Kāshānī's Impact on Mullā Ṣadrā's Contribution to The Problem of Mental Existence: A Historical-Comparative Study

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Abstract

Original Research

Discussions on the works of lesser-known philosophers in history can illuminate various issues, helping to establish historical connections between various thinkers. One such philosopher is Abū al-Hasan Kāshānī (d. 1558), a 16th-century figure whose views have not yet been thoroughly studied. He authored numerous works in the field of philosophy and logic, many of which remain unpublished or unedited. His treatise on *mental existence* (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*) contains detailed and profound contributions. Mullā Ṣadrā (c. 1571-1635/40 AD) authored several works on mental existence based on Kāshānī's views. For example, it was Kāshānī who first used the distinction between primary predication (*al-ḥaml al-awwalī*) and common technical predication (*al-ḥaml al-shāyiʿ al-ṣanāʿī*) in solving the puzzle of mental existence. Mullā Ṣadrā adopted Kāshānī's terminology in his magnum opus *Al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*. We demonstrate Kāshānī's influence on Mullā Ṣadrā's account of mental existence, utilizing a comparative and descriptive methodology. The material of this research includes Kāshānī's manuscript on mental existence as well as Mullā Ṣadrā's works on this issue. The authors edited and revised Kāshānī's manuscript and during the editing realized this important influence by comparing it with Mullā Ṣadrā's works.

Keywords

Introduction

The distinction between primary predication (TP) and common technical predication (CTP) is typically credited to Mullā Ṣadrā as a basis for solving the problem of mental existence. However, we argue that Mullā Ṣadrā adopted much of the relevant textual material from Abū al-Ḥasan Kāshānī's treatise on 'mental existence.' Nonetheless, considering Mullā Ṣadrā's perspectives, his final solution to the problem, unlike Kāshānī's, relies on an innovative ontology of knowledge rather than merely on the distinction between TP and CTP. This conclusion was reached after conducting a critical edition of Kāshānī's manuscript and comparing it with Mullā Ṣadrā's *Al-Asfār*.

Research Scope

Although this article is thematically placed in the domain of the history of Islamic philosophy, it is a comparative study too, dealing with the opinions of two philosophers on a specific issue, and pointing out their similarities and differences.

Research Method: Comparative-Descriptive Analysis

After we edited and published Kāshānī's manuscript on mental existence, we noticed some points that were considered new findings in the history of Islamic philosophy as these findings showed that what Mullā Ṣadrā considered his own initiative in discussing mental existence had, in fact, been proposed by Kāshānī much earlier than Mullā Ṣadrā. While comparing the works of Mullā Ṣadrā and Kāshānī, we described and analyzed their views, so the research has been conducted using a descriptive, comparative, and analytical method. On the other hand, it can also be considered a kind of phenomenological method because what is presented as a description is actually a type of phenomenological method that allows the researcher to put himself in the author's position and experience his point of view from his perspective, and then, in the process of comparison, show the innovative aspect of the work.

Mental Existence Theory

Mental Existence Theory (MET) deals with the characteristics of the mental form of an external object, regarding their similarities and differences. Things

have different kinds of existence (concrete, subjective, or linguistic existence). According to Mullā Ṣadrā, mental existence is one of the levels of existence, though a *shadowy* one: Mental form has no effect, and is dependent on the human mind for its existence (Parildar, 2015). Mental existence is a mode of existence other than the concrete existence exemplified in the everyday world of material things (Black, 1999). It includes 'feelings, thoughts, sensations' (Sabzvari, 2011) and deals with conceptualism rather than realism (Zamboni, 2023). Figure 1 shows some main features of mental existence as defined by scholars from different viewpoints.
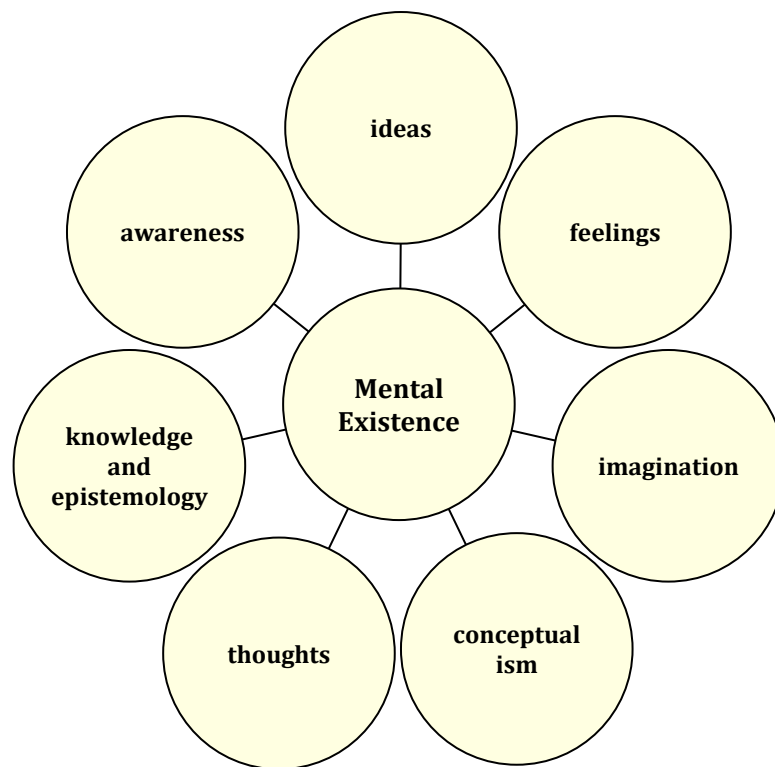

Figure 1: Features of mental existence

The Relationship Between 'Mental Existence' and Islamic Epistemology

In traditional Islamic philosophy, the term 'mental existence' was used instead of the contemporary term ''epistemology,' so the issue of mental existence is closely related to the issue of knowledge (*ʿilm*).

Among the researchers who studied epistemology from the perspective of Islamic philosophy, we can mention Ḥāʾirī Yazdī (1992), who refers to the relationship between knowledge and the knower (ʿālim) by referring to the primacy of existence over knowledge. He argues that human knowledge is knowledge 'by presence' (ḥuḍūrī), neither acquired (ḥuṣūlī) nor conceptual, and it is the foundation of all other human knowledge. In 'knowledge by presence' (al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī), knowledge and the known (maʿlūm) are one and the same, that is, the existence of knowledge is the same as the existence of the known, and the knower discovers the known through the presence of the known.

