrah*, they naturally come to recognize their state of servitude before the Creator of existence. Awareness of one's own imperfection and incapacity draws one toward God, for one clearly realizes that the removal of existential deficiencies and the attainment of the perfection one seeks require a source capable of remedying those shortcomings. This profound awareness of one's incompleteness leads human beings to seek a Divine Object of worship through whose remembrance, worship, and nearness they may overcome their inner deficiencies and attain true perfection.

Accordingly, the process of self-knowledge may be understood as a path of purification and the unfolding of human *fiṭrah*, through which innate knowledge of God naturally manifests itself within the human being. The more profound one's knowledge of oneself becomes, the deeper one's awareness grows of the innate need for God. Consequently, the relationship between the human being and the Creator transcends the level of purely conceptual knowledge and becomes an inward and presential experience, in which one perceives the genuine spiritual presence of God within one's life.

9. Differences Between Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i in Innate Knowledge of God

Despite the shared philosophical and theological foundations of Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i, significant differences exist in their approaches to the question of innate knowledge of God. These differences lead to distinct interpretations of the nature and foundations of humanity's innate awareness of the Divine. The following discussion examines these points of divergence in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how each thinker conceptualizes innate knowledge of God.

9.1. Difference in the Conception of *Fiṭrah*: An Inner Inclination or an Existential Bond?

One of the most noteworthy distinctions between Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabataba'i concerning innate knowledge of God lies in their respective understandings of *fiṭrah*. Mulla Sadra tends to interpret *fiṭrah* primarily as a mode of existential connection with the source of being. In his view, *fiṭrah* is an objective and presential reality arising from the soul's existential relationship with its cause, namely God. By contrast, Allameh Tabataba'i, while acknowledging the ontological dimensions of *fiṭrah*, places greater emphasis on its inward and psychological aspect, interpreting it as an innate disposition and natural tendency within human beings to know and worship God. This difference gives rise to two distinct conceptions of the relationship between human beings and God within the structure of human *fiṭrah*: one emphasizing existential connectedness and the other highlighting conscious inclination and inner attraction.

Mulla Sadra understands *fiṭrah* not merely as an inner tendency but as a mode of existence itself, particularly through the doctrine of the complete ontological dependence (*‘ayn al-rabṭ*) of contingent beings upon the Necessary Being. According to his view, contingent beings possess no independent existence of their own, and their relationship to God resembles that of a ray to the sun. For this reason, presential knowledge of God is potentially available to every human being. In *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyyah*, he writes:

“The effect cannot be independent in its essence; rather, it is in its very reality a relation to the cause, and its knowledge of the cause is presential knowledge” (Mulla Sadra, 1983, p. 352).

Within this framework, innate knowledge of God possesses a predominantly ontological character. Knowledge of God is embedded within the very structure of human existence, even if individuals are not consciously attentive to it.

Allameh Tabataba’i, however, conceives of *fiṭrah* as a combination of presential awareness and an innate inclination toward God. While accepting the principles of the Primacy of Existence and the complete ontological dependence of contingent beings, he places greater emphasis than Mulla Sadra on the dimension of humanity’s innate tendency toward God. In his commentary on the verse, “The *fiṭrah* of Allah upon which He has created mankind” (Qur’an 30:30)

he writes: “What is meant by *fiṭrah* in this verse is the innate and natural knowledge of, and inclination toward, the Lordship of God; it is not merely presential knowledge, but also heartfelt submission and inward inclination” (Tabataba’i, 1995, vol. 16, p. 280).

According to Allameh’s perspective, the divine *fiṭrah* possesses two dimensions: an immediate and self-evident awareness of God’s existence, and an intrinsic tendency toward worship and servitude. This innate inclination constitutes the very foundation of religiosity and spirituality.

