Ontology and Cosmology of the ʿaql in Ṣadrā's Commentary on Uṣūl al-Kāfī

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# Ontology and Cosmology of the *ʿaql* in Ṣadrā's Commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*

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**ABSTRACT:** Mullā Ṣadrā's (c 1571-1640) commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* is one of the more famous commentaries on this significant Shiʿi hadith collection. For his philosophical and Sufi background, Ṣadrā's approach to the hadith is slightly different and in some ways contrary to the earlier commentators such as ʿAllāma Majlisī in Shiʿaand Ibn Taymīyya in Sunni Islam. This paper aims to shed light on the way Ṣadrā interprets *al-Kāfī* and particularly to determine his understanding of the *ʿaql* (intellect) at the cosmic (as first created-being) and human levels as presented in the *Kitāb al-ʿAql wa al-Jahl* (*The Book of Intellect and Ignorance*). Ṣadrā, already well-versed in the philosophical discourses on ontology and cosmology, finds *al-Kāfī* as a fertile ground to develop and extend his vision of cosmos and existence. This paper, furthermore, investigates and reviews some later and contemporary scholars' critiques of Ṣadrā's view on hadith and intellect.

**KEYWORDS:** Islamic philosophy, intellect, Ṣadrā, *al-Kafī*, *ʿaql*, cosmology, ontology, Majlisi, Goldziher, Ibn Taymīyah

## Introduction

Scholarship in Islamic philosophy over the past fifty years has brought to light a number of important thinkers and texts in what is known as the post-Avicennian period of Islamic thought. Among these later figures, none is as important in the Islamic intellectual tradition as Mullā Ṣadrā Shirāzī (c 1571-1640), a major philosopher of the Ṣafavīd period whose work changed the course of Islamic philosophy and whose influence continues to be felt to the present day. As has been observed by a number of scholars of Islamic philosophy, a relatively unexplored aspect of Ṣadrā's corpus are his works in the religious sciences, as opposed to his writings in philosophy for which he is better known. In the religious sciences, Ṣadrā wrote a number of important commentaries upon the Qur'an with philosophical and mystical approaches, and also dedicated his attention to the traditions of the Prophet and the Shiʿa Imams. This latter aspect of his religious writings has received little attention in modern Western scholarship (the exceptions being Crow 1996, Rustom 2007-2013, Dakake 2010). Among Ṣadrā's writings on hadith, his monumental, incomplete commentary on the main book of Shiʿa hadith, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī (d. 970) is the single most important work. This magisterial work, in four hefty volumes in modern print, offers a detailed exposition of the first two sections of al-Kulaynī's hadith text which deals with the nature of the intellect and knowledge.

This study investigates Ṣadrā's approach in evaluating the reality of *ʿaql* (intellect) in his commentary on the opening chapter of *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, where he proposes an Islamized version of cosmology and ontology of *ʿaql*. Considering the fact that his opponents were always denouncing intellectual encounters with religion, our aim is also to appraise the outcomes of such a philosophical and Sufi approach. This becomes more important as other commentators of Shia hadith such as Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī (d.1698), a prolific Shiʿa hadith authority, directly attacked philosophical and intellectual interpretations of hadith and revelation for its implicit denial of religious creeds.

Ṣadrā, as he appears in his works, portrays himself as advocate of the intellectual approach to revelation in which the tradition of *hikmah* and philosophy play a vital role. In Islamic revelation, *hikmah* is what the Qur'an places next to the revelation:

> it is He who has sent amongst the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them his signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in scripture and wisdom, - although they had been, before, in manifest error (62: 2).

In the history of Islamic thought, defining *'aql* [1] and determining its intervention in interpreting revelation has always been the subject of involute discussions. One cannot define the *'aql* except by the *'aql*. The definition of *'aql* by Muslim philosophers like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā and consequently theologians mainly tends to describe its functions and cosmological or ontological levels.

Muslim scholars had diverse views on the definition and function of *'aql*, its role in interpreting the Scripture, and its canonical importance in faith. The literal meaning of *'aql* in Arabic is "to restrain," and its basic function is "to restrain man from precipitous conduct." Within the context of the both transmitted (*naqlī*) and intellectual (*'aqlī*) Islamic sciences, there are various purposes and definitions for *'aql* that range from various levels of the human faculty of thinking to an immaterial substance which is directly emanated from God and therefore called the first created being.

Nevertheless, if Qur'an is the main source for Islamic thought, even though the word *'aql* as a noun is not employed in that text, one cannot deny the book's continual call to think, contemplate, and speculate. Verses such as "If we had only lent our ears or applied our reason we would not be now among the inhabitants of the hellfire" (67:10) or "Surely the worst of beasts in God's sight are those that are deaf and dumb and do not understand" (8:22) clearly emphasise the role of *'aql* in salvation. Moreover, the Qur'an uses cognate and associate terms to point to the importance of human intellection. In another phrase it interrogates [man?] as follows: "Do you not apply your reason"? (2:44)

Hadith collections are the next sources on the nature of *'aql* in Islam. One can especially note those of Shi'a Islam in which the subject of the very first chapters begin with intellect and ignorance (*kitāb al-'aql wa l-jahl*). In this regard, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* [2], compiled by Abu Ja'far al-Kulaynī (d. 941), is one of the four authentic and first of the four collections of hadith among the Shi'a, which are equivalent to the six collections of Sunni Islam known as the *Sihāh Sitta* (The Six Authentic Books of Hadith).

*Uṣūl al-Kāfī* is divided into three parts in which the former deals with the principles (*uṣūl*) of faith and the second part contains the religious applications (*furū'*) while the third includes various aspects of religion and sayings or letters of the Shi'a Imams. There has been a tradition of commenting on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*. Shi'a scholars, whether jurists (*fuqahā*), theologians (*mutikallimūn*), or philosophers have commented on the book based on their diverse standpoints.

This paper will examine the cosmological and ontological status and functions of *ʿaql* according to Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* which is mainly based on his discussions in the opening narrations of the first chapter.