1. Research on Islamic Epistemology

To highlight the original feature of our article, we studied several recent articles on Islamic epistemology neither of which viewed mental existence from our point of view. For example, Atmaja and Mustopa (2020) compared Islamic and Western epistemology. Al-Jābirī defined three major currents for Islamic epistemology: expressive, mystical, and argumentative (Zohdi, 2017). Azarm (2011) also introduced conceptual knowledge, revealed, and derived knowledge, and the unity of thoughts in an Islamic definition of epistemology.

The Importance of Kāshānī's Works

1. Apparently Novel Ideas Previously Presented by Kāshānī

Discussing the ideas of lesser-known philosophers whose works have been seldom studied can reveal nuanced philosophical insights that are crucial for advancing discussions and deepening understanding of philosophical issues. Essentially, establishing a philosophical tradition and presenting new, innovative viewpoints require acknowledging past achievements. A philosopher or thinker might mistakenly believe they have introduced a novel idea if they neglect to explore the historical context of their research problem, unaware that their findings had already been articulated by others. Therefore, studying the views of lesser-known philosophers is not only necessary but also pivotal in enriching philosophical discourse.

2. Kāshānī's Ideas: The Criteria for Measuring the Novelty of Other Relevant Ideas

Analyzing earlier philosophical ideas can elucidate the quality and extent of innovation expressed in the ideas of later philosophers. Recent philosophers develop their original perspectives by reflecting on the views of their

predecessors and proposing their own distinctive contributions. Therefore, it is only through examining the opinions of earlier philosophers that we can determine the contribution of new ideas to the completion of a philosophical issue and assess their originality.

For example, the distinction between TP and CTP in solving the mental existence puzzle (Figure 6) is often attributed to Mullā Ṣadrā (1571-1636) while this distinction had already been proposed by Kāshānī.

3. Why Were Kāshānī's Works Neglected?

As with many lesser-known philosophers, the main reason for the lack of attention to Kāshānī's views is that his manuscripts had not undergone the process of critical edition and publication. Other reasons include inaccurate cataloging of their works, natural deterioration of manuscripts over time, and limited access to manuscript collections worldwide.

Abū al-Ḥasan Kāshānī

Abū al-Ḥasan Kāshānī is among the 16th-century philosophers, theologians (*mutikallimīn*), astronomers, and mathematicians who was overlooked in the history of Islamic philosophy. There is no detailed report about his birth date, but the available sources and documents show that he was born in Qāʾin, a town in Khorasan province, and after a while, he settled in Kashan. He died in 1558. He lived during the reign of King Ṭahmāsab of the Ṣafavīd Era and received his education in the Shiraz school of philosophy. Kāshānī was a contemporary of Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥafrī and a teacher of Aḥmad Fanāʾī Ḥalḫālī. Trained under prominent professors such as Qīyāṯa al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī, Kāshānī wrote numerous works in the field of philosophy and logic (Tehrani, 1983).

Many biographers testified to Kāshānī's scientific excellence and strength. According to Amīna al-ʿĀmilī (2000), Ḥasan Beg Rumlu stated in his book, *Aḥsan al-Tawārīḫ*, that Kāshānī was one of the best and wisest scholars of the time and a collector of sciences and wisdom, with perfect virtues. Due to his superior nature, he was very polite and had no equal in eloquence. He adorned the ears and minds of his audience with the jewels of his virtues, and because of his sharp understanding and speed of communication, no one would argue with him.

Afandī (1982), the author of *Riyāḍ al-ʿUlamā,* wrote: "Kāshānī is noble, virtuous, learned, a jurist, and theologian, well-known in the era of King Ṭahmāsb Ṣafavī."

Kāshānī's treatise on mental existence includes arguments, objections, and

responses. Mullā Ṣadrā was significantly influenced by Kāshānī's discussions on this issue, using his phrases and words in some of his works without attribution. Surprisingly, Kāshānī's name has never been cited in the extensive research on Mullā Ṣadrā's life, education, and philosophical contributions. Many ideas regarding mental existence in Mullā Ṣadrā's book, *Al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*, were drawn directly from Kāshānī's works.

This research explores Kāshānī's influence on Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas concerning mental existence. The present article is the first introduction to his works and influence. It could be boldly asserted that no Ṣadrian scholar has previously proposed the demonstration of Kāshānī's impact on Mullā Ṣadrā regarding the issue of mental existence. Therefore, an analysis of Kāshānī's thoughts is deemed necessary and crucial. Delving into his views plays a significant role in elucidating obscure points in the history of Islamic philosophy related to the problem of mental existence.

Research Literature

For an exploration into the origins of the debate on mental existence, only the writings of scholars who have addressed this issue peripherally, without delving into it or dedicating a separate chapter to it are available.

Mental Existence as a Peripheral Discussion

1. Fārābī (d. 950)

Fārābī implicitly addressed mental existence as well (Nasr & Leaman, 2008). For example, he mentioned the points A and B below:

> **A: When we contemplate a *tree*, it acquires a mental existence.** Fārābī, (2013) in his definition of intellection (*taʿaqqul*), believes that reasoning about an external object and the relevant imaginations imply the existence of its mental form within the mind of the knower (*mudrik*). He asserts that the act of 'thinking about and imagining material objects' involves their mental form or representation, which is abstract and devoid of any physical feature such as volume or weight

B: Universal concepts have mental existence. In a discussion about classification terminology, specifically about the truth of the genus (*jins*) and differentia (*faṣl*) (see sections 3-4), Fārābī believes that universal concepts, such as 'animal,' exist only in the internal mental world not in the external real world. In other words, the concept of 'animal' can apply to numerous external instances (*maṣādīq*) such as humans, horses, and sheep. Considering that every external object is particular (*juzʾī*), that is, it does not apply to numerous instances, the existence of universal concepts indicates that such concepts have mental existence, being located in a container (*ẓarf*), the mind (Farabi, 1992)

2. Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037)

In Ibn Sīnā's view, imagining an object that is *not* existent in the external world indicates that its image exists in the mind. One of his famous examples in this regard is 'the sea of mercury,' which lacks external existence and possesses a mental existence. In other words, an object can have a mental existence without having an external existence (Ibn Sina, 1984).

