



# The Phenomenology of the Connection Between Desire, Consciousness, and Perception in Avicenna's Philosophy

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### ABSTRACT

The impact of non-epistemic factors on the process of knowledge formation is one of the most pressing questions that epistemologists grapple with. By non-epistemic factors, we mean psychological, sociological, and other similar influences that can affect the process of knowledge. Can we speak of the impact of non-epistemic factors on knowledge in Avicennian psychology? Yes, in Avicenna's thought, knowledge is primarily influenced by psychological factors. He introduces the concept of "desire" (shauq) and strives to explain its relationship with awareness, proposing a type of psychological-ontological epistemology, as he consistently analyzes the psychological factors affecting knowledge ontologically. Avicenna refers to "desire affecting awareness" as another significant non-epistemic factor and provides an ontological explanation of the connection between "desire" and "perception," which depends on the nature of both. In this paper, Avicenna's approach to the non-epistemic factors affecting knowledge is examined phenomenologically. It is found that: (1) Non-epistemic factors influence the direction of awareness and the process of knowledge formation. (2) Without the emergence of desire or encountering something that elicits desire, movement does not materialize; that is, movement follows desire. Desire has an independent ontological nature and cannot be defined under perceptive or motive forces. Desire sustains and determines awareness, assisting the perceptive force in issuing judgments related to good and evil. Avicenna's epistemology is not devoid of naturalistic aspects; however, in this study, by bracketing natural dimensions, psychological factors are considered solely from an ontological perspective, and a phenomenological interpretation of Avicenna's statements is provided. The chosen interpretation focuses on the quality of knowledge emergence and its connection with psychological factors. By establishing the precedence of the motivating force over the perceptive force, a model of Avicennian ontological-psychological epistemology is inferred.

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## **Introduction**

The philosophical legacy of Muslim thinkers, particularly Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), offers a rich terrain for exploring epistemological questions through contemporary interpretive lenses. A fundamental question persists: Can the philosophical systems of historical figures like Avicenna, which integrate epistemological, ontological, and psychological dimensions, be reinterpreted using modern methodologies to yield new insights? If so, what methods best illuminate the intricate connections within such systems? Should these systems be approached holistically, recognizing their categorical interdependence, or analyzed atomistically, isolating individual components? These questions are not new; they have long challenged interpreters seeking to engage with philosophical texts across temporal and cultural divides. Avicenna's philosophy, with its profound influence on both Islamic and Western intellectual traditions, provides a compelling case for such inquiry. His work addresses critical epistemological issues, including the nature of knowledge, the processes of its formation, and the impact of psychological and ontological factors on epistemic outcomes.

This study proposes a phenomenological reinterpretation of Avicenna's epistemology, focusing on the interplay between desire (shauq), consciousness, and perception. By employing a text-centered yet contemporary methodology, this research seeks to elucidate Avicenna's psychological-ontological framework, emphasizing the role of non-epistemic factors in shaping knowledge. The phenomenological approach adopted here enables a descriptive analysis of how these factors manifest in consciousness, offering a fresh perspective on Avicenna's contributions to epistemological debates.

### **A) Problem Statement**

The formation of knowledge is not solely a cognitive process but is profoundly influenced by non-epistemic factors, such as psychological states and motivations. In Avicenna's philosophy, the concept of desire

(shauq) emerges as a critical non-epistemic factor that interacts with consciousness and perception to shape epistemic outcomes. However, the precise nature of this interaction—how desire influences awareness and how it relates ontologically to perception—remains underexplored in contemporary scholarship.

Traditional interpretations of Avicenna's epistemology often emphasize its logical or metaphysical dimensions, yet the psychological underpinnings, particularly the role of desire, warrant deeper investigation. This study addresses this gap by examining the phenomenological dimensions of Avicenna's psychological epistemology, focusing on the ontological status of desire and its epistemic implications.

## **B) Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

How do non-epistemic factors, particularly desire, influence the direction of consciousness and the formation of knowledge in Avicenna's philosophy?

What is the ontological relationship between desire, consciousness, and perception in Avicenna's epistemological framework?

How can a phenomenological approach illuminate the interplay between psychological and epistemic elements in Avicenna's thought?

The hypotheses are:

Desire, as a non-epistemic factor, plays a directive role in shaping consciousness and the epistemic process in Avicenna's philosophy.

Desire possesses an independent ontological status, distinct from perceptive and motive forces, and sustains awareness to facilitate value-based judgments.

A phenomenological interpretation, by suspending naturalistic considerations, reveals the ontological-psychological dynamics of Avicenna's epistemology, offering new insights into the emergence of knowledge.

### **C) Background and Literature Review**

Avicenna's philosophical system integrates epistemology, ontology, and psychology within a cohesive framework, making it a fertile ground for interdisciplinary inquiry. His epistemology, as articulated in works such as *Al-Shifā'* and *Al-Najāt*, emphasizes the soul's role in knowledge production, mediated by psychological faculties such as perception and motivation. Scholars have long debated the extent to which Avicenna's thought aligns with or diverges from Aristotelian frameworks. For instance, Gutas (2014) highlights Avicenna's synthesis of Aristotelian logic with Neoplatonic metaphysics, while McGinnis (2010) underscores the psychological dimensions of his epistemology, particularly the interplay between sensory and intellectual faculties. However, the specific role of desire (*shauq*) as a non-epistemic factor has received less attention, with studies often focusing on its ethical rather than epistemological implications (Fakhry, 2004).