9.1.1. The Relationship Between the Conception of *Fiṭrah* and Innate Knowledge of God

The way in which *fiṭrah* is understood has a direct impact on the explanation of innate knowledge of God, since *fiṭrah* is regarded as the primary source of humanity’s knowledge of and inclination toward God. If *fiṭrah* is understood, as Mulla Sadra maintains, as an existential and presential bond between the soul and the source of being, then innate knowledge of God is explained as a form of presential and intuitive knowledge. In this view, human beings are perpetually present before God by virtue of their complete ontological dependence (*‘ayn al-rabṭ*) upon Him. Even when they are not consciously aware of this reality, their existential relation to the Divine Source remains intact and operative.

By contrast, if *fiṭrah* is interpreted, following Allameh Tabataba’i, as an inner inclination and natural tendency toward the Creator, then innate knowledge of God is understood primarily as an intrinsic readiness for the acquired knowledge (*ḥuṣūlī*) of God. In this case, human beings are able, through reflection upon their own inner nature and with only minimal contemplation, to arrive at an awareness of God. Such awareness is not grounded principally in direct presential intuition but rather in a natural, God-given cognitive disposition. Consequently, differing interpretations of *fiṭrah* lead to distinct accounts of both the origin and the nature of innate knowledge of God.

In this context, the question of self-knowledge plays a crucial role in explaining the possibility of innate knowledge of God. Within Islamic philosophy, self-knowledge is not merely a form of acquired cognition; rather, it constitutes a mode of presential knowledge. This is because, in its awareness of itself, the soul finds no intermediary between the knower and the known, but instead knows itself through its own existential presence. Human awareness of the self is therefore, in reality, awareness of a being whose very existence is dependent upon and sustained by the source of all being.

According to Mulla Sadra, the soul, at its own existential level, is nothing but poverty and dependence in relation to Absolute Reality. Consequently, this presential awareness of existential dependence can provide the basis for turning one’s attention toward the source of existence. Similarly, Allameh Tabataba’i, by emphasizing the soul’s presential knowledge of itself and its awareness of its own existential need, explains how one may move from self-knowledge to the knowledge of God. Thus, in both philosophical systems, self-knowledge is not merely an ethical recommendation; rather, it serves as an epistemological foundation for explaining the very possibility of knowledge of God.

9.2. The Proof of the Truthful (*Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn*)

One of the most rigorous and refined rational arguments for demonstrating the existence of God is the Proof of the Truthful (*Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn*). The distinctive feature of this proof is that the existence of God is established solely through reflection upon the reality of existence itself, without recourse to created beings or the external world as intermediaries. Through an ontological and rational analysis, it becomes evident that the reality of existence—which manifests itself in varying degrees throughout the cosmos—ultimately culminates in a level of being whose existence is identical with its essence and is entirely independent of any cause. This reality is none other than the Necessary Being, namely God Most High. For this reason, the Proof of the Truthful occupies a unique position among the various arguments for the existence of God due to its depth, purity, and philosophical rigor.

Allameh Tabataba'i's formulation of the Proof of the Truthful is founded upon two principal premises:

First Premise: The reality of existence, which constitutes the very actuality of things and their objective reality, is the unrestricted existence and effusion bestowed by God upon contingent beings. Such existence admits no non-existence, for every real entity excludes its own negation. Existence cannot accept non-existence, and non-existence cannot accept existence, since their conjunction would entail a contradiction.

Second Premise: Since this effused reality of existence cannot admit non-existence, it must exist by virtue of itself. Therefore, the existence that is inherently immune to non-existence is necessarily existent in itself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*), and this is precisely what is meant by God (Tabataba'i, 1983, p. 268).

Mulla Sadra, however, presents the Argument of the Truthful in a different manner. According to him, the objective reality of existence, while fundamentally one, also possesses multiplicity. Existence is a single and simple reality whose distinctions are not essential but arise from differences in intensity and weakness, perfection and deficiency. The highest degree of this reality is a level beyond which no greater perfection can be conceived, namely Absolute Perfect Existence, which is God Almighty. Every deficient being requires a more perfect being in order to attain completion. Hence, existence is either self-sufficient—in which case it is the Necessary Existent or intrinsically dependent upon another—in which case it is a contingent existent (Mulla Sadra, 2001, p. 136).