3. Suhrawardī (d. 1191)

Suhrawardī (2003) maintained that objects exist in the mind in a manner other than their external existence, and argued that wholesale denial of mental existence could imply accepting an intermediary between existence and non-existence.

3-1- Intermediary Theory (Ḥāl Theory)

Some theologians have deemed the concurrence (*ijtimāʿ*) of existence and nonexistence impossible, yet they maintain that their simultaneous absence (*irtifāʿ*) is possible. They assume that certain entities are neither existent nor non-existent, positing a mediacy between existence and non-existence known as the intermediary state (*ḥāl*). Some Ashʿarites, such as Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī and Qāḍī Abū Bakr Bāqillānī, and some Muʿtazilites, such as Abū Hashim Jabbāʾī, have endorsed this view (Taftazani, 1989).

Meanwhile, the adherence to the existence of 'universals' (*kullīyāt*) is one reason for the inclination towards the intermediary theory, as universal concepts are neither external/real nor non-existent. Suhrawardī also addressed this important point (Groff & Leaman, 2007). Uuniversals are neither external, nor non-existent, but intermediary states (Sabzvari, 2011).

Independent Discussions on Mental Existence

It seems that skepticism[1] about knowledge and its truthfulness as well as doubts regarding an intermediary state between existence and non-existence, which ultimately led to the intermediary theory, prompted the development of a distinct, independent discussion on mental existence.

1. Al-Rāzī, Ṭ zī, Taftāzānī, Ibn Kamūna, Mīrdāmād

For the first time, al-Fakhra al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) dedicated a separate discussion to MET in a section titled 'Arguments for Mental Existence', in the book *Al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqīyyah* (Rāzī, 1990).

Khwaja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) explored the issue as well. The significant factor contributing to the popularization of this topic among theologians and philosophers is Ṭūsī's book *Tajrīd al-Iʿtiqād* (1932) where he examined the issue of mental existence independently under the title "A Chapter on the Division of Mental and External Existence,' providing arguments for mental existence (Tusi, 1932).

Subsequently, other thinkers such as Taftāzānī (1989) and Ibn Kamūna (2008) proposed arguments to prove mental existence. Moreover, this issue also attracted the attention of Mīrdāmād (Alsalami, 2021). Mullā Ṣadrā has also dedicated an independent section to this topic in several of his works, such as *Al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*, where he analyzed its various aspects in different chapters (Mulla Sadra, 1989).

Mental Existence in Islamic Philosophy

Muslim philosophers explained mental existence within two dimensions: 1) Proving the reality of the mind (section 3-3-1); and 2) correspondence between mental forms and external forms (section 3-3-2).

1. The Reality of the Mind

To prove the reality of the mind, let us consider statement C:

> **C: The union of mutually exclusive things is impossible**

Affirming statement C entails that there is a reality called the mind, because

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1. Ibn Sīnā (1984), in the eighth section of the third article of *Ilāhīyyāt al-Shifā,ʾ* responded to the skepticism around the question of knowledge as an accident.

affirming the non-existence of a set of mutually exclusive things depends on imagining them, which will be possible only in the realm of the mind.

2. Agreement Between Mental Form and External Form

Muslim philosophers claim that when imagining an object such as a *tree*, its form and substance (*jowhar*) are present in the mind. They argue that there is a correspondence between the mental form and external form so that the mental form of the tree represents the external existence of the tree itself and not some other object.

For example, *fire* in the external world produces effects such as heat and burning. However, mental existence refers to the form or image of an external object within the mental realm—an image devoid of external effects. The only shared attribute between external fire and mental fire is their substance. In other words, they are similar to each other only in terms of their quiddity. Yet, due to their existential differences, the effects of external fire, such as its burning feature, cannot be compared to those of mental fire (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Mental fire versus external fire: Mental fire is a mode of knowledge; external fire is a real object. They have the same quiddity, but their effects and existential status are not equal.

If we suppose that a mental existent is like a body (with form and color), when placed in water or in a clear crystal bowl, it can be seen that the problem of mental existence is solved, because, by supposing this, insofar as the imagined body exists in its mental place, its form and color are completely reflected in that place (Hairi Yazdi, 2017).

Objections Against Mental Existence

Some scholars have raised objections against mental existence, such as the statement D below. These objections suggest that philosophers' arguments for proving mental existence are insufficient. Nonetheless, many other philosophers have embraced it.

> **D: A large object needs a large container.** If, as per MET, the mental form is identical to the external object, then large objects must be able to exist in the mind just as they exist in the external world. However, since a large physical object cannot fit into a smaller one, it follows that mental existence is not tenable.

Authors' analysis: Therefore, mental existence does not imply a real union with an external object. In the above argument, it is assumed that the union (*ittiḥād*) of an intellectual agent (*ʿāqil*) and an intellectualized object (*maʿqūl*) means the physical entry of the external object into the mind, but Mullā Ṣadrā Sadra and Kāshānī reject such a view. In the mind, we do not have the "real" material substance of the object, but rather its abstract and immaterial appearance. Therefore, this view is based on a misunderstanding of union in the epistemology of Islamic philosophy.

Mullā Ṣullā's Approach to Mental Existence in the Research of Other Writers

According to Khaleqi (2022), Mullā Ṣadrā's statements regarding mental existence can be categorized into three groups: 1) Mental existence deals with abstract forms created by the mind; 2) mental existence is a level of the existence of things; 3) mental existence deals with both presumed mental forms and a level of the existence of things.

Fazeli et al. (2019) observed that knowledge in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical works is influenced by external information, especially visual data, including both the particulars and the universals.

Pashayi (2011) maintains that Mullā Ṣadrā, unlike his predecessors, considered a shadowy (*ẓillī*) being for mental existence too, a shade from the reality of knowledge, regarding both of them as two sides of a single reality. In this view, mental existence is more perfect than external existence through which the problem of correspondence can be established easily.

Javadi et al. (2013) described that according to Mullā Ṣadrā, 'each mental category is the very category based on the TP rather than on the CTP and what occurs to the mind as a concept is a psychic quality (*al-kayf-al-nafsānī*) in its essence and reality.