Phenomenological approaches to Islamic philosophy, though rare, offer a promising method for reinterpreting Avicenna's thought. Husserl's phenomenology, with its emphasis on bracketing naturalistic assumptions to focus on the essence of phenomena, provides a framework for analyzing the emergence of meaning in Avicenna's texts (Moran, 2000). However, these studies often remain empirical or sociological in scope, leaving room for a more ontologically focused phenomenological analysis, as pursued in this study.

Avicenna's concept of desire (*shauq*) is rooted in his broader metaphysical system, where it functions as a dynamic force linking the soul's cognitive and motive capacities. Unlike modern empirical psychologies, Avicenna's psychology is inherently ontological, viewing psychological phenomena as inseparable from metaphysical realities (Avicenna, 2007). This study builds on these insights by applying a phenomenological lens to explore how desire shapes the epistemic process, suspending naturalistic interpretations to focus on its ontological significance. By doing so, it contributes to contemporary epistemological

debates, positioning Avicenna's thought as a valuable resource for understanding the psychological dimensions of knowledge formation.

### 1. The Connection Between the Soul and Psychic Forces

In examining the connection between the soul (Nafs: نفس) and its forces, Avicenna refers to "finding the state of the soul and its forces" (Avicenna, 2019, p. 194), indicating that the ontological state of the soul is defined in relation to the forces that determine its ontological position. Khawaja Nasir al-Din Tusi asserts that establishing the principle of the soul's existence precedes providing an explanation of its ontological forces (Tusi, 2018, vol. 2, p. 308). This means that the nature of the soul leads us to an ontological explanation of its forces. The psychic forces are determined by the actions arising from the soul, which can be distinguished from each other based on various criteria (Avicenna, 2012, vol. 5, p. 27). Observing these actions allows us to categorize the psychic forces into three types:

1. **Vegetative Forces:** These are associated with vegetative actions such as reproduction, nutrition, and growth, and are referred to as the "vegetative soul" (Al-Nafs-o-Nabatiah: النفس النباتية).
2. **Animal Forces:** These are associated with animalistic actions such as desire and are referred to as the "animal soul" (A—Nafs-o-heyvaniah: النفس الحيوانية).
3. **Human Forces:** These are associated with human actions stemming from free will and reasoning, and are referred to as the "human soul" (Al-Nafs-o-Ensaniyah: النفس الإنسانية) (Avicenna, 2012, vol. 5, p. 32).

These forces are interrelated, with each force encompassing the subsequent one. Thus, the human soul also determines the actions of the vegetative and animal souls, while the animal soul only determines its specific actions and those of the vegetative soul.

Each type of soul, according to its actions, reveals other forces. This means that psychic forces arise from the ontological nature of the soul and, in turn, they reveal other forces. Therefore, psychic forces are innumerable, and their enumeration is only possible through "convention"<sup>1</sup> (Avicenna, 2012, vol. 5, p. 32). However, the human soul also plays a role in determining the actions that arise from the vegetative and animal forces. The forces that determine the vegetative soul's mode of existence are "nutritive," (Kaziah: غذایه) "growth," (Munmiah: منمیه) and "reproductive" (Muvaledah: مولده). The two forces that determine the existence of the animal soul are the "perceptive force" and the "motive force." These forces impact the ontological state of the human soul. Although the human soul is distinct from the animal and vegetative souls due to its two faculties, the practical intellect and the speculative/theoretical intellect, it is also influenced by the perceptive and motive forces (Avicenna, 2012, vol. 5, p. 37).

The impact of the perceptive and motive forces on the human soul means that every perception arising from the perceptive force and every movement originating from the motive force affect the function of the soul. If this influence is accepted, then (1) the manner of influence and (2) the connection that the influencing factors establish with each other must be explained. In this research, we will:

1. Discuss only the epistemic influences, noting that knowledge only manifests when the ontological status of the soul and its forces are

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1. This means we can only enumerate and name some of those forces whose functions we understand, assigning names that refer to the specific psychic forces in question. A deeper understanding of the phrase "in the manner of convention" ('ala sabil al-wadh') is also possible; if we consider wadh' to be the ontological status of the forces, then it aligns with the ontological interpretation we have provided for the soul and its forces. The existential status of the psychic forces leads us to assign names appropriate to each status; therefore, the naming is not arbitrary, and the distinction in naming arises from the distinction in the existential nature of each force.

clarified.

2. Limit the discussion to the influence of the perceptive and motive forces and the connection these two forces establish with each other.

### 1.1. The Perceptive Force

From the statements of Ibn Kammuna, the commentator on *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, it is apparent that one cannot predefine the meaning of the perceptive force or provide a definitive definition of it. Perception applies to any object of perception—regardless of the perceptive force it arises from, such as sensation, imagination<sup>1</sup>, estimation<sup>2</sup>, or intellect (Ibn Kammuna, 2020, p. 248). Consequently, this force is understood a posteriori, based on its functions.