## Chronology of Commentaries on al-Uṣūl al-Kāfī

Shiʿa scholars usually commented on hadith collections. Yet, not all had similar approaches in their methodology and interpretation. Depending on the tendencies of the author, commentaries have been strongly influenced by theological, philosophical or mystical forms. Muhammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād (d. 1630) annotated some parts of *al-Kāfī* known as "*al-Rawāshīh al-Samāwīyya*."[3] In his introduction Mīr Dāmād asserts that since its compilation (seven hundred years earlier) there has not been a commentary to *al-Kāfī* to explain its difficulties and ambiguities (Mīr Dāmād, 2010, p. 4). This statement shows that according to the knowledge of Mīr Dāmād there has been no commentary on *al-Kāfī* since his time. Later scholarly works on the history of commentary of *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* (ʿAbidī Shāhrūdī, 1383 A.H. Solar, pp. 113-114) shed light on the fact that until the first half of the seventeenth century six other commentaries on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* had been written and since then up to the present there have been more than 20 commentaries [4].

There are some other contemporary commentaries on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* with diverse approaches, among them, *Sharh Uṣūl al-Kāfī* (Ḥāʾirī Yazdī, 2013) which includes a commentary on the chapters on intellect and ignorance and the Unity of God by Mahdī Ḥāʾirī Yazdī is worth mentioning.

## Definitions of ʿaql according to Ṣadrā's Sharh-e Uṣūl al-Kāfī

In his commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, following the third hadith of the first chapter, Ṣadrā categorizes six levels of *ʿaql* definitions (Shirazi, 1383 Solar, pp. 223-4). He points out that the concept of *ʿaql* in some cases is equivocal and among some others is an analogical term. We summarise those definitions as follows:

A. Intellect is an innate disposition (*gharīza*) by which human is distinguished from other animals. All human kinds have this intellect which is a theoretical intellect, by means of which mankind is able to know the primary self-evidences (*al-Badīhīyāt*) and consequently the theoretical sciences.

B. The second meaning of *'aql* is that which theologians (*mutakallimūn*) apply; the goal of this *'aql* is affirmation or negation. The *mutakallimūn*'s purpose of approaching the *'aql* is its fundamental level, which is known to all. For instance, *'aql* in this meaning is the ability to understand that the whole is bigger than its part.

C. The third definition is the one that is referred to in the science of ethics (*'Ulūm al-Akhlāq*). This intellect is a part of the human soul that is gradually attained by practising religious beliefs. By means of this intellect, one will be able to learn what good deeds to practice and what to avoid.

D. Based on the fourth definition, *'aql* is the faculty by which people call someone *'āqeel* (wise). If someone possesses this, he/she will be able to immediately recognise what to choose or withdraw. Ṣadrā indicates that people of truth (*Ahl al-Ḥaqq*) call this ability *al-Nukrā* or mischief not *'aql*.

E. The fifth definition of *'aql* is the one mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Nafs* (the Book on the Soul) that is divided into four categories: potential intellect, habitual intellect, actual intellect and *intellectus in actus*.

F. The last definition is the intellect discussed in the book of *Ilāhīyyāt* (Divinity) and refers to the knowledge of God. This is an entity that has no attachment or connection to anything but his creator, who is the self-abiding God. This sense of intellect applies to an external and objective being (immaterial substance) while the former definitions were part of the human soul or its faculties (Sadra, 1383 A.H, pp. 223-4). In other words, it is an essential-substance (*jawhar*) independent of bodies in every respect, not existent in the manner of contingent-accidents, nor acting and freely disposing in the manner of Souls-Psyches, nor as particularity and mixture as Matter and Form (Crow, 1996, p. 572).

## Ontology and Cosmology

Ontology in philosophical discussions refers to the subject of existence. It questions the nature of being and constitutes a major branch of metaphysics. Cosmology, on the other hand, is the study of the origins and fate of the universe. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, cosmology includes the domains of both the appearance and disappearance of the

universe (Chittick, 2007); in religious terms, this means both the visible (*shahādah*) and invisible (*ghayb*) worlds. To put it another way, cosmology investigates both the origin (*al-Mabda'*) and the return (*al-Ma'ād*) of the existence.

For the Islamic intellectual tradition, the universe as a whole is a single being and, as Ṣadrā defines it, a single being has a particular type of gradation (*tashkīk*). In this order, what is nearer to the origin is simpler, and more spiritual, and what is distant is more compound and corporeal.

For traditional Muslim thinkers, human beings had a role of utmost importance to play in the universe or circle of existence. They referred to the human as a microcosm (*al-'alam al-saghīr*) which was a mirror of the whole universe that in its turn was called a macrocosm (*al-'alam al-kabīr*). Both man and universe according to Islamic intellectual tradition have a mutual relationship and movement. The beginning of creation marks the 'centrifugal movement away from the Source,' followed by the 'centripetal movement toward the Source' (Chittick, 2007, pp. 31-32). These are what the Islamic philosophical and Sufi traditions commonly described as *al-mabda' wa al-ma'ād*, the Origin and the Return, or what in the school of Ibn 'Arabī marked as the descending and the ascending arcs of existence.

For the vital role that the perfect man had in leading the ascending arc toward the origin, knowing the universe has never been separated from knowing the self. The philosophical and mystical views on existence were such that there was no duality between self and cosmos. Their origination from the One was a reason to see all as a sign and manifestation of the One and therefore to understand their ontological and cosmological significance. The upward and returning movement is discussed in terms of ontology and psychology, whereas the downward and originating movement is discussed in terms of cosmology. (Chittick, 2012, p. 268)

## Ṣadrā's approach to Hadith

Before turning to Ṣadrā's commentary and evaluation of the *'aql*, it is necessary to explain his methodology in dealing with hadith. When Ṣadrā encounters Scripture and hadith he has a major principle in mind which is emphasising the existence of some potential meaning in the core of those texts. In his introduction to *Sharh al-Usūl al-Kāfī*, Ṣadrā, while alluding to this point, states that:

> I thought to begin the hadith commentary while asking God
> to protect me from any evil to be able to bring out those
> meanings from potentiality to actuality, highlighting them
> from secrecy to existence (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 168).