Saeedimehr (2014) considers three main claims for a strong version of mental existence theory: 1) Perception implies the existence of an idea in the mind of the subject; 2) the reality of the perception is nothing but the mental idea; and

3) this mental idea corresponds with the external perceived object. He examined an interpretation of Mullā Ṣadrā's view that accepts the first claim and rejects the second.

Rezaei and Hashemi (2010) argue that the unique feature of Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge lies in the fact that, contrary to modern epistemology which is separate from ontology, it is a part of his ontological system and cannot be discussed in isolation. Rather than pure epistemology or ontology, Mullā Ṣadrā has an 'onto-epistemology,' according to which truth and existence are two sides of the same coin. They explained two features of Sadrā's ontological doctrines: 'the primacy of existence' and 'the gradation of existence,' both dealing with 'existence,' which is the cornerstone of Mullā Ṣadrā's system. In Sadrā's ontological definition of knowledge, knowledge is a mode of (immaterial) existence and is identical with presence. Mullā Ṣadrā's account of real known objects indicates that 'mental existences,' created by the soul when confronted with external objects, are the real known objects. In this study, identity refers to the relationship between known objects and the knower from Mullā Ṣadrā's viewpoint. The role of knowledge, as a factor in changing the substance of the soul, is explained by means of 'substantial motion,' which is an important ontological doctrine in Mullā Ṣadrā's system. The two critical points in Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemology deal with the issue of correspondence and his theory of truth. They argued that Mullā Ṣadrā is not clear about the issue of correspondence (between mental entities and the external world) and therefore his theory of knowledge cannot cover experimental knowledge.

According to Marcotte (2011), regarding the nature of mental entities and the demonstration of their existence as the major epistemological issues, Ibn Sīnā had admitted the existence of distinct mental entities but didn't elaborate on it. Mullā Ṣadrā elaborated on these issues deeply, for example, in his *Al-Asfār*, but in line with his own ontology. In a much less studied work, *Al-Masāʾil al-Qudsiyyah*, he explained this issue in much more depth and introduced three important arguments to prove the existence of mental entities: 1) a teleological proof; 2) a proof based on the ability to judge (between two mental concepts); and 3) a proof based on the universality of mental concepts. Marcotte concluded that Mullā Ṣadrā was more concerned with ontological (as distinct from epistemological) questions than with the nature of the correspondence between mental entities and the external world.

Kāshānī's View on Mental Existence

In this section, we first discuss the arguments presented in Kāshānī's treatise, 'Mental Existence,' and then outline Mullā Ṣadrā's perspective on this issue in
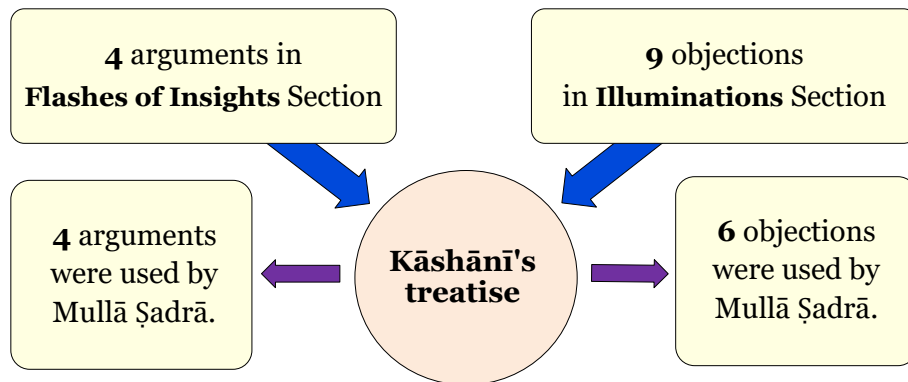
his *Al-Asfār* (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Arguments and objections in Kāshānī's treatise as reflected in Mullā Ṣadrā's treatise.

As shown in Figure 3, Kāshānī divides his treatise into a 'Flashes of Insights' (*Lamaʿ*) and two 'Illuminations' (*Ishrāq* 1 and *Ishrāq* 2). In the Flashes of Insights Section (see section 4-1), Kāshānī provides four arguments to prove mental existence, which were also presented by Mullā Ṣadrā. We expound upon these arguments. The objections introduced in *Ishrāq* 1, or Illumination 1, are discussed in section 5 of this article.

Argument 1: Affirmative Propositions about Non-Existent Things

Kāshānī sought to prove mental existence by appealing to the truth of affirmative propositions about non-existent subjects. To illustrate this argument, consider proposition F, where there is an affirmative predicate and a non-existent subject:

F. *Sīmurgh* is a bird	
Simurgh	Is a bird.
Subject	Predicate
Affirmative proposition	

In example F, the truth of the predicate requires the existence of a subject, and since the subject (*Sīmurgh*) does not exist in the external world, it must exist in

the mind. This argument proves the existence of an internal realm (*mawṭin*) and a container other than the external world: the mind (Figure 4). Kāshānī presented this argument along with three objections and responses. Mullā Ṣadrā also discussed this argument along with the same objections and responses (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, p. 114). (See Table 1 and Figure 4)**.**
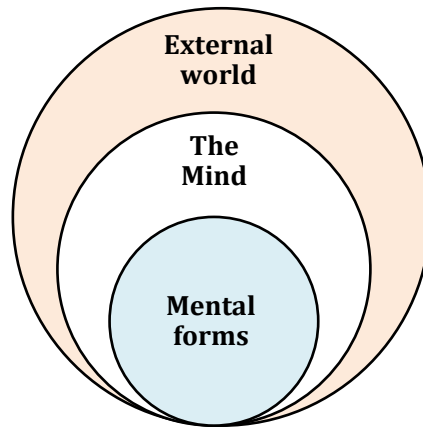
**Figure 4: Mental forms are contained in the container (ẓarf) of the mind.
The mind itself is an external entity.**

Argument 2: Imagination of Non-Existent Things

This argument hinges on the ability to imagine non-existent things. Non-existent entities like the *Sīmurgh* or the union of mutually exclusive things are imaginable; though they are distinct: *Sīmurgh* is a 'possible non-existent' entity, meaning it could exist in some form in the external world, whereas the union of 'mutually exclusive things' is impossible and can never exist in the external world. Therefore, the fact that we discern distinctions between such images indicates that they are in a mode of 'existence.' Since such entities do not exist in the external/real world, they must exist in the mind and possess mental existence. This argument is accompanied by an objection and a response in the works of Kāshānī and Mullā Ṣadrā (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 168-169). (See Table 1).