In explicating Ibn Kammuna's claim, one could say: Perception is only describable by "family resemblance."<sup>3</sup> That is, through family

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1. The *imaginative force* links the forms that emerge from the *sensible force* (1) by connecting them to each other and (2) by separating them to create a new form (Avicenna, 2019, p. 193). In this research, we have focused on the perceptive and motive forces, thus avoiding a detailed phenomenological explanation of other forces. Nevertheless, when necessary, we have provided a brief explanation of other psychic forces based on their relationship with these two forces, using a "phenomenological reduction" to clarify the interrelation of the forces and open the door for contemporary studies on Avicenna's explanation of psychic forces.

2. The *estimative force* is that by which the meanings of the unseen—those not accessible through the senses—are known, with the aim of avoiding unpleasant things and seeking pleasant ones (Avicenna, 2019, p. 195). The estimative force is one of the psychic forces whose connection with other forces needs to be elucidated.

3. The emphasis on "description" is a common feature between Wittgenstein and phenomenologists (Dwyer, 2018, p. 71), which has led phenomenologists to provide a phenomenological interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy as well (Spiegelberg, 2020, vol. 2, p. 997). Family resemblances, by describing phenomena that fulfill the common factor of perception, encompass all such phenomena under the term "perceptual" and demonstrate their perceptual nature. The common factor of perceptual phenomena is the resemblance that groups them into one family (Wittgenstein, 2020, p. 49).

resemblance: (1) the scope of what can be rightly called perception is captured, and (2) perceptual instances are distinguished from non-perceptual ones. By applying family resemblance, the common feature that encompasses all perceptual instances under the single concept—perception—is identified (Glock, 2008, p. 169).

Avicenna considers every perception to be "form-bound," meaning that the perceived object reveals itself to the perceiving soul by constructing an appropriate form. Therefore:

1. The perceiving soul reveals perceptual forms.
2. The perceptive force merely provides a form for perception.
3. When encountering a material object, the perceptive force brackets/suspends its material dimensions; in Avicenna's terms, the perceptual form is abstracted from matter and is considered only as it reveals itself in a form, albeit possessing a vague form of abstraction (*tajrid-Al-ma*).
4. The bracketing of material dimensions can be either broad or narrow. In a broad suspension, all material dimensions and the states associated with them are suspended, while in a narrow suspension, only some dimensions are suspended (Avicenna, 2007, p. 69).

Relying on the aforementioned explanation, we can conclude that:

1. Perceptual forms make the appearance of the perceived object possible.
2. Every perceived object requires an intermediary to appear; forms act as intermediaries in this appearance.

Anything that comes to be perceived does so by becoming intelligible (Maqul: معقول). In Avicenna's words, "The perceived must exist for the perceiver" (*An al-mudrak yajibu an yakun mawjudan lil-mudrik*) (Avicenna, 1992, p. 246). Therefore, the perceived, which is a form-bound entity, always reveals itself to the perceiver, and there is no necessity for imagining its appearance outside of the perceiver. This is why, as Avicenna states, "We perceive non-existents, even though they do

not have actual existence, and we do not perceive many actual existents" (ibid.), because they have not yet become intelligible to the perceiver.

For something to become intelligible, its natural dimensions and material attributes must be entirely bracketed (freed from matter: بريئة عن المادة) (Avicenna, 1984, p. 101). The parts of a thing's form correspond and align with the parts of its essence: "Because the parts of that form become parts of the meaning of the essence"<sup>1</sup> (ibid.). Therefore, essentiality depends on formality; in other words, a thing has no essence unless it appears in a form, and if the perceptive force does not create an appropriate form for objects, they do not become intelligible and, consequently, are not perceived. Thus, "Anything that is perceived is so by becoming intelligible; that is, its reality necessarily manifests in the mind" (Avicenna, 1992, p. 247).

If the essence of a thing is metaphysically identical to its reality, and the representation of its reality is considered the appearance of the thing in the form (form-bound appearance), then we can claim that when the reality of a thing is represented in the mind, its essence appears in the mind. According to Avicenna, every intellectual form is the basis for sensory form: "And those intellectual forms are the principles of these sensory forms" (Avicenna, 2007, p. 123). Therefore, a sensible object is perceived only when it becomes intelligible; the intelligible is form-bound, and a sensible object that has become intelligible has a sensory form.

The sensory form of these things must, by its nature, be present in the sensible worlds (the corporeal realms: العوالم الجسمانية) to create an intelligible form from it (Avicenna, 2007, p. 123). Consequently, when forming an intelligible form from a sensible object, we deal with "narrow bracketing" rather than "broad bracketing." This means that we do not

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bracket all dimensions of the sensible object; rather, we must at least assume its existence to create an appropriate form of it.

Consequently, if sensibles do not become intelligible, they are not perceived, because no unity forms among the disparate and separate sensory parts (Avicenna, 1984, p. 101). If objects are perceived only in their sensible, not intelligible, aspect, then, as Pinkard puts it, the "synthetic unity of mental apprehension" does not occur (Pinkard, 2016, p. 49). The perceiver cannot unify scattered sensibles under a single form; yet we do have perceptions that, despite being disparate, have been unified into one intelligible form. This demonstrates that we form an intelligible concept of an object that has separate sensible characteristics like blackness, hardness, etc. (Pinkard, 2016, p. 49).