Thus, Ṣadrā's approach is different from the commonly-held view of his
opponents in grasping the in-depth meaning of narrations or revelation.
We know the dominance of the opponents of philosophy at his time, for
whom he also points out that:

> A true believer in whatever he apprehends of the truth (al-
> Ḥaqq) does not pay attention to the predominant ideas and
> does not care about the objections of the public; for the public
> are inhabitants of their veiled abode, while a true believer is
> a wayfarer from his station toward his God and Prophet, so
> that it is necessitated for the wayfarer to disagree with the
> inhabitant of this abode. (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 617)

Such an expression shows how Ṣadrā's method and understanding of the
interpretation of hadith differs from the predominant and official reading
of his time. His rival in this regard was ʿAllāmah Majlisī (d.1110/1698)
who in his commentary on hadith (Majlisī, 1984, p. 27) clearly attacks
the philosophical and intellectual interpretation of Scripture and hadith
and suggests that philosophers are straying. We shall return to Majlisī
later in this section. In his introduction, Ṣadrā explains that hadiths, like
the Qur'an, possess polysemic levels of meaning of both a horizontal and
vertical nature.[5]

   Thus, a more sophisticated and in-depth interpretation is in fact
Ṣadrā's preferred practice based on his background in philosophy and
in theoretical and practical Sufism. It should be noticed that in his other
works such as *al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah (Transcendent Philosophy)*, he narrates
some of his mystical experiences along with his argumentation to
emphasise the equality of revelation, reason, and mystical visions. In other
words, he indicates that extracting the in-depth meaning of hadith and
revelation needs a scholar not only well versed in the Islamic transmitted
knowledge, but also masterly skilled in the intellectual sciences and in
practical Sufism.

## Ṣadrā and the 'aql:

The first hadith of the opening chapter of *al-Kāfī*, a narration of creation and God's praise of *'aql*, has been said to be "the most influential yet controversial report in Islamic tradition" (Crow 1996). It is as follows:

> When God had created *al-'aql*, He interrogated it. Then God said to it: Come Forward! So he drew near; then God said to it, turn back! So it did. Then God said, "By My Power and My Glory! I created no creature more loved by me than thee, and I did not make thee complete save in one whom I love. Truly, thee alone do I bid and thee alone do I forbid, thee alone do I punish and thee alone do I reward [6] (Kulaynī, 1379 AH. Solar, p. 15).

Ṣadrā's commentary on the narration begins with his discussion of the ontology, cosmology and cosmogony of *'aql*. In fact, among the various meanings of *'aql* in the Islamic context, he intentionally chooses the ones that contain cosmological and ontological meaning. So, in the beginning of his commentary on the first hadith he directly speaks of the *'aql* and asserts that:

> …this *'aql* is the First of Created Beings, and the closest of Beings to the First Reality, and the greatest and most perfect of them. It is the second of Existent-Beings with respect to 'being-ness,' even though the first, Exalted be He, has no second in His reality because His Oneness is not something enumerated as a category of units (Shīrāzī, 1366 A.H. Solar, p. 216).

In Islamic intellectual tradition, the advocates of peripatetic philosophy shared this notion with Ṣadrā, namely that the first created being is the *'aql*. It is apparently what Suhrawardī and the followers of the philosophy of illumination call the First Light (*al-Nūr al-Awwal*). Among Muslim mystics the same notion is referred to as Divine effusion which is in part taken from the Neo-Platonist school and represented first in al-Fārābī's works and later, in a more profound way, in the school of Ibn Arabī (Netton, 1989).

In his commentary Ṣadrā brings in other narrations as witnesses to his claim that the *'aql*, in addition to the claims of philosophical cosmology, is the first created being in the religious context. For instance, he uses narrations such as "The first thing that God created

is 'intellect' (*al-'aql*)" as well as other narrations describing the first created being as Muhammadan Light (*Nūrī*) or Spirit (*Rūḥī*) and some of them regarding it as Pen (*al-Qalam*) or Cherub-Angel (*Malakun Karrubī*) (Shīrāzī, 1366 A.H. Solar, p. 217). According to Ṣadrā all these names refer to a single reality in its various functions. Different characteristics explain the different names: *'aql* accordingly is not corporeal, it is essentially one, its quiddity and reality is an independent substance with no connection to physical bodies, its being is not like accidents, nor does its conduct resemble souls. It has no parts, nor is it mixed like forms and materials (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 575). Each of these qualities is therefore indicated by a distinct name.

Ṣadrā's commentary seems to reconcile philosophical and religious concepts in a cosmological framework. In the above-mentioned narrations, the first created being is the first emanation from the First Reality (*al-Ḥaqq al-Awwal*), the creation of which is immediate. These narrations indicate that God created the First Intellect as an immediate creature. Thus, in order to act, the intellect is not in need of any physical or spiritual body. A being with this character in the Islamic intellectual tradition is called an immaterial substance. Based on the narrations quoted by Ṣadrā, the immaterial intellect can be expressed in different ways: Pure Immaterial Substance, Light, Pen, and Spirit.

With his mystical-philosophical background, Ṣadrā tries to comment on hadith by employing terms that he uses in his transcendent philosophy. For instance, he refers to the philosophical notion of the Principle of the Noblest Contingency (*imkān al-ashraf*) which asserts that nothing can exist without a cause originating at a higher ontological level (Marcotte 2012). He explains the principle of homogeneity between cause and effect (*al-Sinkhiyyatu bayn al-'allati wa al-ma'lul*). And by the principle of the Unique One (*al-Waḥid*), he argues for the existence and necessity of the First intellect. All other intellects that have polarisations of being with the first intellect exist hierarchically below the first intellect.

In four out of thirty-four hadiths of the first chapter of the *Kitāb al-'aql wa al-Jahl* (*The Book of Intellect and Ignorance*) Ṣadrā reinterprets the term *'aql* as "the immaterial substance."

Following hadith number thirty-two, he asserts that:

The *'aql* has different degrees and the one that is the most perfect is the first created-being, and the closest of "Independent-Beings." It is the most obedient to God with no disobedience. But the latter intellects, that are descending to human bodies,

because of mixture and combination and attaching to the bodily desires, are capable of disobedience, based on the strengths or weakness of the power of Intellect and spiritual insight (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 567).

Thus, Ṣadrā declares that the descended intellects are of the same genus as the first intellect and in fact they are descended degrees thereof. Descended intellects are a combination of intellectual substance, passions and corporeality, and therefore they are not strictly obedient to the Divine as the first intellect is. Their combined being makes it possible for them to be capable of both obedience and disobedience to the Divine command.

As mentioned in the first hadith of the book of intellect and ignorance in *al-Kāfī*, God commands the *ʿaql* with two orders: Come forward (*aqbil*) and go back (*adbir*). Therefore, according to Ṣadrā the mystery of the fall and ascension is in obedience to the order of "Come forward and go back". He describes this function as following:

In the process of the fall, at first it was *ʿaql*, then it became soul; after that nature and form and lastly corporeal being. In ascension toward God it is first corporeal being, then it becomes one form after another form and then soul after another soul and finally intellect following another intellect. Namely, first it was simple potential intellect, then primary intellect, later habitual intellect, then passive intellect within which the *ʿaql* moves from one form to another, and after that it becomes the acquired intellect, then actual intellect that unites with all or most of the intelligible forms. Finally, the *ʿaql* becomes the active intellect where it returns to the original form from which it had descended. So, the final stage of the ascending arc is the beginning of the descending arc (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 567).