Argument 3: Perception of Universal Concepts

This argument is based on the perception of universal concepts. Universals, common characteristics or qualities shared by a set of particular entities, are abstract, while particulars, identifiable according to their types, properties, or relations, are concrete. A particular entity, such as *a specific sprig of a red rose in a vase on your desk*, is categorized under the universal category of plants.

Particular entities are instances of an abstract universal concept. For example, *humanity* is a universal abstract concept, whereas the personhood of *Socrates* is a particular concrete concept. Given that what exists in the external world is specific, and because genus or differentia are abstract universal concepts, not existing in the external world, such concepts exist only in the realm of mind and not in the external world. This argument was raised along with two objections and their responses in the works of Kāshānī and Mullā Ṣadrā (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 272-273). (See Table 1).

Argument 4: Perception of Nonexistent Attributes

The crux of this argument lies in considering the perception of nonexistent attributes. Humans can imagine attributes such as impossibility (*imtināʿ*) that cannot be found in the external world. However, since ascribing an attribute (*ṣifat*) or adjective is impossible without a predication/noun (*ism*), there must be an internal realm and a container separate from the external world, in which the attribution exists. This realm is what we refer to as the 'mind.' This argument is presented without addressing any objections (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 274-275).

As shown in Table 1, Mullā Ṣadrā adopted Kāshānī's 1st, 2nd, and 4th arguments in the 'mental existence' section of *Al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah* along with mentioning all the objections. Regarding the 3rd argument, after discussing the main points, he only stated one of the two objections and responded to it. In the following, Kāshānī's view will be explained

Objections

Arguments	Kāshānī	Mullā Ṣadrā
Argument 1	With 3 objections and relevant responses	With 3 objections and relevant responses
Argument2	With 1 objection and 1 response	With 1 objection and 1 response
Argument 3	With 2 objections and relevant responses	*With 1 objection and 1 response*
Argument 4	With no objection	With no objection

**Table 1: Adoption of Kāshānī's arguments, objections, and responses
on mental existence in the treatise of Mullā Ṣadrā.**

Objection 1: The Impossibility of Imprinting a Large Body into a Small Place

Those who deny MET maintain that the theory is associated with the imprinting (*inṭibāʿ*) of large bodies (such as mountains, seas, and planets) in a small place (for example, the human mind). They contend that since the human mind is a limited container, it cannot accommodate large objects such as mountains, making mental existence impossible (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, p. 299).

Objection 2: The Necessity of Attributing the Properties of External Perceived Entities to the Mind

Opponents of MET argue that if mental existence were true, then imagining an external object would require the characteristics of that object to be formed in our minds. For example, if we imagine *cold water*, its coldness should be formed in our minds. Additionally, they contend that if we imagine two opposite things, since the union of mutually exclusive things is impossible, mental existence must also be impossible because two opposite things cannot be formed in the mind at the same time. Proponents of MET, however, suggest that it is the *universal concepts* of these characteristics that exist in the mind, rather than their external, objective, and particular quiddities.

Objection 3: The Union of Mutually Exclusive Things is Impossible.

This objection has two parts: 1) The union of substance and accident (*ʿaraḍ*) (see section 5-3-2); 2) the union of each one of the other 9 categories (Aristotle, 2001) with the category of quality (*kayf*)[1] (see section 5-3-3). This is the most fundamental objection raised against mental existence, to which scholars have provided various responses (see section 6).

1. Substance-Accident Union is Impossible

On the one hand, objects cannot be stripped of their substantial (*jowharī*) aspects, whether in mental or external form. On the other hand, philosophers maintain that the image of whatever object a person imagines is an extrinsic (*ʿāriḍī*) entity, that is, this image extrinsically occurs to the mind when a person confronts an external object. From this perspective, mental image is extrinsic, not existent before the confrontation with the object (Figure 5).

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1. Qualification or quality (ποιόν, *poion*, of what kind or quality).

mental form   **external object**

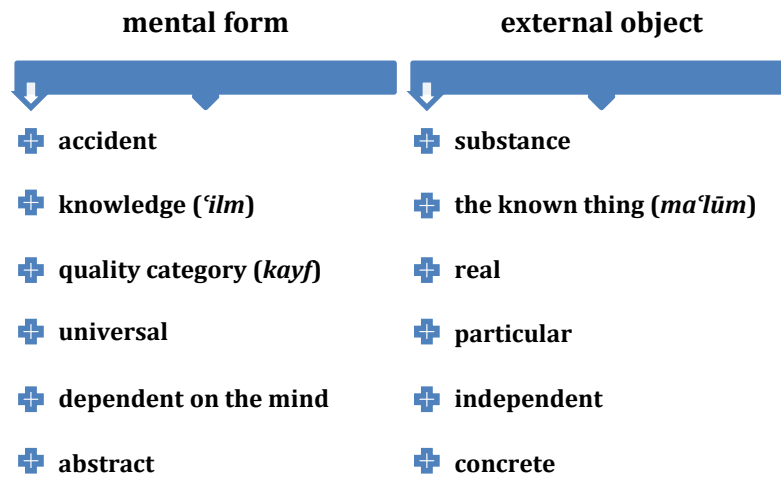| mental form	external object
✚ accident	✚ substance
✚ knowledge (*ʿilm*)	✚ the known thing (*maʿlūm*)
✚ quality category (*kayf*)	✚ real
✚ universal	✚ particular
✚ dependent on the mind	✚ independent
✚ abstract	✚ concrete

**Figure 5: Features of mental form versus features of an external object,
regarding substance and accident.**

Those who raised this objection contend that the mental image of all kinds of substances (such as intellect (*ʿaql*), body, form, matter, and soul) cannot be simultaneously substantial and accidental. In other words, they suggest that, according to this theory, the image of an object such as a *tree* is a substantial fact because it is an instance (*miṣdāq*) of substance, and due to its dependence on the mind, it is an accidental phenomenon. Thus, since this mental image and form cannot be coincidentally an instance of the accident and substance, MET cannot be accepted (Table 2).