We conclude that:

1. Perception can only be explained by family resemblance because its instances are so diverse that no single explanation can encompass them all.
2. The appearance of perceived objects to the soul is mediated by the forms provided by the soul's faculties.
3. Objects are not perceived until they become intelligible—until awareness constructs a form of them for itself.
4. Perception is an act of the soul that manifests through its faculties.
5. The unity of psychic experience is a prerequisite for constructing a single form from disparate and multiple sensibles.

### **1-1-1. The Process of Perception Formation**

Avicenna describes the process of perception as follows:

"Becoming aware of a thing is the same as conceptualizing its reality (its essence) for the knower; through perception, the reality of the thing becomes intuitively evident to the knower. The conceptualized reality is either: (1) a reality that, at the time of perception, is located outside the essence of the knower; in actuality, there is no external object for such a reality [rather, merely on the basis of restricted bracketing of its existence,

it is potentially assumed in order to be able to abstract a form from it] ... or: (2) a form of the reality of the thing is revealed in the essence of the knower, [expanded bracketing becomes possible], in such a way that the duality between the perceiver and the perceived is eliminated." (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 308)

From Avicenna's claim, it follows that:

- (1) Every thing has a reality (an essence).
- (2) The reality of the thing is revealed by conceptualization.
- (3) The knower, by perception, constructs a form of the perceived for himself.
- (4) Intuition may reveal the essence of a thing to the knower.
- (5) Intuition, as an act of the perceptive force, makes the appearance of the essence of a thing possible.
- (6) If expanded bracketing is possible, the duality between the perceiver and the perceived is eliminated.

Urmawi considers the process of perception to be a kind of inner intuition; an intuition that is formed with regard to the "exemplary form revealed from a phenomenon in the essence of the perceiver"; (Urmawi, 1397, vol. 2, p. 185) therefore, according to him: (1) We are not confronted with the existence of the perceived - that is, the perceived as it is; rather, an exemplary form of the perceived is revealed to us. And (2) The appearance of the exemplary form of the perceived is connected to the inner intuition that the perceiver has of the exemplary form; that is, the exemplary form "mediates in intuition".

Fakhr Razi, in explaining the process of perception, interprets it as "the occurrence of the perceived in the essence of the perceiver" (Fakhr Razi, 1391, p. 276) and raises the question of whether perception is this kind of occurrence or a relation that the perceiver establishes with the perceived; a special relation that leads to the appearance of the perceived for the perceiver? (ibid) To clarify Fakhr Razi's intention, we must acquire a phenomenal understanding of the concept of "occurrence".

Occurrence can be: (1) a kind of being influenced by the essence of the

perceiver from the perceived. (2) a kind of presence of the perceived in the essence of the perceiver. (3) a way of appearing and showing the perceived in the essence of the perceiver. According to the first possibility, an explanation of how it is influenced must be given; that is, the first possibility does not provide a philosophical explanation; rather, it is more a kind of "explanation of the name". The second possibility has also assumed the duality of the perceiver and the perceived, and has accepted the "possibility of presence" as a presupposition, and the concept of "presence" also faces a kind of "ambiguity"; because it may mean "presence for us" or "intersubjective presence"; if it is intersubjective presence, the manner of presence must be explained in a public language, in which case the state of being is transformed into a kind of "verbal being", and if "presence for us" is intended, the perceiver may be placed in a "state of solipsism" and cannot attain any valid knowledge. Presence for us is first-person presence; that is, the knower finds knowledge present to himself that he cannot equate with other knowers; but intersubjective presence is realized in the assumption that a single thing can be present from a single aspect to all knowers.

Therefore, the third possibility seems stronger; because: (1) If by occurrence, "appearance to the perceiver" is meant, we do not face the caveat of "solipsism". (2) The caveat of "duality of the perceiver and the perceived" is removed, and there is no need to grapple with the problem of dualism. (3) The essence of the perceived is defined in connection with the essence of the perceiver, and the appearance of the essence of the perceived takes place in the context of the essence of the perceiver, and the essence of the perceived is united with the essence of the perceiver. If this assumption is accepted, then perception is the same as the appearance of the perceived for the perceiver, and we must focus the discussion on this appearance and examine the factors affecting it.

The perceived is either internal or external; that is, the perceptive force assists in the appearance of two types of perception: the perception of what is internal and the perception of what is external (Avicenna, 1434,

vol. 5, p. 33); in Urmawi's words, the perceived is either obtained through the intuition of the internal thing or through the intuition of the external thing (Urmawi, 1397, vol. 2, p. 185). The external perceived is primary; (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 308) the meaning of primacy is that the attribution of effects and the imposition of requirements are based on it; so it gives existence to those requirements and effects that have a logical connection with externality; therefore, it gives existence to the requirements and effects that are logically possible to be imposed.

The internal perceived is the form and appearance of the external perceived; in other words, after encountering the external thing, an internal form of it is constructed; a constructedness that occurs in the process of perception formation. This constructed form determines the mode of appearance of that object for us; Qutb refers to this mode of appearance with the phrase "its representation for us"; (ibid) therefore, internal and external apprehension is connected to providing an explanation of the process of perception formation.