What is mentioned above shows that, according to Ṣadrā's ontological and cosmological scheme, the *ʿaql* that descends to the corporeal human stage is the lowest degree of the First Intellect. Nevertheless, this intellect—which is in the lowest degree—by ascending back through the levels is able to reach its highest position which is the ultimate goal of the journey of the *ʿaql*. The return to the origin of *ʿaql* means unification with the first intellect and a positive response to the Divine command of "Come forward" (*aqbil*). This is the uppermost stage of the *ʿaql*'s ascending journey.

It is important to note that the beginning of the ascending journey, in Islamic intellectual tradition generally and especially according to Ṣadrā, is the state of awareness. Wakefulness and self-knowledge are the primary steps to being aware of the process of ascent, otherwise there would not be any movement. Moreover, in the traditional, broad-based Islamic view of things, one cannot disengage the study of the soul from cosmology (Chittick, 2007, pp. 40-50) Therefore the human being's end is not separated from the *ʻaql*'s end. Moreover, the ascending and descending journey of the *ʻaql* connects the visible world with the invisible one. Ṣadrā asserts that:

> [The Intellect's] orientation toward God—after its descent to the visible world and encountering the shortcomings and darkness of corporeality and in addition to the depth of ignorance and arrogance there—is because of its awareness about the ignorance that is the nature of the physical world and its understanding of the existence of another world and return to its origin through perfecting the self by gaining knowledge and spiritual states and keeping distance from the obscenities and religious prohibitions. [The Intellect's orientation toward its origin also takes place] by releasing from the veils and its ascension to the higher stations and taking other forms [one after another] and its existence to a higher level of being and stage after another stage which is the opposite of the descendent arc (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 330).

## The Ontological and Cosmological state of Muhammadan Spirit:

The first hadith of the *Kitāb al-ʻaqlwa al-Jahl* indicates that *ʻaql* is loved by God more than anything else. Ṣadrā explains that the First Intellect is the most venerable being among the creatures and therefore it attracts the highest level of Divine Love.

Ṣadrā depicts role of *ʻaql* in the circle of existence with the two movements of descent and ascent. As mentioned, he also reminds the reader of the vital role of awareness in this movement, for if there were no awareness there would be no movement and no perfection in the arc of ascent. Therefore, awakening people and reminding them of their reality and higher degrees of being, the origin and return, is the duty of the prophet or the sage who has already been awakened to his reality, light or

spirit is pure intellect. This might be the reason why Ṣadrā identifies the ʿaql in the first hadith with the Muhammadan Spirit, for God addresses the ʿaql thus: "I did not make you complete, save in one whom I love." Ṣadrā elaborates:

> His light was with all Prophets inwardly and with Him [Muhammad] outwardly. It is narrated from Him that: We are the last and the foremost, i.e. last in exit and emergence like the fruits, and first in creatures and being like seeds. So, He is seed of the tree of the world. Then God asked Him: Turn back! That means turn to your Lord, so he turned from the world and returned to his Lord in the night of the Ascension and when his spirit separated from this world. Then God said: By my glory and majesty I did not create any creation dearer than you to me. This was His state (peace be upon him), for he was beloved of God and the most loved among the creatures (Shīrāzī, 2005, p. 218).

Thus, the nearest creature to God, the Muhammadan Spirit which existed inwardly with all prophets, is called ʿaql in the first hadith, and therefore it pertains to God's love. This helps to explain why asserting the message and mission of earlier authentic prophets is one of the Islamic creeds. In fact, witnessing the mission of all the prophets is equal to witnessing Muhammad's mission and contrariwise. Another hadith in *al-Kāfī* states that: "God created *al-ʿaql* and it is the first creature God created among the spiritual beings on the right side of the Throne from His light." This hadith indicates that intellect is the first entification and the first descending light from al-Haqq al-Awwal, and its creation is directly attributed to the name of Allah, that is the greatest of Divine Names. Consequently, manifestation of the Real in mirror of the first intellect is a manifestation with complete dignity and contains all unveiling.

Ontologically and cosmologically the First Intellect gives awareness to existence and this scheme of the universe is not an accident; rather consciousness is the vital pillar of being. Therefore, according to a prophetic narration, if a man dies without having awakened, he dies the death of *al-Jāhilīyyah* (Ignorance). Prophet described the state of such a human is as sleeping from which he will awaken when he dies.

The superiority of ʿaql in both the scheme of ascent and descent is the key element for understanding the unique role of the intellect in Ṣadrā's ontology and cosmology and uncovering the mystery of why God is said in this hadith to find it so worthy. We mentioned that the

unification of the First Intellect with the Muhammadan Spirit compels Ṣadrā to interpret the Divine command as the spiritual state of the Prophet. Moreover, Ṣadrā states that the knowledge of God and His reward and punishment is dependent on one's knowledge of Muhammad and on following him. A Qur'anic instance for this is the verse in which God commands:

> Say: If you do love God, follow me: God will love you and forgive you your sins: for God is oft-forgiving, most merciful" (Qur'an, 3: 31), or: "Say 'Obey God and His messenger', but if they turn back, God loves not those who reject faith (Qur'an, 3: 32).

## Examining Ṣadrā's Approach:

There is nothing in existence other than *'aql* to define itself. The first chapter of *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* has been a good source for those interested in defining *'aql* and its functions, and there have been many commentaries or annotations on that collection. Each scholar commenting on the narrations on *aql* has interpreted them and this, it may be worth noting, is the central paradox of all exegesis of authoritative texts: the reading is only as good as the fallible reader. Earlier in this work a number of commentaries on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* were mentioned. In this section we will review and examine some of the most important critics of Ṣadrā's understanding of the first narration of the opening chapter of *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*.

## Criticism of Ṣadrā:

In the history of early modern Shi'a thought, Majlisī (d. 1698) played an important role in making a collection of all extant hadith and treatises related to Shia belief in one way or another. His voluminous *Biḥār al-anwār* (*Oceans of the Lights*) in 110 volumes in the modern edition contains a categorised collection of narrations although without considering their authenticity. Majlisī is known for his criticism of Sufi and philosophical interpretations of revelation and hadith. In his *Risālah al-I'tiqādat* (*Treatise on the Creeds*), Majlisī states that the *'aql* in the hadith refers to the Prophet. He, therefore, concludes that following Muhammad's tradition—an expectation of every pious Muslim—is the same as following the intellect. Here is the point that he makes: following Muhammad is not like following one's own reason or "the lost Greek philosophers." (Majlisī, 2002, p. 28) He clearly differentiates between logical reasoning and following the Prophet.