Based on the foregoing discussion, both philosophers agree that the existence of God can be demonstrated through the Argument of the Truthful in a manner consistent with innate knowledge (*fiṭrī* cognition). Both maintain that the effect is essentially dependent upon its cause and that contingent beings possess an intrinsic dependence upon the Necessary Existent. Accordingly, both regard existence itself as the path leading to God.

Their disagreement, however, concerns the structure of the argument. From Tabataba'i's perspective, the Argument of the Truthful proceeds directly from the Necessary Existent to the Necessary Existent and does not establish God through contingent beings. He considers this proof the most direct path to the knowledge of God and sufficient, in itself, for recognizing the Divine Essence, Attributes, and Acts. Mulla Sadra, by contrast, maintains that reflection upon contingent beings immediately reveals the necessity of a cause more perfect than themselves, a cause capable of bestowing existence upon them. Consequently, merely attending to contingent existence is sufficient to arrive at the existence of God without recourse to complex philosophical demonstrations. Thus, unlike Tabataba'i, Mulla Sadra establishes the Necessary Existent through contingent existence.

In other words, for Mulla Sadra, the Necessary Existent represents the ultimate degree of existential intensity and absolute ontological richness, constituting the endpoint of the intellect's ascent. His argument moves from contingent beings, which possess weaker modes of existence, toward the Necessary Existent, who possesses the highest degree of being. Although the argument employs rational concepts, it nevertheless reflects a gradual ontological ascent.

Tabataba'i, on the other hand, offers a formulation in which attention is directed from the outset to existence itself as a self-evident and undeniable reality. He then demonstrates that this reality, precisely because it cannot admit non-existence, must be the Necessary Existent. Since the reality of existence cannot become non-existent, it is necessarily existent. In this formulation, there is no inferential movement from effect to cause or from contingency to necessity; rather, the conclusion follows directly from the reality of existence itself.

This significant difference demonstrates that, although both philosophers employ a proof bearing the same name, their epistemological and ontological orientations differ substantially. Mulla Sadra's formulation is primarily concerned with the structure of reality, whereas Tabataba'i adopts a more analytical and logical approach to the concept of existence.

More precisely, the distinction between the two formulations can be identified at three levels:

First, regarding the starting point of the argument: Tabataba'i begins with the reality of existence *qua* existence, without incorporating the hierarchy of contingent beings into the structure of the proof. In contrast, Mulla Sadra's argument relies fundamentally upon the analysis of existential gradation and the relationship between stronger and weaker degrees of being.

Second, regarding the structure of the proof: Tabataba'i's formulation is analytical and grounded in the impossibility of non-existence with respect to existence itself. Mulla Sadra's formulation, however, is based on the doctrine of gradation (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) and the ontological poverty and dependence of lower degrees of existence upon the Perfect Reality.

Third, regarding its relation to innate knowledge of God: For Tabataba'i, the innate character of God-knowledge derives from the self-evidence of existence itself. For Mulla Sadra, however, this innate knowledge arises from the immediate awareness of the dependence and essential relatedness (*'ayn al-rabt*) of contingent beings to the Source of Being.

Accordingly, the difference between these two formulations is not merely verbal; rather, it is rooted in their distinct ontological foundations and in their respective analyses of the reality of existence within their philosophical systems (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of the Argument of the Truthful in the Thought of Mulla Sadra and Allamah Tabataba'i

Criterion	Mullā Ṣadrā	ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī
Basis of the Argument	Gradation (tashkīk) and hierarchy of existence	Analysis of the reality of existence
Starting Point	Contingent and graded beings	The self-evident concept/reality of existence
Method	Ontological and hierarchical approach	Conceptual and intuitive analysis of existence
Role of Intermediaries	Contingent beings serve as intermediaries leading to the Necessary Being	The Necessary Being is identical with the very reality of existence