### **1-2. The Motive Force**

Aristotle believes that if motion is directed towards an end, it is "whither motion"; this motion is always purposeful and is accompanied by imagination and desire; because until a desire for something arises, the only motion that can be realized is "forced motion". (Aristotle, 1393, p. 257) From Aristotle's claim, it follows that: (1) Without desire, purposeful motion is not realized. (2) Forced motion arises from the natural requirements of the moved and is not purposeful. (3) The moved must always move towards an end. (4) The end is accompanied by "desire"; therefore, the appearance of the "end" depends on "desire".

Avicenna considers the animal soul to have two forces, perceptive and motive; and he enumerates two functions for the motive force: either it is the factor of instigating motion or that force, without mediation, plays the role of determining the manner of motion. (Avicenna, 1434, vol. 5, p. 33) Desire is the influencing factor on the instigating factor; that is, first a

desire arises from "imagination", in such a way that, in "imagination", a form of what is desirable or undesirable to the soul is imprinted, and then it turns to what is desirable. (Avicenna, 1434, vol. 5, p. 33)

The result is that: (1) Imagination is the constructor of a form of the desirable and the undesirable. (2) The constructed form of the desirable is the instigator of desire. (3) The motive force turns to what is the instigator of desire. And (4) with turning to the factor instigating desire, the appropriate motion is realized.

### **1-3. The Relation of the Perceptive and Motive Forces**

We spoke about the manner of influence of the forces and the function that each performs; now this question must be examined: what connection do the forces establish with each other? Avicenna and the commentators of his philosophy have used the concepts of "precedence" and "posteriority" to explain the connection between the forces, and some believe in the precedence of the perceptive force over the motive force and others the opposite.

#### **1-3-1. The Theory of the Precedence of the Perceptive Force over the Motive Force**

Urmawi believes that Avicenna considers the perceptive force to be prior to the motive force; because motion is necessarily voluntary, and voluntary motion is revealed if an a priori perception has emerged. (Urmawi, 1397, vol. 2, p. 185) The motive force is voluntary; that is, it is the object of attention of the "voluntary force"; therefore, the voluntary force is the factor of (1) determination and (2) giving existence to the motive force. By giving existence to the "voluntary force", the motive force is determined; that is, the determination of the motive force depends on the realization and objectification of the "will force". The result is that the motive force is always entirely voluntary; therefore, every voluntary motion arises from the determined motive force. With this explanation, the connection between the perceptive force and the motive force also

becomes clear; because from the voluntariness of the motive force - based on the explanation given - it necessarily follows that first, perception of the desirable (the intended; the attended to) must emerge; so that the will is aroused towards the perceived and thereby finds its determination; the result is that the will is always attentive to the object of perception and the motive force is posterior to the perceptive force. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 309)

Khwansari has provided a naturalistic explanation of the precedence of the perceptive force over the motive force; according to him, the animal is naturally drawn towards what is compatible with its temperament in terms of temperament, and avoids temperamental incompatibilities. Movement towards things compatible with temperament is only realized if we have a perception of compatibilities and incompatibilities; therefore, if compatibility and incompatibility are not the object of perception, no movement occurs. (Khwansari, 1378, vol. 1, p. 793)

The motive force is either expansive (*munbasitah*) or contractive (*munqabidah*); expansion is when the motive force pays attention to something that the soul considers desirable for itself; that is, attention to what is pleasing to the soul leads to the expansion of the motive force. Contraction is the result of attention to psychic unpleasantness. Turning to pleasantness and unpleasantness is not realized unless we have previously had a perception of pleasantness and unpleasantness. Therefore, the turning of the motive force depends on the perception of the object of motion. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 309)

### **1-3-2. The Theory of the Precedence of the Motive Force over the Perceptive Force**

The proponents of the precedence of the perceptive force over the motive force believe that motion is always towards pleasant things, and as long as we do not have a perception of what is pleasant, no motion is realized; therefore, the perceptive force precedes the motive force. In criticizing this claim, it has been said that motion has necessarily and according to

wisdom become compatible with the soul and has preceded perception, and the motive force has been determined in such a way that according to ontological necessity, it inclines towards things compatible with the soul and avoids incompatibilities. (Khwansari, 1378, vol. 1, p. 793) Motion has a teleological aspect, and what plays the role of an end in the world of existence has ontological nobility over other roles, and because motion plays the role of "end" for perception, it must precede it; (Khwansari, 1378, vol. 1, p. 793) because the end always precedes the means to the end. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 309) Therefore, it can be claimed that motion precedes perception because the perceptive force is not determined at all without motion towards compatibilities - and the motive force finds compatibilities according to divine wisdom - and the perception of the compatible thing and the incompatible thing is connected to the movement towards compatibility and incompatibility. (ibid) We conclude that if motion by itself, according to ontological necessity, is prior to perception, then there is no need for the object of motion (things compatible with the soul) to be previously perceived.

## **2. The Role of Desire in the Emergence of Perception**

With the explanation given of the "motive force", the discussion of "desire" also comes up; because according to Avicenna, "desire" is the factor of arousing the "motive force"; that is, no movement is determined unless a desire precedes it. (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) On this basis, desire as a psychological factor arouses one of the psychic forces, and consequently the orientation of the force also becomes known; so the manner of the motive force's turning is connected to the previously emerged desire; first a desire is revealed to the moved soul, desire determines the motive force, and with the determination of the force, the orientation of the moved's motion is determined.