The first choice is not promising. The second is what every believer commanded to do. This is the distinction between him and philosophers who maintain that a sound intellect does not judge in opposition to the prophetic orders. He then reports on an unfortunate fact that some scholars of his own time are following Greek philosophy in the interpretation of the revelation. He describes these people as follows:

> …neither believe a prophet nor have faith in a Book. They have relied on their own corrupted reasons and baseless thoughts and have chosen philosophers as their own leaders. They interpret and justify the clear sayings of the Imams which conflict with the sayings of philosophers. It is while that they all know that all their reasons and doubts are false. And, they see how many contradictory and heterogeneous thoughts exist among them. (Majlisī, 2002, p. 28)

Ṣadrā is among those who Majlisī is addressing. Each scholar has commented differently on the hadith and the meaning of ʿaql. According to Majlisī, ʿaql is the faculty of understanding good and evil, distinguishing between right and wrong, and therefore its domain is that of responsibility, reward and punishment (Majlisī, 1983, p. 99). On the other hand, as mentioned, he denies the reliability of ʿaql in interpreting Scripture. To prevent errors made by ʿaql, the accepted intellection is the one that is in accordance with Divine law. (Majlisī, 1983) He stresses that any trust in ʿaql without referring to Divine law is corrupted and leads astray.

To examine Majlisī's criticism of Ṣadrā's methodology, one should refer to Allama Majlisī's *Mir'āt al-ʿuqūl* (*The Mirror of Intellects*), a twenty-six volume commentary on hadith in which he states that:

> To maintain what philosophers tend and pretend to prove of an immaterial eternal substance that essentially and practically has no attachment to corporeal, requires denial of many principles of the religion such as the contingency of the world and likewise (Majlisi, 1410AH, p. 27).

Majlisī directly attacks philosophical and intellectual interpretations of hadith and Divine revelation for their implicit denial of many principles of the religion. Ṣadrā, in contrast to Majlisī, in his prologue to *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī* alludes to the point that hadith, like the Qurʾān, has multiple layers of meaning. It is therefore necessary to reach the depth of its

meaning through intellectual contemplation and reasoning and deepen our knowledge about it as time passes and new generations and thinkers come to existence. Moreover, in regard to the Qur'anic interpretation, he states that:

> Some have thought that true knowledge is restricted only to jurisprudence and outward commentary and theology (*kalām*), and there is no knowledge except them. This is a very erroneous idea and such people do not seem to have understood the meaning of the holy Qur'an as yet and do not believe that it is as endless ocean, encompassing all the truth; for all the connotations of the holy Qur'an have not been mentioned in the kind of commentary attributed to Qushayrī, Tha'labi, Wāḥidī, Zamakhsharī and the like, and their method is to deny what they cannot understand. And their followers and imitators have never drunken the pure wine of the truth (Ṣadrā, 1363 A.H.).

Followers of both Majlisī and Ṣadrā have continued to debate the same problem up to the present time. [7]


## Ibn Taymīyya's and the Question of ʿaql

Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328 AD) is known for his literalist reading of Scripture and the prophetic tradition. However, he is not known as a hadith authority in the history of Islamic sciences. Nonetheless, in a response to an inquiry, he questions the authenticity of the hadith, "the first thing God created was intellect." He emphasises that it is a fabricated (*Kidhb*) hadith and is not narrated among the authentic hadith collections. He then adds that people like Dāwūd ibn Muḥabbar and others who wrote about the intellect have commented on the hadith, including philosophically minded groups like al-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (The Brethren of Purity) in addition to al-Ghazzālī in some of his works, along with Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn Sabʿīn, and others. Having said that, he reminds the reader that scholars of hadith such as Abū Ḥātam al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Jawzī among the others hold that the hadith is a lie and its narration is an accusation to the messenger of God (Ibn Taymīyah, 1966, p. 191). Ibn Taymīyya states that the true reading of it is "when God created the intellect" not "the first thing God created". He continues that the real meaning of the hadith is that God had interrogated *ʿaql* in the first

moments of its creation, but that this does not imply that it is the first created being. He takes the opportunity to attack both philosophers and Shiʾa scholars by stating that philosophers (the followers of Aristotle) and those Esoteric (Baṭinī) Shiʿite who follow them, along with sufis and *mutikallimūn* (theologians) believe in the eternity of the world, therefore, they narrate the hadith as "the first thing that God created."  He claims that the reason for this is that they use this hadith as a proof-text for their belief in eternity. (Ibn Taymīyah, 1966, p. 192) It is not clear how Ibn Taymīyya makes the connection between "the eternity of the world" and creation of *ʿaql* and consequently calls it a foundation on which to prove the authenticity of faith. One of his major differences with Ṣadrā's reading of *ʿaql* is that he asserts that *ʿaql* is an accident (*ʿAradh*), and does not subsist through its own essence (*Qāʾim bi al-Ghayr*). He also names it as an innate disposition (*Gharīza*) or knowledge, or acting based on one's knowledge. What Ibn Taymīyah is trying to establish here is that it is not in accordance to the Islamic teachings to describe *ʿaql* as subsisting through its own essence. Consequently, it is impossible for the first created being to be an accident that does not subsist through its own essence (p.191). It is obvious that we are faced with two opposing attitudes in the Islamic tradition toward the reality of *ʿaql*.

It seems that despite what Ṣadrā suggests, Ibn Taymiyya does not believe in the idea that consciousness is an essential and primary foundation of being and creation as it is the case generally in the Abrahamic religions. Moreover, it appears that he rejects the compatibility of the intellect and revelation because according to his definition intellect is an accident and innate deposition, not a reality at the cosmological and ontological level. When Ibn Taymiyya considers intellectual disagreements among individuals, he concludes that there is disagreement between intellect and revelation. It should be noticed that when Ṣadrā speaks about the compatibility and agreement between *ʿaql* and revelation, he refers to *ʿaql* in its objective existence (*Nafs al-Amr*), not the rational faculty of an individual which is not yet elevated and connected to the First Intellect. In that case, the reality of intellect is not separated or opposed to the reality of revelation.