9.2.1. The Relationship Between the Argument of the Truthful and Innate Knowledge of God

The Argument of the Truthful (Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn), through its rational analysis of the reality of existence, leads the human intellect directly to the Necessary Existent without requiring inference from effects, contingent beings, or external phenomena. The distinctive feature of this argument lies in the fact that it begins with an internal and abstract reflection on the very concept of existence itself, a concept that is self-evident and immediately intelligible to the human mind, requiring neither definition nor empirical verification. When the intellect examines the different degrees of existence and recognizes that being manifests itself in varying levels of intensity and perfection, it is ultimately led to a level at which existence is identical with essence and admits neither deficiency nor dependence. This highest degree of existence is the Necessary Existent (Wājib al-Wujūd). Consequently, propositions such as “God exists” or “the First Cause exists” may be regarded as secondary self-evident truths that become manifest through careful reflection upon the primary notions of existence and reality.

From this perspective, the Argument of the Truthful is not merely a rational proof; it also reveals the innate dimension of God-knowledge. The rational nature (fiṭrah) of the human being is such that it acknowledges the existence of God with the least possible mediation. Although individuals may differ in the manner in which they articulate or analyze this truth, they share an innate inclination toward recognizing a perfect, self-sufficient, and absolute being. The Argument of the Truthful translates this innate inclination into the language of reason and logical demonstration, elevating it from an implicit and intuitive awareness to an explicit and philosophically articulated understanding.

Accordingly, this argument may be viewed as a manifestation of the harmony between reason and fiṭrah in the process of knowing God. It demonstrates that knowledge of God is not imposed upon the human mind from outside; rather, it is rooted in the very rational and existential structure of the human being. In this sense, the Argument of the Truthful serves as one of the clearest philosophical expressions of innate God-consciousness, showing how the human intellect, when faithfully reflecting upon the reality of existence, naturally arrives at the recognition of the Necessary Existent.

9.3. Causal Homogeneity Between Cause and Effect

One of the fundamental principles underlying the explanation of causality is the principle of the homogeneity (sankhiyyah) of cause and effect. Both Mulla Sadra and Allamah Tabataba'i subscribe to this principle, although they articulate and develop it in somewhat different ways. Drawing upon the doctrine of the gradation of existence (tashkīk al-wujūd), Mulla Sadra regards homogeneity as a self-evident and necessary principle, since a cause cannot bestow what it does not itself possess. Consequently, an existential cause must possess the perfections of its effect in a more intense and complete manner. Tabataba'i accepts this principle as well, but further develops it by emphasizing the perpetual dependence of the effect upon its cause. He maintains that the effect is nothing but “poverty and relation” (ʿayn al-faqr wa al-rabt) with respect to its cause and remains dependent upon the continuous bestowal of existence. Were this existential effusion to cease even momentarily, the effect itself would cease to exist. This point constitutes a subtle distinction between Tabataba'i's perspective and that of Mulla Sadra, and it serves as the basis for a fundamental critique of the deistic conception of a detached or inactive creator.

Mulla Sadra's treatment of the homogeneity of cause and effect is particularly noteworthy because he distinguishes between existential causes and material or preparatory causes. Concerning existential causes, he writes: «The homogeneity between cause and effect is among the self-evident principles and requires no demonstration, for human beings clearly perceive through both inner and outer experience that a certain correspondence and affinity exists between cause and effect. Nevertheless, the homogeneity found in existential causes differs from that found in preparatory causes. In the case of existential causes, since the cause bestows existence upon the effect, it must itself possess that existence in a more perfect manner; for the bestowal of something that one does not possess is impossible (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 480).

Accordingly, the homogeneity between an existential cause and its effect signifies that the cause possesses the perfection manifested in the effect in a higher and more complete degree. If the cause did not intrinsically possess that

perfection, it could not confer it upon the effect.