(i)	Quality is defined as something that is inherently indivisible and non-relative. For example, the reality of color is itself inherently indivisible, but when applied to a body, color can be divided because the body is a coherent and integral entity. By dividing the body, its color is also divided. Quality, as an accident, encompasses various types, including psychic quality.
(ii)	An object will be a member and instance of a category only if it can produce the *effects* characteristic of that category. For example, the body (*jism*) will be a member of the set of the category of substance if it produces the same effects and characteristics of a substance. A substance is independent in the external realm. This feature, that is, independence from anything else, is present in all bodies, so *jism* is an instance of substance.

(iii)	An object cannot be an instance of multiple categories from one aspect or feature, as each category has distinctive effects and properties. For example, the physical body is an instance of the category of quality given its size, but considering that it is located in a certain place, it can be subsumed under the 'where' category. However, from the same single aspect, it cannot fall under both quality and 'where' categories.

Table 2: Three premises of objection 3

2. The Union of Quality with each one of the Other Nine Categories

The second part of objection 3 is the union of the category of quality with the other nine categories. To explain this objection, three premises should be considered (Table 2). As widely held by philosophers, knowledge and mental forms are categorized under psychic qualities as they exhibit the properties and effects of quality, such as indivisibility (Table 2, Premise ii). Philosophers maintain that the quiddities of mental objects are entirely consistent with the quiddities of external objects. For example, the quiddity of an external *tree* is categorized as substance, and accordingly, the quiddity of the mental *tree* is also categorized as substance. Therefore, the quiddity of the mental tree, in addition to being a substance, will also be categorized as quality. In other words, since the mental tree corresponds to the external tree, its quiddity is categorized as substance, and because of having the effects of quality [+knowledge] as its feature (Figure 5), it is also quality. This means that the mental form of the tree, from the same single aspect, its quiddity, is categorized as both a quality and a substance, and since the categories are inherently distinct from each other and non-combinable, one object cannot be an instance of both quality and substance from one aspect. Accordingly, MET cannot be accepted (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, p. 277).

Objection 4: Impossible Things Cannot have External Existence

The absence of a proper idea about mental existence led to a fourth objection against MET:

Premises:

G. Mental images of objects exist within the human mind, not in the external world.
H. The human mind itself is an external existent, just like other external existents.
I. The realm of mental existence is the human mind.

Objection: Premise H implies that mental forms also occur in the external/real realm, and so does mental existence. This contradicts the claims of philosophers who consider the things in the mind as mental, rather than external, entities (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, p. 311). If mental existence were an external existence, MET would require that the mental forms of impossible things have external existence, which is impossible.

Objection 5: Universality or Particularity of the Mental Form

Opponents of MET argue that mental existence requires an object to be both universal and particular, while these are mutually exclusive.

According to MET, the quiddity of an external object is identical to its mental quiddity. For example, the quiddity of a particular human individual, such as John, as a rational animal, exists in the mind of a knower with all of John's accidental characteristics, in such a way that John's image in the knower's mind is only relevant to John and not to anyone else.

Therefore, opponents of MET contend that MET requires an external object's mental form, which is universal, to be particular as external objects are particular. An object cannot be both universal and particular (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, p. 122; Mulla Sadra, 1989, pp. 304-305).

Objection 6: The Union of Mutually Exclusive Things is Impossible

According to the opponents of MET, acceptance of the theory requires the existence of impossible things (*mumtaniʿāt*), specifically the simultaneous existence of mutually exclusive things. They argue that if mental existence were possible, the existence of impossible things would be possible in our minds.

Accordingly, to imagine something impossible, such as the idea that 'God has a partner,' implies that the combination of 'a partner for God and God' is mutually exclusive. In other words, God has no partner and if there were a partner for God, God would not be God.

Therefore, the impossible notion that 'God has a partner' signifies a mental form of mutually exclusive things while any union of mutually exclusive things and all their hypothetical instances are impossible. Thus, affirming MET requires the union of mutually exclusive things, which is unacceptable (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 122-123; Mulla Sadra, 1989, p. 312).

In response, proponents of MET suggest that the union of mutually exclusive things is not possible in any realm, whether mental or external. Nonetheless, what is formed in the mind is the *concept* of the union of mutually exclusive

things, not its concrete real instance. Therefore, mental existence is a possible kind of existence.

Responses to Objection 3

Kāshānī goes on to articulate the responses offered by philosophers in this regard. In his view, some later scholars responded to these objections through the Phantom Theory (or *shabaḥ*) (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 124-125). However, Kāshānī does not accept this idea, because the arguments that confirm mental existence indicate the existence of an essential correspondence between the mental form and the external object.

Phantom Theory

According to the phantom theory (*shabaḥ*), there is no perfect match between the quiddity of mental form and the quiddity of external form, as the former is like a shadow resembling the shadow-casting object (the external form). Alternatively put, just as the shadow of a person only refers to that person, not a *table* or a *tree*, and since there is no complete similarity between the external quiddity of a person and the quiddity of his shadow, the mental form of a tree, a table, a book or any other object—such as a shadow—is only an indication of the same object, without referring to any other object. Thus, the quiddities of mental form and external form are not the same. This is the opposite of the opinion of philosophers who maintain that mental form and external form share a common quiddity.

In any case, the essential objection against the mental existence theory is the third objection—that is, 1) the mutually exclusive union of substance and accident; and 2) the union of two different categories in one mental form, from one aspect. Therefore, Kāshānī, and consequently Mullā Ṣadrā, cited responses offered by various scholars to this objection and finally expressed their point of view.

Ibn Sīnā's Response

In Ibn Sīnā's view, categories are different from each other and the existence of substance cannot lead to the categorization of mental substance as a quality, as it lacks the external effects of substance, that is, the mental form of substance is dependent on the soul and cannot be categorized as substance.

In other words, an external substance is defined as an independent quiddity. According to this definition, the mental form of a substance—that of humans or

any other object of five types of substance—is not a substance. The mental form of a substance has the properties and effects of quality, or the quality category, whose instances are indivisible. Philosophers maintain that a mental form, such as the concept of sweetness, is indivisible because of its abstract non-material property, with divisibility being a feature of the physical and material, rather than abstract objects. Therefore, since mental form is indivisible, it is categorized as a quality, without being an instance of substance. Ibn Sīnā believes this response will solve the problem of listing a single object under two contradictory categories. Only the concept of substance, not its definition, is true of the mental form of substance, which is an instance of the quality category (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 125-126; Mulla Sadra, 1989, pp. 277-278).