## Goldziher and Neoplatonic and Gnostic Elements in Hadith:

In his article *Neuplatonische und gnostische elemente im Hadit* (*Neoplatonic and Gnostic Elements in Hadith*) (1908, pp. 317-344), Goldziher (d. 1921) claims that there are Neo-Platonic elements such as the First Intellect that

have entered into the Islamic hadith corpus. He states that the original reading of the hadith in the first and second century after the appearance of Islam (7th & 8th centuries CE) was in the form of "when God created," and in the third and fourth century it changed to "The first thing God created." In later centuries, according to this claim, Greek philosophy and elements of Neoplatonism entered into Muslim intellectual tradition. That was the reason for some to try to read the hadith as *Awwala mā Khalaq* ("the first thing God created"). Although this claim is not directly critical of Ṣadrā's commentary, in a sense it implies that Ṣadrā's approach in commenting on the narration of *'aql* has been influenced by Neoplatonism. An analytical and scholarly response to this claim is found in K. Crow's doctoral thesis in which he clarifies that the narration Goldziher refers to must be read differently in its original form. Crow alludes to another reason to explain why Goldziher states such theory:

> 'Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the *Aqbil* report(s) has remained influential among Sunni Muslims until today. Goldziher may well have been prompted by this long Sunni tradition of distrust towards 'foreign' Hellenistic inspiration imputed to this *'aql* report, when he placed the "*awwalu*" version prior to the "*lammā*" form. He did so within a context of a German scholarly tradition greatly influenced by classicism and neo-Hegelianism, and which inclined to various syncretistic hypotheses marked by an over-emphasis on Hellenisation in explaining the higher development of Semitic religion (Crow, 1996, 142).

Goldziher's analysis posits that there are no innate philosophical or intellectual notions in the Islamic teachings and that any philosophical notions found there must be imported from the Greek tradition. Ṣadrā and many other great masters of Islamic intellectual tradition, are proof of the opposite notion. Their contemplation on revelation and its intellectual tradition makes it clear that revelation, for them, is multilayered. Thus, they have referred to many Qur'anic verses and hadith. Moreover, as S. H. Nasr argues, there has been a "subtle change" (Nasr, 1996, 27-39) in the notion of intellect from the Greek philosophical *nous* to the Islamic Peripatetic and Transcendent *'aql*. In fact, Ṣadrā presents the Islamic version of "universal cosmology" that "finds one of its most perfect expressions in Neoplatonism" (Chittick, 2012, p. 101). Therefore, having explained Ibn Taymīyya's standpoint on this discussion one can conclude that Goldziher is doing nothing but repeating him (i.e. Ibn Taymīyya).

## Crow's view on the hadith as a response to Qadarīs

Karim D. Crow,[8] calls Ṣadrā's commentary "the mystical-philosophical commentary" and "a profound example of how the Safavid era thinkers re-appropriated early Shīʿī hadith" (Crow, 2005, p. 571). Crow nevertheless challenges Ṣadrā's interpretation of intellect as the first created being. This might be due to Crow's historical view of the hadith of ʿaql which probably convinced him that this narration is a response to the Qadarīs of the third/ninth century (Crow, 2005). In a dialogue about the first hadith of the opening chapter, Crow responded to the present author that the ʿaql mentioned in the hadith has nothing to do with the First Intellect:

> It has nothing to do with the first intellect in the cosmic scheme. How do you explain the facing forward and the turning back, from the point of view of Neo-platonic scheme? It does not fit. This is in fact an utterly indigestive in Islamic context. [It is] dealing with the main theological issue of the time, the issue of whether one's acts effects his/her salvation? To his/her own ability and will? And what is the role of God's will or his foreknowledge in all of this?

Crow's historical study of the hadith leads him to conclude that Kulaynī's concerns were to respond to a theological problem of his own time on human destiny and the role of one's actions in it. Based on what we mentioned about Ṣadrā's approach toward commenting Qurʾan and hadith, he principally held an ahistorical outlook and in this case as an essence in his cosmic scheme and not an accident. On the other hand, his note on the discussion being "utterly indigestive in Islamic context" causes one to ask to which Islamic context and to which interpretation of Islam does he refer? If it is Shiʿa Islam, then similar ideas such as the creation of the illuminated bodies of Imams and the prophet prior to their material bodies or their surrounding God's throne has already been accepted and narrated in a large body of Shiʿa literature. As Ṣadrā stated in his prologue to the commentary, the reason rests in his endeavour to comprehend the core meaning of the text, i.e. the inward meaning. Finally, it worth reading Ṣadrā's own words in providing reasons for his commentary, "Today we face to a group of people that an in-depth contemplation of theological issues are considered by them as heresy, and thinking of God's signs as misleading" (Sadra, 1383 A.H). He is, therefore fighting religious dogmatism.

## Muntaẓerī and the First Intellect in Ṣadrā's Commentary

Muntaẓerī (1922-2009) was a Shi'a theologian who thought *Usūl al-Kāfī* in the Qom seminary.[9] He did not challenge the philosophical and intellectual interpretation of hadith and revelation, but he also rejects Ṣadrā's interpretation of *'aql* as expressed in the margins of the first hadith as the First Intellect. Part of the reason for this, argues Muntaẓerī, is that the world of intellect is essentially immaterial even in its activity. This means that it comprehend universals with no need for any agent. The immaterial intellect, therefore, belongs to the world of Divine Command (*'alām al-amr*), not to the world of creation (*'alām al-khalq*). The First Intellect is in the arc of descent and the human intellect that reaches its perfection, by change and motion, belongs to the arc of ascent. Therefore, the perfection of the human intellect is attainable by means of obedience to God and ascending. So the *'aql* in the first narration does not refer to the first intellect.

Muntaẓerī is not refuting the cosmology and ontology of intellect that is described by Ṣadrā in his commentary. He is rather arguing that perhaps the first hadith is not advocating this meaning. There are other traditions that present the notion of a First created being. An instance for this could be Ja'far al-Ṣādiq's (702 -765) narration in which he mentions *'aql* as "the first creature God created among the spiritual immaterial beings on the right side of the throne from his light" (al-Kulayni 1422AH, 400).

