



## The Role of Knowledge and Action in Man's Gradual Perfection According to Sadra

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### Abstract



The Human soul has two faculties of theoretical intellect and practical intellect. The soul's divine matter has the potential to elevate and seek absolute perfection and if man abandons it purposelessly, it will go towards darkness. The gradually perfecting and evolutionary qualities of the soul are among the indisputable principles of Sadrian philosophy and substantive motion is one of its main arguments. Based on this, man is constantly in a state of motion and becoming. The main discourse of this article is that man's gradually perfecting motion in Sadrian philosophy towards ultimate happiness and the peak of existence is not possible except through knowledge and action. Knowledge and action correlate to one another and each is the cause for the development and actualization of a more perfect degree of the other. Although, in terms of assigning value knowledge is higher than action because in the initial stage knowledge is the cause for action in a way that without it action has no meaning; and in higher stages as well, knowledge is the purpose of action and action is the prelude and constituent of knowledge which results in the removal of inner and outer obstacles and veils, i.e. it creates the groundwork so that man's divine existence becomes manifest and results in a knowledge known as "Divine Knowledge".

### Keywords

soul, knowledge, action, substantive motion, gradual perfection, Sadra.

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## Introduction

The human soul has two faculties: the theoretical and practical intellect. The theoretical intellect is in respect to the essence of the soul and the practical intellect is in respect to the association of the soul with the body. Therefore the soul has the two capabilities of elevating and seeking perfection towards God and descending into darkness. This article studies the circumstance and levels of the elevation of the soul through knowledge and action and how they interact according to Sadra.

## Man's Reality

According to Sadra, the whole of man's reality is his soul and all the perfections that he attains through the soul's perfective motion are justified. Man's soul is essentially unbodied but at the same time requires tools and faculties to serve it. Of the most important of its faculties is the faculty of intellect. The soul essentially has the capacity to attain perfection and man's perfectiveness in Transcendental Philosophy is a matter that has a close relationship with some of Sadra's philosophical principles like substantive motion and the "real and diluted" (haqiqat and raqiqat) principle.

- a. Substantive motion: according to the theory of substantive intensive motion, man's existence is one with motion and becoming and man has a unified personal identity which traverses the levels of perfection through perfective and intensive motion and with his own volition and free-will.
- b. The "real and diluted" principle explains the common perfect attributes between man and God and many of the rules that apply to God also apply to man albeit with the preservation of levels in regards to man. Therefore, man can traverse the levels of perfection and elevation to the extent of human potential and thus, according to Sadra, the path of perfection, perfective motion and essential and internal transformation is open to all and man can become the manifestation of Divine names and qualities.

### The Interaction of Knowledge and Action in Man's Gradual Perfection

Man possesses theoretical and practical faculties and through theoretical faculties gains knowledge and cognizance and through his practical one performs actions. Therefore, knowledge and action are considered as the essential pillars for the actualization of the soul's perfection.

Sadra explains the effect and impact of knowledge and action in the process of the gradual perfection of the soul through the example of repentance and says that repentance is a practical measure that materializes in response to man's



knowledge of the fact that sins are deadly; i.e. whenever man attains knowledge of the annihilative characteristic of sins, a state of regret is born in him which results in repentance; therefore, every knowledge leads to a state and every state is the root of an action. According to Sadra if man acts upon the requirements of knowledge, his soul will be purified and he will receive mystical intuition because knowledge and action are correlated to each other and each is the cause for the growth of the other and actualization of a more perfect stage for man in a two-way process; i.e. knowledge leads to action and action is a cause for the creation of knowledge and cognizance in higher stages. This new knowledge creates new action suitable to it and in the same way that action also creates an emphatic knowledge. In other words, in the initial stages, knowledge is a prelude to action, but in the higher stages, action is a prelude to knowledge, i.e. it removes the obstacles and veils of the soul and provides the groundwork so that man's divine existence manifests itself and it leads to a knowledge known as "Divine Knowledge".

Regarding the effect of knowledge on the soul and its perfection, the important issue is that according to Sadra, the knowledge that leads to the perfection and elevation of the soul is knowledge of God and His attributes, of Divine angels and His Prophets (peace be upon them); because in Sadrian philosophy, the soul would be more perfect in proportion to the extent of the higher existential levels of its perceptions. On the other hand, reasoning is the highest level of perception and God possesses the most intense level and stage of existence and whoever has a more complete and perfect existence, his intellectual existence in the mind of the knower is more complete and perfect; therefore, knowledge of God and intellection regarding Him has the most intense effect in the elevation and perfection of the soul. It is notable that in Sadrian philosophy, the theoretical and practical faculties of the soul unite in the higher stages of perfection and as a result, man's knowledge is his action and vice versa.

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