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Why knowledge is only *ḥuṣūlī*

In discussions of epistemology in the Islamic tradition, Illuminationist/Sufi/Irfani thinkers elevate presential (*ḥuḍūrī*) or mystical knowledge to the status of paradigmatic, or even exclusive, knowledge proper. According to this view, discursive and representational (*ḥuṣūlī*) cognition is at best secondary, derivative, or a shadow of a more fundamental immediate awareness of reality. This paper offers a critique of this position from a Peripatetic (*Mashshāʾī*) perspective, drawing primarily on the contemporary work of Ayman ‘Abd al-Khālīq al-Maṣrī. The paper proceeds in three stages. First, it offers an account of presential knowledge as it is articulated in some Illuminationist/Sufi literature/Irfani literature, distinguishing its major divisions - self-knowledge, inner experiential awareness, and purported mystical unveiling (*kashf* or *shuhūd*). Particular attention is given to the epistemic claims made on behalf of such knowledge, including its alleged infallibility, immediacy, and privileged access to metaphysical reality.

Second, this account is then contrasted with the Peripatetic theory of representational (*ḥuṣūlī*) knowledge as developed by Avicenna and his successors and defended by Ayman al-Maṣrī. On this view, knowledge properly so called consists in a ‘revelatory state’ when an intelligible form occurs for the knower and is divided into conception (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*), both governed by objective logical standards. While presential awareness is acknowledged as a real and undeniable mode of consciousness, it itself is shown to lack any epistemic merit proper (e.g., truth-aptness). Finally, the paper addresses and rejects the claim - articulated most explicitly by ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī in *Nihāyat al-ḥikma* - that representational knowledge ultimately “returns to” or is reducible to presential knowledge. I argue that no such reduction is possible as it involves a kind of category error. The paper concludes that, from a Mashshāʾī standpoint, presential and mystical awareness are more motivationally/psychologically significant than they are epistemically (except qualifiedly) and that any viable account of human knowing must retain the primacy of *ḥuṣūlī* cognition.



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Davlat Dadikhuda is a philosopher whose research focuses on Avicenna and the post-Avicennian tradition, with particular emphasis on epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind and religion. He has held a postdoctoral research position at the University of Jyväskylä as part of the ERC-funded project *Epistemic Transition in Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science*. His work has appeared in journals such as *Religious Studies, Theology and Science*, and *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, and his current research engages critically with Illuminationist and mystical epistemologies from a Peripatetic perspective.