Ḥakīm Qūshjī (n.d.) believes that there is a difference between knowledge— or the mental form— and the substantially known thing (*maʿlūm bi-l-dhāt*). By keeping this distinction in mind, we can respond to the famous objection against mental existence, namely, the categorization of a single object in two contradictory categories. In his opinion, when perceiving and imagining an external object, the mind grasps two different realities: 1) the known thing: the substantial, universal entity, which is independent of the mind; 2) knowledge: the accidental, particular entity, dependent on the mind. Since knowledge (or mental form) is categorized as a psychic quality, it is an accident, dependent on the mind. However, given that the substantially known thing is something substantial and universal, knowledge and the known thing are distinct entities. In other words, when imagining an object like a *tree*, there are two different things in the mind: the known thing, which is essential and universal, and knowledge, which is accidental and particular. Regarding the duality between the substantially known thing and knowledge, the well-known problem of mental existence, that is, the categorization of a single mental form under two different categories, is resolved (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 125-126; Mulla Sadra, 1989, p. 282).

Kāshānī presents Dashtakī's response with the premises and objections that the latter introduced. As a response to this objection, the categorization of one mental form under two different categories, Dashtakī proposes the transformation of the quiddity. When an external object, which is categorized as a substance, is imagined, its quiddity changes and turns into a psychic quality, which is an accident.

Therefore, Dashtakī believes that when the imagined object is identified with the external object, it means that the resulting mental form is categorized as a psychic quality, and the relevant external object is categorized as a substance or any other category to which it belonged in the external world before the development of the mental form. According to Dashtakī, this amount of similarity

suffices to verify that the mental form is identified with the external object.[1]

In response to this pivotal problem, Kāshānī argues that the human soul consists of a faculty that can abstract universal concepts from sensory or imaginary perceptions. When a human being wants to imagine an external *tree*, he considers it separate from matter and some accidents of matter such as volume and weight. With this conceptual perception, the soul is attributed with knowledge that is inherently categorized as a psychic quality. On the one hand, this mental form is specifically categorized as a psychic quality because it has the properties and effects of the quality category, but every known form has a kind of union with its external known object, representing the same external thing, rather than any other thing, so accidentally it is categorized as the external thing. For example, the mental form of a *tree* is inherently categorized as a quality, because it has the effects of the quality, and accidentally, it is categorized as a substance, because the *tree* in the external world is categorized as a substance (Figure 6).

Authors' analysis: The key question in Islamic philosophy is: "How is an external object known?" In response to this question, Kāshānī attempts to explain the nature of the mental form and its relationship to philosophical questions. According to his analysis, the mental form is not a substance in itself but rather represents a substantial object. From an epistemological perspective, Kāshānī accepts the non-triviality of the correspondence between the mind and the outside but reconstructs it conceptually. Kāshānī's view can be considered a Representational Theory of Knowledge that states that the mental form is the mediator between the mind and reality. Representational concepts are important in contemporary analytical epistemology, such as that of Frege or Russell.

He further explains that every quiddity consists of substantial properties (*dhātīyāt*), and the effects of that quiddity are attributed to those substantial properties. The substantial properties of a quiddity are known by considering its effects. It should be noted that the mental forms of substantial properties of external objects are considered the attributes of the soul, without having external effects. For example, when the mind imagines an external tree, the resulting mental form, though equal to the external tree, is an accidental entity in relation to the soul, categorized as a psychic quality. Thus, the mental form of the tree, though inherently categorized as quality, will be accidentally categorized as a substance, since it represents the external tree. This is a response to the objection regarding the mental form being subsumed under two different categories. The

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1. Rāzī (1990, p. 342) explains perceptions in terms of the concept of relation (*iḍāfa*) and considers knowledge as a relation between the soul and external objects. To study theologians such as Jurjānī and Siyālkūtī on this matter, see Kaş (2018).

objections discussed above will be unsolved if the mental form is essentially listed under two different categories, but in the case of being listed essentially under one category and accidentally under another, there will be no problem or ambiguity (Figure 6).
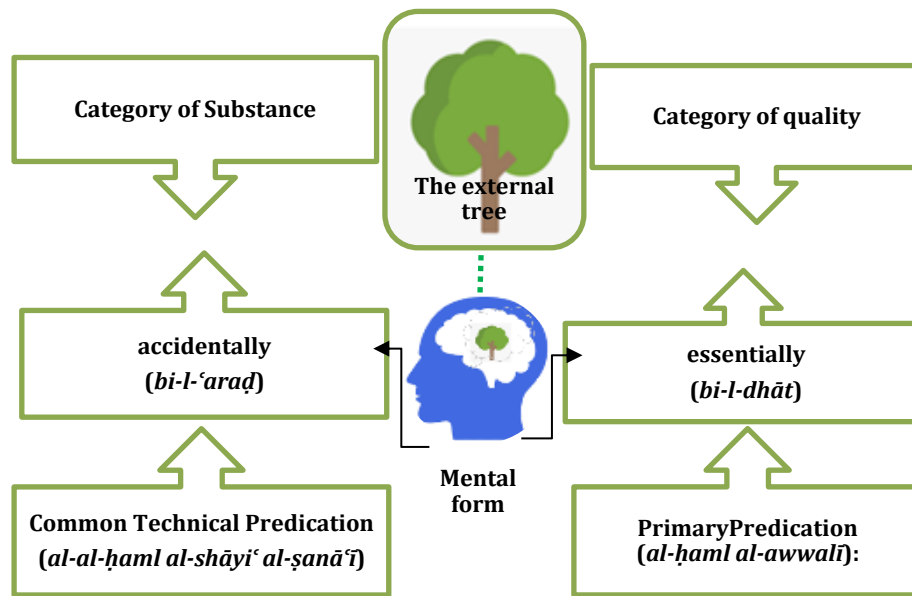

Figure 6: Kāshānī's response to Objection 3 (the problem of subsuming one mental form under two different categories): According to TP, the mental form of the tree is essentially categorized as a 'quality.' According to CTP, the mental form of the tree is accidentally categorized as a 'substance' because it is equal to the external tree.

This aspect is articulated by Mullā Ṣadrā in chapter four of *Al-Asfār* in justifying the statements of Dashtakī (Khademi & Hesari, 2023, pp. 140-142).