The knowledge or ignorance of the moved (the knower moving towards an end) of the "desire revealed to the soul" does not play a role in the function of "desire"; (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) that is: (1) whether the

moved understands the nature of "desire" or not, and (2) whether it is aware of the object of "desire" or not; in both cases, "desire" as a determining factor of motion plays its necessary and essential role; that is why Avicenna says: "This desire is not for the perceptive force." (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) Therefore, desire should be considered a psychological factor affecting motion, and motion itself affects perception; so: desire is considered an influential factor on perception. Now we must examine whether the psychological influence that Avicenna has in mind is like the influence that other psychologistic epistemologists believe in.

### **2-1. The Relation of the Perceptive and Motive Forces**

We spoke about the manner of influence of the forces and the function that each performs; now this question must be examined: what connection do the forces establish with each other? Avicenna and the commentators of his philosophy have used the concepts of "precedence" and "posteriority" to explain the connection between the forces, and some believe in the precedence of the perceptive force over the motive force and others the opposite.

#### **2-1-1. The Theory of the Precedence of the Perceptive Force over the Motive Force**

Urmawi believes that Avicenna considers the perceptive force to be prior to the motive force; because motion is necessarily voluntary, and voluntary motion is revealed if an a priori perception has emerged. (Urmawi, 1397, vol. 2, p. 185) The motive force is voluntary; that is, it is the object of attention of the "voluntary force"; therefore, the voluntary force is the factor of (1) determination and (2) giving existence to the motive force. By giving existence to the "voluntary force", the motive force is determined; that is, the determination of the motive force depends on the realization and objectification of the "will force". The result is that the motive force is always entirely voluntary; therefore, every voluntary

motion arises from the determined motive force. With this explanation, the connection between the perceptive force and the motive force also becomes clear; because from the voluntariness of the motive force - based on the explanation given - it necessarily follows that first, perception of the desirable (the intended; the attended to) must emerge; so that the will is aroused towards the perceived and thereby finds its determination; the result is that the will is always attentive to the object of perception and the motive force is posterior to the perceptive force. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 309)

Khwansari has provided a naturalistic explanation of the precedence of the perceptive force over the motive force; according to him, the animal is naturally drawn towards what is compatible with its temperament in terms of temperament, and avoids temperamental incompatibilities. Movement towards things compatible with temperament is only realized if we have a perception of compatibilities and incompatibilities; therefore, if compatibility and incompatibility are not the object of perception, no movement occurs. (Khwansari, 1378, vol. 1, p. 793)

The motive force is either expansive (*munbasitah*) or contractive (*munqabidah*); expansion is when the motive force pays attention to something that the soul considers desirable for itself; that is, attention to what is pleasing to the soul leads to the expansion of the motive force. Contraction is the result of attention to psychic unpleasantness. Turning to pleasantness and unpleasantness is not realized unless we have previously had a perception of pleasantness and unpleasantness. Therefore, the turning of the motive force depends on the perception of the object of motion. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 309)

### **2-1-2. The Theory of the Precedence of the Motive Force over the Perceptive Force**

The proponents of the precedence of the perceptive force over the motive force believe that motion is always towards pleasant things, and as long as we do not have a perception of what is pleasant, no motion is realized;

therefore, the perceptive force precedes the motive force. In criticizing this claim, it has been said that motion has necessarily and according to wisdom become compatible with the soul and has preceded perception, and the motive force has been determined in such a way that according to ontological necessity, it inclines towards things compatible with the soul and avoids incompatibilities. (Khwansari, 1378, vol. 1, p. 793) Motion has a teleological aspect, and what plays the role of an end in the world of existence has ontological nobility over other roles, and because motion plays the role of "end" for perception, it must precede it; (Khwansari, 1378, vol. 1, p. 793) because the end always precedes the means to the end. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 309) Therefore, it can be claimed that motion precedes perception because the perceptive force is not determined at all without motion towards compatibilities - and the motive force finds compatibilities according to divine wisdom - and the perception of the compatible thing and the incompatible thing is connected to the movement towards compatibility and incompatibility. (ibid) We conclude that if motion by itself, according to ontological necessity, is prior to perception, then there is no need for the object of motion (things compatible with the soul) to be previously perceived.

### **3. The Role of Desire in the Emergence of Perception**

With the explanation given of the "motive force", the discussion of "desire" also comes up; because according to Avicenna, "desire" is the factor of arousing the "motive force"; that is, no movement is determined unless a desire precedes it. (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) On this basis, desire as a psychological factor arouses one of the psychic forces, and consequently the orientation of the force also becomes known; so the manner of the motive force's turning is connected to the previously emerged desire; first a desire is revealed to the moved soul, desire determines the motive force, and with the determination of the force, the orientation of the moved's motion is determined.