With regard to preparatory and material causes, however, Mulla Sadra adopts a different position. He maintains that such causes merely provide the conditions or appropriate context for the emergence of an effect and bring about certain changes within it. Since not every factor can produce every kind of change, a form of correspondence or suitability may be said to exist between them. Yet this homogeneity is not equivalent to the profound ontological affinity that characterizes the relationship between an existential cause and its effect. In such cases, homogeneity cannot be established through rational demonstration but can only be recognized through experience. By contrast, existential causes exhibit a unique and fundamental form of homogeneity that reveals the deep interconnectedness and coherence of reality. An example would be the relationship between physical exercise and bodily health, where the cause merely prepares the conditions for a particular outcome rather than directly bestowing existence itself (Mulla Sadra, 2012, p. 480).

In demonstrating the homogeneity between cause and effect, Allamah Tabataba'i begins with the philosophical doctrines of the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) and the gradation of existence. Through these principles, he seeks first to clarify the relationship between agent and act and then to explain the nature of their connection. The principal foundations upon which his account rests may be summarized as follows:

a) According to the doctrine of the primacy of existence, what truly belongs to the effect is poverty, dependence, and need. In other words, a real existential relationship exists between the cause and its effect, and the two poles of this relationship are the existence of the cause and the existence of the effect. The existential dependence and poverty of the effect arise from its very nature as a contingent being (Tabataba'i, 2008f, Vol. 2, p. 29).

b) Furthermore, within this relational structure there exists what philosophers call a "relational existence" (*wujūd rābit*). Need, dependence, and poverty belong essentially to the existence of the effect, which is intrinsically dependent upon its cause. If this dependence were not intrinsic, then need would merely be an accidental attribute superadded to the essence of the effect, implying that the effect would be self-sufficient in itself. Such self-sufficiency, however, is incompatible with being an effect. Consequently, when the existence of the effect is considered in relation to its cause, it is nothing other than a relational existence (*wujūd rābit*) and a being that exists through another (*mawjūd fī ghayrihi*) (Tabataba'i, 2008f, Vol. 2, p. 30).

c) A complete agent is ontologically prior and existentially superior to its act, since the act is the effect of the agent and occupies a lower rank of being. The effect is nothing but relation and dependence upon its cause, deriving its existence entirely from it. The agent not only brings the effect into existence and sustains it, but also encompasses it existentially. The priority of the agent over the act, in terms of both rank and existence, is a self-evident and innate principle grounded in the dependence of the act's existence upon the existence of its agent (Tabataba'i, 2008f, Vol. 2, p. 30).

From the foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that an intrinsic homogeneity must exist between cause and effect. By intrinsic homogeneity, it is meant that since every cause bestows existence and the perfections of the effect upon it, the cause itself must possess those perfections in a higher and more eminent degree. Consequently, the weaker degrees of perfection are found in the effect, whereas the stronger and more complete degrees belong to the cause.

Accordingly, both philosophers agree on the principle of causal homogeneity. There is no doubt that not every effect can proceed from any arbitrary cause; causality presupposes a specific relationship between cause and effect. This relationship is among the self-evident principles of reason and does not require formal demonstration. Their difference, however, lies in the manner in which they interpret and develop this principle.

Mulla Sadra regards the homogeneity of cause and effect as an essential implication of causality itself. Within the domain of existential causation, he understands homogeneity to mean that the cause possesses the perfections manifested in the effect in a more intense and complete mode. A cause cannot bestow what it does not possess. This interpretation is rooted in his doctrines of the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) and the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*). Therefore, every cause must possess an existential affinity with its effect.

Allamah Tabataba'i, while fully accepting the Sadrian foundations of the primacy of existence, the gradation of existence, and relational existence (*wujūd rābit*), offers a more detailed analysis of the perpetual dependence of the effect upon the cause. He emphasizes that the causal relationship is not limited to the moment of origination; rather, the effect remains dependent upon its cause throughout the entirety of its existence and at every moment of its being. Without the continuous bestowal of existence by the cause, the effect could never subsist. This position stands in clear contrast to deistic theories that regard God merely as a first cause who withdraws from the world after creation.