Conclusion

Kāshānī's Impact on Mullā Ṣullā

Mullā Ṣadrā is influenced by Kāshānī in the discussions surrounding mental existence, including the arguments for its approval, objections against these arguments, and responses to the well-known problem of mental existence—specifically the inclusion of a single mental form under two different categories. This influence has been overlooked by Sadrian scholars and other researchers

of the history of Islamic philosophy.

Abū al-Ḥasan's treatise on mental existence contains significant insights used extensively by Mullā Ṣadrā in his accounts of mental existence. All arguments for mental existence, objections raised against each of them, the famous objection regarding the union of quality (as an accidental category) with the category of substance, that is, the union of two different categories, as well as the responses offered by other scholars in Mullā Ṣadrā's statements, are derived from Kāshānī's treatise. The influence of Kāshānī on Mullā Ṣadrā is so essential that even his discussion on TP and CTP in addressing these problems is adopted from Kāshānī's views. Recognizing the existence of two different states for mental form (substance and accident) can solve the famous objection against mental existence.

We believe that Mullā Ṣadrā's arguments are derived from Kāshānī's treatise. Mullā Ṣadrā formulates his view by relying on his own principles, such as the union of the intellectual agent and the intellectualized object. The initiative to solve the "problem of mental existence through the difference between primary predication and common technical predication (whether it is Kāshānī's invention, as proven in this article, or Mullā Ṣadrā's) is open to criticism and, as stated, faces epistemological challenges. This analysis attempts to resolve the objection related to the "union of two different categories" (rejected in Aristotelian logic) and avoids the category confusion between substance and accident but it is subject to some epistemological criticisms that are related to: 1) Ambiguity in the existential unity of a mental form; 2) ambiguity in solving the problem of correspondence between a mental thing and an objective thing; 3) the lack of attention to the precise differences between "signification," "meaning," and "representation" among Muslim thinkers (a criticism from the perspective of the contemporary Analytical Philosophy Theory). A detailed discussion of these criticisms requires another paper.

Mullā Ṣullā's Innovation in Solving the Mental Existence Problem

Of course, Mullā Ṣadrā's answer to solving the mental existence problem has not been previously mentioned by any scholar. In his opinion, knowledge as a mode of existence, cannot be included under the categories of quiddity (*al- maqūlāt-al-māhuvī*). Therefore, he maintained that in order to solve the problem of mental existence, one cannot rely on the distinction between TP and CTP (Mulla Sadra, 1989, pp. 306-307), because this distinction implies accepting the inclusion of knowledge under one of the 'ten categories' which is not compatible with Mullā Ṣadrā's principles. Mullā Ṣadrā's final solution to the mental existence riddle contains original insights and is the product of his

special profound worldview, not articulated by any philosophers before him. So he was innovative in this matter. Therefore, in Mullā Ṣadrā's point of view, knowledge is a mode (*sinkh*) of **existence** (Figure 7). Basically, considering the special role of Plato's theory of ideas (Platonic *muthul*) in the process of gaining knowledge, and regarding Mullā Ṣadrā's idea on the essential evolution of the rational soul (*al-nafs-al-nāṭiqa*), his final answer to this puzzle is that knowledge does not belong to the categories of quiddity (Mulla Sadra, 2007).
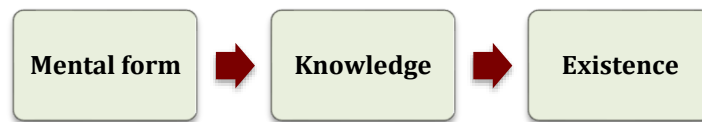

Figure 7: Mullā Ṣadrā maintained that each mental form is considered knowledge, and knowledge is a mode of existence.

In criticizing Mullā Ṣadrā's view, it should be said that although this view is superior to other views in his philosophical system, in classical epistemology, knowledge is based precisely on the substantial definition and distinctiveness of categories, and therefore, his view is not consistent with new theories, such as the Analytical Philosophy Theory, because Mullā Ṣadrā considers the knowledge of quiddities (*māhīyyāt*), including substantial and accidental quiddities, to be a kind of knowledge of the shadows of existence, and lower in rank than the knowledge of existence.

In fact, the human soul, as an abstract entity, when faced with an *external* object, through Plato's theory of ideas, and like divine (*malakūtī*) beings, has the ability to develop a mental form of the *external* object in its essence. A person's knowledge of an *external* object is a *true existence* in the essence of his soul. This *true existent*, as illuminative (*nūrī*), divine, and causing the existential development of the soul, is called 'knowledge.' Moreover, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, this illuminative, divine, true existent also has a 'shadowy' feature. This shadow is actually the 'mental existence.' In Mullā Ṣadrā's view, knowledge is an external truth, that is, it has an external existence, realized in the human soul and having its own specific effects, but *'mental existence' is a shadow of knowledge*, without the effects of an external object (Mulla Sadra, 1989, p. 310).

Therefore, this developed form that leads to the substantial evolution of the human rational soul, is similar to the external object and corresponds to it.

Mental form, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, is knowledge, and a mode of

existence, rather than a quality, and therefore, it is not included within the 'ten categories.'

Mullā Ṣadrā's view on knowledge and its relationship to substantial categories does not negate the knowledge of substance but rather considers it possible through existential perception, rather than essential perception. This view is considered innovative from a philosophical point of view and through the transcendental wisdom approach. However, as mentioned, it faces some challenges from a classical epistemological point of view. Among these challenges (which should be examined in detail in another article) is the challenge that this view faces against Mullā Ṣadrā's other theories and specifically the theory of the union of the intellectual agent and the intellectualized object. Mullā Ṣadrā believes that in knowledge, the knower and the known object are united. The theory of union is too "internal" and ontological to provide sufficient precision for epistemological analysis. For example, this theory faces such challenges as: What is the concept of union? Which category does union belong to: existence, intuition, or knowledge? How is this union related to particular matters and external objects? Etc.

The Historical Importance of this Study

Although Asgari (2020) claimed that Mullā Ṣadrā (1571-1636), or indeed Mīrdāmād (1561-1630) are the first scholars who used the distinction between TP and CTP to solve the *mental existence riddle*, this study indicated that it was Kāshānī (d. 1558) who first used this method years before them.

◘ **Conflict of Interests**

◘ The authors declare no competing interests.

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