The knowledge or ignorance of the moved (the knower moving

towards an end) of the "desire revealed to the soul" does not play a role in the function of "desire"; (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) that is: (1) whether the moved understands the nature of "desire" or not, and (2) whether it is aware of the object of "desire" or not; in both cases, "desire" as a determining factor of motion plays its necessary and essential role; that is why Avicenna says: "This desire is not for the perceptive force." (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) Therefore, desire should be considered a psychological factor affecting motion, and motion itself affects perception; so: desire is considered an influential factor on perception. Now we must examine whether the psychological influence that Avicenna has in mind is like the influence that other psychologistic epistemologists believe in.

According to psychologistic epistemologists, all epistemic concepts, such as "justification", "truth", "reason", etc. should be described in such a way that: (1) they fulfill one of our psychic goals (Puddifoot, 2012, p. 140) or (2) they arise from one of our psychic goals. On this basis, epistemology is completely at the service of psychology and either determines its orientations based on psychic factors or turns towards psychic factors; in the first case, epistemology arises from psychology; and in the second case, epistemology inclines itself towards psychology to become its servant. Based on the explanation given, knowledge takes on a teleological aspect, and bad beliefs are evaluated from good beliefs based on the extent to which they are capable of fulfilling our goals. (Puddifoot, 2012, p. 140)

The discussion that Avicenna has introduced about desire opens the door to the claim that he is one of the believers in psychological epistemology; now we examine the kind of connection he has established with this epistemic paradigm. It seems that Avicenna's epistemology has established a close connection with psychological epistemology; because in explaining the process of knowledge formation, in addition to the effect that is revealed from the perceptive force and the function that appears and manifests from it, he also pays attention to the role of psychological

factors such as "desire" and does not ignore them. According to him, "to the perceptive force, only judgment and perception of something is attributed, and judgment and perception become necessary if, before them, by the act of judgment or perception, a feeling or illusion emerges so that a desire is oriented towards that thing." (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) Therefore, perception cannot, by itself, determine knowledge with all its limits and objects; rather, the perceptive force only reveals two acts from itself: (1) perceiving and (2) judging; these two acts leave awareness without any content and meaning, and only act in relation to the form of judgment and perception, and knowledge, until it becomes meaningful - that is, until it is endowed with meaning in the form of a judgment or perception - does not find determination, and what is without determination will have no appearance and manifestation. The result is that the perceptive force does not give any content to awareness, and content is entirely connected to psychological factors such as "desire" that have preceded the perceptive force and have oriented it to be able to find a meaning compatible with influential psychological factors and, on this basis, make the content of awareness known.

Now we can briefly unveil the "nature of desire". The nature of desire is connected to the psychological states revealed to awareness. Each revealed state necessarily leads to a specific desire that is connected to that state, and directs the person attributed with desire towards the object of the thing; that is, each desire has an object that, by necessity, originates from the desire arising from a psychological state. This desire, in any case, inclines us towards an object, and in our inclination towards things, having knowledge about the desire that has emerged in relation to them has no objectivity; that is, whether we have knowledge of our inclination towards that thing or not (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204); our knowledge or ignorance does not play a role in the function that inclination performs; in phenomenal terms, we bracket two types of knowledge: (1) knowledge of the original inclination that exists in us, and (2) knowledge of the object of the inclination towards which we have been aroused.

Therefore, desire is the same factor arousing us towards a thing; that is, desire creates "motivation", and until there is no motivation, movement towards a thing is not realized. From this explanation, the connection between "desire" and the "motive force" also becomes clear: until there is no desire, no arousal towards a thing emerges, and the manner of determination of the motive force is entirely connected to the arousal arising from "desire"; so: desire is the factor of objectifying the motive force; that is, the motive force does not reveal any effect from itself unless it is accompanied by desire. Therefore, Avicenna believes: "The arousal of the moved is connected to desire towards a thing" (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204).

#### **4. The Relation between Perception and Awareness**

Based on the explanation given, we can now understand the distinction that exists between perception and awareness. Perception is only one of the factors that provides an object and content for awareness, and the perceptive force is one of the forces that plays a role in the process of things becoming evident for awareness.

These points are also necessary:

(1) Awareness goes through a process for a thing to be revealed to it in a specific way - a way that is related to looking at the thing from a possible aspect - and this revelation is only one of the possible modes of appearance; in other words, each appearance is connected to the dimension in which the thing has been intuited.

(2) The perceptive force also has a specific process; that is, the two acts of "judging" and "perceiving" themselves come out of an epistemic process; a process that determines the quality of issuing a judgment and the necessary conditions for the formation of "perceptual forms". On this basis, we can now provide an explanation of the quality of the "act of perceiving" and the "act of judging": perception and judgment are only possible by means of perceptual forms and judgment forms; these forms are present in awareness, and by clinging to them, one can cast any

possible content and meaning in the form of one of the predetermined forms and provide a formulation of them. Avicenna's logic, by discussing the accidents of the internal thing - that is, those accidents that make logic capable of making the unknown thing knowable - performs such a role. (Isfahani, 1399, vol. 1, p. 32)

(3) If perception is oriented by "desire" and other influential psychological factors, then people will have epistemic alignment with each other when they are in the same feeling or same imagination epistemic-psychological state. (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) Feeling and imagining the same is the condition for reaching an intersubjective state. As a result of feeling and imagining the same, a specific epistemological state emerges; a state that leads to the same desire, and the same desires incline towards the same object/thing, and finally affect knowledge in the same way. Therefore, in order to equalize the objects of knowledge and eliminate epistemic differences, we must strive to create the same feeling and imagination for those who differ; because "people agree in the perception of what they feel and imagine". (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204)