In summary, Mulla Sadra places greater emphasis upon the existential homogeneity between cause and effect, whereas Allamah Tabataba'i stresses the continuous dependence of the effect upon the cause and its status as *'ayn al-rabṭ* (pure relation), denying the possibility of even momentary independence. This distinction may be regarded as a significant interpretive development of Transcendent Philosophy (*al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah*) in the thought of Allamah Tabataba'i.

Furthermore, Mulla Sadra distinguishes between existential or productive causes, those that directly bestow

existence, and material or preparatory causes. Allamah Tabataba'i does not explicitly introduce such a distinction in his discussion of causal homogeneity. Rather, his analysis encompasses all forms of causality while focusing primarily upon the existential cause.

According to Mulla Sadra, the homogeneity between cause and effect is necessary and demonstrable in the case of productive causes that confer existence. In contrast, with respect to material and preparatory causes, homogeneity is established chiefly through experience and observation rather than through purely rational proof. Tabataba'i, however, devotes comparatively little attention to this distinction.

Instead, his analysis centers on the existential relationship between cause and effect and on the ontological poverty (*faqr wujūdī*) of the effect. Within this framework, every cause that bestows existence, whether directly or through intermediary conditions, stands in an existential relationship to its effect, and homogeneity is understood primarily at the ontological level.

Indeed, Tabataba'i concentrates on the existential and efficient cause and moves away from the classical Sadrian classification of causes into material, formal, efficient, and final causes. His analysis is fundamentally grounded in the primacy of existence and the relational nature of the effect.

In conclusion, Mulla Sadra recognizes conceptual distinctions and varying degrees of homogeneity among different kinds of causes, whereas Allamah Tabataba'i presents a unified existential account of the relationship between cause and effect. Within this account, such distinctions become less significant, and the primary focus is placed upon the ontological and relational character of causality itself.

9-3-1. The Relationship Between Causal Correspondence and Innate Knowledge of God

The principle of correspondence (*sanakhiyyah*) between cause and effect requires that there be a kind of existential harmony and unity in the order of being between the bestowing cause and its effect. In other words, the cause must possess the perfections found in the effect in a higher and more complete manner in order to be able to bestow them. Based on this principle, God, as the Bestower of existence, is the source of all existential perfections found in beings, and every contingent being, including the human being—remains dependent upon and in need of Him at every level of its existence. This dependence is not confined to the moment of creation; rather, it continues at every instant of existence, and the effect is, in its very essence, nothing but a relation (*'ayn al-rabt*) to its cause.

Since an existential and proportional relationship exists between God and the human being, divine perfections such as knowledge, power, life, and consciousness also manifest themselves in a limited manner within the human being. This correspondence provides the ground for a kind of immediate and presential knowledge of the cause within the existence of the effect. In other words, because the human being is continuously connected to God at the level of existence, he is capable of knowing Him in an innate and intuitive manner. Therefore, innate knowledge of God is not only possible, but is also a direct consequence of the principle of causal correspondence within the Islamic philosophical tradition.

9-4. Difference in the Relationship Between Knowledge of God and Religion

One of the fundamental differences between Mullā Ṣadrā and 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī concerning the relationship between knowledge of God and religion lies in the type of connection each establishes between divine knowledge and religious law. Mullā Ṣadrā regards knowledge of God as the ontological foundation of religion and maintains that religion emerges as an extension of immediate and presential knowledge of the Truth. In this view, religion represents the manifestation of a level of existential reality that the human being encounters during his journey toward divine proximity. By contrast, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, while emphasizing the innate and epistemological dimensions of the knowledge of God, considers religion not merely as a continuation of mystical intuition but as a system of teachings that human nature rationally affirms. Accordingly, the relationship between religion and knowledge of God in Ṭabāṭabā'ī's thought is primarily rational and innate, whereas in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy it is existential and intuitive. This difference in perspective significantly influences their respective analyses of religious foundations and the paths leading to the knowledge of Truth.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī regards knowledge of God as the prerequisite and foundation of religious commitment. According to him, the first step on the path of religion is the knowledge of God. In *Risālat Lubb al-Lubāb*, he writes: "The beginning of religion is His knowledge (*awwal al-dīn ma'rifatuhu*); the perfection of His knowledge is to affirm Him; and the perfection of affirming Him is sincerity toward Him" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 6, p. 93). On this basis, religion has no meaning without the knowledge of God; religious life must be founded upon an innate knowledge of the Creator.