## Conclusion: An Islamic Version of Cosmology and Ontology

Ṣadrā's commentary reveals a metaphysical reflection upon the creation of the intellect as the first existentiation/emanation from God. This then sets the stage for his detailed explanation, in both philosophical and religious language, of the close connection between the intellect and the way God brings about the cosmic order. Ṣadrā also ties his theory of the intellect to several other key philosophical and religious teachings pertaining to the nature of the cosmos and the function of the Prophet "*Muhammadan Reality*" in the divine plan as well as the importance of the intellect in relation to religion. The book of intellect and ignorance, as mentioned above, holds thirty-four narrations on the concept of intellect. In Ṣadrā's cosmology *'aql* and ontology have a gradational nature which includes all of their functions, from the first intellect to the Essential-Substance faculties or aptitudes, the speculative faculty, and the practical faculty.[10]

We saw that according to different scholars the intellect mentioned in the first hadith is not the philosophical first intellect or the first created being. But the question is why Ṣadrā discusses the cosmic intellect when commenting this hadith. It should be noticed that Ṣadrā's commentary does not only interpret the first hadith. Rather it is an inclusive commentary that tries to collectively interpret a number of traditions and find out the different meanings and functions of the intellect. He finally wants to explain his vision based on the narrations which refer to *'aql*, as Muhammadan Light, pen, Cherub-Angel (*Malakun Karrubī*), or as the first created being. Ṣadrā emphasises that all these names are finally referring to a single reality. Whether philosophically or religiously, *'aql* plays a vital role in Ṣadrā's scheme of cosmology and ontology. It is the origin and return of the ascending and descending arc in the circle of existence. Ṣadrā, moreover, has adapted the notion of the first intellect to the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-Haqīqat al-Muḥammadīya*) and to prove this, he applies both intellectual arguments and revelation.

Literalists opposing philosophers and Sufis have always rejected applying philosophical notions to interpret religious texts. In response to this claim, in his prologue to *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Ṣadrā reminds his readers that hadith, like the Qur'an, have both inward and outward meanings and those who only possess knowledge of the outward are not capable of reaching the core meaning. Not only does he apply philosophical arguments in his commentary, but also esoteric exegesis.

To conclude on Ṣadrā's view on *'aql*, it becomes clear that the notion of *'aql* that is proposed in the narrations—including the First Intellect, in-born intellect, applied intellect, speculation, theoretical or practical intellect—are all gradations of one reality that according to different states, degrees or levels have certain attributes and characteristics and that each term is a manifestation of the *'aql* in one of those levels. Each station of *'aql* has specific rules and instances. Ṣadrā uncovers those rules from narrations of the book of intellect and ignorance. Some narrations show the cosmological and ontological reality of *'aql* which, therefore, are expressing those attributes, and other narrations represent it as a human faculty, and thereby propose the attributes related to a specific station. In a sense, the relation between the first intellect and the faculty of thinking in individuals in the Islamic intellectual tradition is like the example of the sun and the moon. Without sunshine, the moon will remain in darkness.

In Ṣadrā's scheme of the *'aql*, it is important to see how he unifies *'aql* with Muḥammadan Reality. This is the key point for offering an Islamic version of the cosmology and ontology of the First Intellect.

This is also where his cosmology differs from that of Peripatetics such as Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Sīnā's first created being is merely the first intellect, while Ṣadrā, using his methodology of philosophical and Sufi theology, is able to expand the notion and uncover its other dimensions. This unification therefore means that grasping the reality of *'aql* and its rules—in the sense that Ṣadrā depicts it—is equal to grasping the reality of revelation for they originate from one point.

In Ṣadrā's ontological and cosmological scheme, *'aql* and revelation are manifestations of one and the same reality and therefore they cannot contradict each other, hence he applies philosophical arguments regarding religious interpretation. The goal of his philosophy is not separate from the goal of his religious beliefs, rather through both he is seeking perfection, knowledge of the Real, and eternal salvation.  In Ṣadrā's cosmology, there is harmony in the universe and one needs to intellectually contemplate and purify one's soul to reach the inward and unseen to grasp it. There is a narration in which Imam al-Kāḍhim (d.799) indicates that God has two guides for man, one is the external which is the Prophet and the other one is *'aql* which is the inner (al-Kulayni 1422AH, 64). Accordingly, Ṣadrā describes the one who rejects intellectual contemplation in revelation as the one who has lost his sights while believing that the sunshine will guide him. Ṣadrā's commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfi* is neither a work of an *akhbārī* nor an *uṣūlī* jurist, nor of a polemical theologian. Rather, it is the investigation of a philosopher who has made a methodology out of philosophy, Sufism, and theology to offer a transcendent philosophical view of existence and revelation.

## Notes

1   We have listed a number of scholarly works on the definition of *'aql*, as follows: F. Rahman, 'Aḳl, Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition; Gardet, L. 'Aḳliyyāt, Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition; Boer, Tj. De, 'Aḳl, Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2013. Reference. 04 September 2013 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/akl-COM_0038>;
Kermani, Navid, Intellect, Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān; Chittick, William C.; F. Rahman,'AQL (intellect, intelligence, reason), Encyclopedia IRANICA, Vol. II, Fasc. 2, pp. 194-198; Grunebaum, G. E. von Concept and Function of Reason in Islamic Ethics, Oriens, Vol. 15 (Dec. 31, 1962),  pp. 1-17; Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Intellect and Intuition: Their Relationship from the Islamic Perspective, Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 13, No. 1 & 2. (Winter-Spring, 1979); Modarressi, Hossein, Rationalism and Traditionalism in Shi'i Jurisprudence A Preliminary Survey, Studia Islamica, No. 59. (1984), pp. 141-158; Crow, Karim Douglas, the Intellect in Islamic Thought: Mind and Heart, KATHA - The Official Journal of the Centre for Civilizational Dialogue, 2 (2006), pp. 1-22.

2    *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* includes eight chapters as follows:
The book of Intellect and Ignorance, (*al-'aql wa l-jahl*) with 34 narrations; The book of priority of knowledge, (*Kitāb Faḍl al-'ilm*) with 176 narrations; The book of Divine Unity, (*Kitāb at-Tawḥīd*) with 212 narrations; The book of God's argument/ proof, (*Kitāb al-Ḥujjah*) with 1015 narrations; The book of belief and infidelity, (*Kitāb al-Imān wa al-Kufr*) with 1609 narrations; The book of supplication, (*Kitāb al-Du'ā*) with 409 narrations; The book of magnificence of Qur'ān, (*Kitāb 'adhamat al-Qur'ān*) with 124 narrations; The book of social relations, (*Kitāb al-mu'āsharah*) with 464 narrations.