(4) If we accept the influence of "feeling" and "imagination" as stated, then perhaps a person, in various psychological states - states that have become different due to the difference in the quality of feeling and imagination, and their object - various desires appear to him. The necessary consequence of these desires: (\*1) our desire and lack of desire towards a single thing changes; because due to the difference in psychological states, it is possible that the relation we previously established with a thing changes, and a new state replaces the previous state, and transforms desire into lack of desire or lack of desire into desire. Therefore, our desires and lacks of desire are not stable, and the perceptive force is also affected by these instabilities; instabilities may completely change our view of what we consider knowledge and (\*2) the relation that a person establishes with various things is also completely connected to the psychological states that he experiences; the evidence is that a hungry person has an inclination towards food, and the inclination

of the same person towards food disappears when satiated. (Avicenna, 1400, p. 204) So the distinction in psychological states - which appear to man when encountering various things - leads to a distinction in the object of desire or lack of desire.

(5) Man is not necessarily drawn towards what is good; rather, following "good" and avoiding "evil" depends on which direction "human desire" inclines him. Our moral stances are sometimes subject to change with the difference in the "nature of desire" and sometimes with the change in the "object of desire". Therefore, "good" and "evil" and other value judgments such as "vice" and "virtue" only appear when there is a "desire"; that is, desire is the factor of the appearance of moral values; in Hume's words, one can say that there is an arousing impression or emotion that reveals the difference between vice and virtue; (Hume, 1398, p. 253) in Avicenna's philosophy, the arousing emotion that has the aspect of manifestation is the same "arousing desire", and desire originates in the existential state of the knower.

(6) Avicenna considers the soul as the object of his philosophical investigations in terms of its existence; that is, he has intended three interconnected claims: (\*1) to prove the existence of the soul. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 292) (\*2) to show the independence of the soul from the body, and (\*3) to emphasize the immateriality of the soul. (Avicenna, 1440, vol. 2, p. 295) Therefore, Avicenna is aware of the influence of psychological factors and forces of the soul; but he does not consider the psychological forces influencing knowledge to be of the kind of material things; that is, Avicenna's epistemology is not a "naturalized epistemology"; rather, he examines psychological factors in terms of their place in the world of existence and provides an ontological explanation of them; therefore, it can be said that Avicenna's desired epistemology is a kind of "psychological-ontological epistemology". This epistemology can be formulated as follows: (1) Psychological factors (non-epistemic factors) affect knowledge. (2) Non-epistemic factors are not material. (3) The immateriality of non-epistemic factors means that their existence,

based on purely material and natural elements and components, is inexplicable; so one aspect of immateriality goes back to the ontological nature of those factors. (4) Another aspect of immateriality goes back to the type of investigation of their influence; that is, the immaterial factors that Avicenna has in mind can only be apprehended by "philosophical explanation" and not by empirical and natural explanations. (5) Based on what has been said, the meaning of the qualification of "ontology" in the combination "ontological-psychological" becomes clear; the ontology of the psychological forces influencing knowledge; that is, explaining the place that these forces have in existence, and this manner of influence itself necessarily arises from their place in existence.

## 5. Conclusion

Every explanation has a scope and has requirements and consequences. From the explanation of the connection between the three forces of the soul and the relation they have in determining knowledge, we can derive the following results:

(1) The ontological states of the soul are connected to the forces that determine the ontological position of the soul.

(2) The psychic forces, on the one hand, arise from the ontological nature of the soul and, on the other hand, are the cause of the appearance of other forces; therefore, the psychic forces are innumerable, and their enumeration can only be determined by positing.

(3) The perceptive force cannot be defined in advance; rather, its diverse and multiple instances are subsumed under a single concept by family resemblance.

(4) Awareness makes the perceived intelligible; that is, using the form it has constructed from the psychic forces, it makes them its own; therefore, sensibles must also become intelligible to be perceived.

(5) Perception is a kind of inner intuition; an intuition that is obtained by looking at the exemplary form revealed from a phenomenon in the essence of the perceiver.

(6) The occurrence of the perceived in the essence of the perceiver is the same way the perceived appears to the perceiver.

(7) The perceived is either internal or external; the internal perceived is the form and appearance of the external perceived.

(8) The motive force is either the factor of instigating motion or directly plays the role of determining the manner of motion.

(9) Without desire, purposeful motion is not realized; the end is always prior to the means to the end; so the motive force, which has a teleological aspect, is necessarily prior to the perceptive force.

(10) Until a desire is revealed to the moved soul, the orientation of motion is not determined; so "desire" is also direction-giving to motion.

(11) Avicennian epistemology is considered a kind of teleological epistemology; but the ends are determined in connection with "desire" and "motion"; that is, the end is determined by the psychological factors influencing knowledge.

(12) The psychological factors influencing knowledge have an ontological aspect, not a natural-empirical aspect, and in this respect, Avicenna's epistemology is an ontological-psychological epistemology; so, he has no affinity with psychological epistemology that examines the empirical aspects of psychological factors.

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