Mullā Ṣadrā, however, although he considers the knowledge of God to be the foundation of human perfection, views

religion primarily as a catalyst for the existential journey of the human being through substantial motion and intensification of being. In al-Asfār, he writes: “The ultimate purpose of human existence is to attain proximity to its Lord, and religion is the path leading to this attainment” (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1999, pp. 74–76). In his view, religion is the path of movement, while its essence lies in the existential intensification of the human being toward nearness to God.

Knowledge of God remains a necessary condition, yet it takes shape within the context of this existential progression.

9-4-1. The Relationship Between Different Conceptions of Religion and Knowledge of God and Innate Knowledge of God

Differences in the conception of the relationship between knowledge of God and religion directly influence the way innate knowledge of God is understood and explained. This is because the nature of the relationship assumed between religion and the knowledge of God determines how human nature (fiṭrah) is regarded as a source of divine knowledge and as the foundation of religious commitment. If, following Mullā Ṣadrā, innate knowledge of God is understood as an existential and presential reality, then religion is likewise understood as the existential journey and spiritual wayfaring of the human being toward the Source of Being, and religious teachings are viewed as manifestations of this innate existential movement within the order of reality. If, however, one adopts the perspective of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī and regards innate knowledge of God as a rational and inward inclination, then religion is interpreted as the legislative response to humanity’s rational nature. In this view, divine law is established upon the foundation of the innate tendencies and rational perceptions through which human beings recognize God. Therefore, one’s understanding of the relationship between religion and the knowledge of God also determines the direction and nature of innate knowledge of God itself: one perspective views it as an intuitive and ontological experience, while the other understands it as an inward cognitive and dispositional awareness.

10. Conclusion

This article comparatively examined the concept of philosophical knowledge of God in the thought of two prominent Islamic philosophers, Mullā Ṣadrā and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī. Both thinkers regard the knowledge of God as a fundamental subject and the central axis of philosophical and religious understanding, emphasizing the role of reason and philosophical principles in demonstrating the existence of God. Through his ontological system, Mullā Ṣadrā establishes God as the Ultimate Reality, the Necessary Being, the foundation of all existence, and the Cause of all causes, while emphasizing the capacity of reason to comprehend this reality. Likewise, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, drawing upon Ṣadrian philosophy as well as Qur’anic and traditional teachings, presents the knowledge of God as a synthesis of rational and revealed knowledge and insists upon the harmony of reason and revelation in the recognition of God.

With respect to their commonalities, both philosophers consider the existence of God to be a self-evident and foundational reality, without the knowledge of which other philosophical and epistemological inquiries lose their significance. Both also regard reason as the primary instrument for understanding God and His attributes, although ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī accords a more explicit role to revelation and transmitted sources—a feature that can also be discerned, albeit in a different form, within Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy.

At the same time, important differences can be observed in their approaches. Mullā Ṣadrā, through an ontological perspective grounded in the doctrine of substantial motion, develops a distinctly existential account of the knowledge of God. By contrast, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, while remaining deeply indebted to Ṣadrian philosophy, also bases his understanding of God on the interpretation of Qur’anic verses and religious teachings, placing greater emphasis on the complementary relationship between reason and revelation.

In general, a comparative examination of the philosophical knowledge of God in the thought of Mullā Ṣadrā and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī demonstrates that, despite methodological differences, the two philosophers are united in their epistemological and theological objectives. Both seek to provide a profound, comprehensive, and coherent understanding of God through the combined resources of philosophy and religion.

Such a comparative study not only enriches discussions of Islamic theology and philosophy of religion but also creates new opportunities for the further development and deepening of philosophical and theological investigations.

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