3    Mir Dāmād wrote another work known as *al-Ta'līqa 'alā al-Kāfī*, that includes his commentary mainly on the three chapters of Intellect and ignorance (*al-'aql wa l-jahl*), priority of knowledge (*Kitāb Faḍl al-'ilm*)  and Divine Unity. He also commented on some hadiths explaining and arguing the existence of God (*Kitāb al-Ḥujjah*).

4    In the Followings Some of them are listed:

1.    Commentary of Muhammad Ali ibn Muhammad al-Balāghī al-Najafī (d.1592).
2.    Commentary of Mirza Rafī'a (d.1627). He was Majlisī's Master.
3.    Commentary of Mulla Mohammad Amin ibn Muhammad Sharif al-Istarābādī (d. 1627).
4.    Annotation to the book of *al-Rudah min al-Kāfī* by Mulla Muhammad Ḥossein ibn Yahyā al-Nurī (d.?). He studied Islamic sciences with Majlisī.
5.    Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzi (d. 1640), known as Mulla Ṣadrā, his scholarly work offers a detailed exposition of the first two chapter of *al-Uṣūl al-Kāfī.*
6.    Commentary of some of Shi'a scholars (anonymous), written in 1647.
7.    The scholarly comments of Mulla Ṣālih al-Māzandarānī (d.1671). This is a commentary on *al-Usūl* and *al-Rawzah* of *al-Kāfī.* Author in his work first examines chains (*isnād*) of the hadiths then he discusses the important terms.
8.    Commentary of Amir Ismail al-Khātūn Abādī (d. 1701). He was an *Akhbārī* and is well-known for his attacks on the *Usūlī* movement among Shi'a scholars.
9.    Commentary of Mīrzā Muhammad Bāqir ibn Muhammad Ibrāhīm al-Hamadānī (d. 1804).
10.    Commentary of Mulla Hossein al-Sajasī al-Zanjānī (d.1903). He relied on Ṣadrā's commentary in most of his work and has worked on three first chapters of *Uṣūl al-Kāfī.*
11.    Commentary of 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Muẓaffar, namely *al-Shāfī fī Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī* first published in 1956 in the city of Najaf.

5    Ṣadrā states: "Know my believer brother: the science of hadith is like Qur'an that includes an outward (*ẓāhir*), an inward (*bāṭin*), concise (*mujmal*), clear (*mubayyin*), exegesis (*tafsir*), spiritual hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*), firm (*muḥkam*), allegorical (*mutashābih*), abrogated (*nāsikh*) and excludes (*mansūkh*). As one can find in the Qur'an verses discussing knowledge of spiritual unveiling that only people of Allah and people of Qur'an are selected to understand that are difficult concepts of knowledge of Tawhid, knowledge of Angels, Books, Prophets, the resurrection of bodies and souls […] likewise ḥadīths are divided to knowledge of the world and hereafter, knowledge of devotional practice and knowledge of unveiling, the understanding of which is devoted to by people of God and they are those that God has exalted, referring to them in 'whosoever possess knowledge of the book' (Qur'an, 13:43), and 'and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge' (Qur'an, 3:7), and God alludes to this knowledge when He says: 'He grants wisdom to whom he pleases; and he to whom wisdom is granted receive indeed a benefit overflowing' (Qur'an, 2:269)… and that is the appreciated knowledge in the Book and tradition (Sunnah)" (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2005, pp. 170-1).  Also, there is a chapter in the 2nd Volume of *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*,

called 'Chapter on the narrations that indicates their hadiths is utmost difficult'. Based on those Narrations only those who God tested their faith can afford and understand it.

6    The English translation of the original narration by Karim Crew; see Karim D. Crow, Ṣadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute (S.I.P.R.In). http://www.mullaṢadrā. org/new_site/english/Paper Bank/Transcendent Philosophy/45-78376 @ Crow.htm. It appears that Ṣadrā, based on his Shi'a collection and *isnād*, takes the authenticity of this narration as granted or following the same pattern as the other narrations from the prophet of Islam. Although this hadith is narrated in both Shi'a and Sunni collections, there have always been concerns about its authenticity. Crew alludes to the fact that in the earliest sources the hadith with this format including "come forward" and "go back" goes back to the 3/4th Hijri centuries. According to him, this indicates that the hadith has a doubtful *isnād*. Majlisī (d.1110/1698), among the other Shi'a scholars, narrates the hadith in his voluminous *Biḥār al-Anwār* (1:97). He nevertheless asserts that it was not found among the authentic hadiths and is taken from Sunni sources. He mentions that Shia sources such as he gathered in his *al-Samā' al-'Ālam* suggest that the first created being was water or air. He, nevertheless, mentions that the *'aql* in the Shia sources is categorized as the first created being among the Spirituals (*al-Ruhānīyīn*) which makes it possible to consider the existence of other beings before it. Although we are not examining the *isnād* problem in this paper, it is worth mentioning that the frequency of its usage in the Shia sources made it generally acceptable for them to admit that the first created being, at least at the ontological level, must be an immaterial being. As in some hadith, the light of the prophet and Imams are positioned as the first created being. Finally, as al-Kāfi and other Shi'a hadith collections display, the importance of the *'aql* in the Shi'a tradition is beyond dispute.

7    For a complete analysis and assessment of Majlisī's claim, as well as a deep discussion on the necessity of intellectual contemplation on the Qur'an and ḥadīth, it is worth mentioning 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's annotation to Majlisī's Biḥār al-anwār (Ḥashiyah bar Biḥār al-anwār) and Mirzā Mahdī Iṣfahanī's Abwāb al-Hudā. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1904–1981) commented on the 6 volumes of the Biḥār al-anwār in which he criticized Majlisī's view of intellectual interpretation. He states that Majlisī was not able to deeply grasp philosophical concepts. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, due to enormous pressure from traditionists and devoted followers of Majlisī, had to stop his commentary and the publisher was forced to publish the remaining volumes without Ṭabāṭabā'ī's critical review.

8    Karim Crow has undertaken a number of scholarly studies on the notion of the *'aql* in the pre-Islamic, Islamic and Modern eras. One of his researches analyzes the different understandings of *'aql* in Islamic and Modern understandings. Moreover, he illustrates some new phrases that are a result of the Modern life-style such as 'electronic mind.' (*al-Mukh al-Electroni*). See his "The Intellect in Islamic Thought: Mind and Heart;" and "Reason, Physicalism, and Islam."

9    I had access to an audio recording of Muntaẓerī's lecture in a private collection in 2013 in Tehran.

10    Ṣadrā defines six meanings or functions for *'aql* that encompass its different functions.

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