

ISSN 1918-7351

Volume 14.3 (2022)

Home, away from HOME: The Journey of My Self-cultivation and Inter-traditional Fusion

Farzaneh Salehi Kahrizsangi

University of Ottawa, Canada

ORCID: 0000-0003-2155-8700



Figure 1. Naqsh-e-Jahan Square (View of the World/Half of the World Square), Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
<https://www.itto.org/iran/attraction/Naghsh-e-Jahan-Square/>

The first time that my mother took me to the kindergarten, at the time of farewell, I had a very strange feeling. For the first time, I was finding part of my being away from my HOME and I was missing my other part at HOME. It was a strange and profound feeling. . . so sad and so exciting.¹ The feeling grew in me as I grew up. It changed as I transitioned to different levels, academically and professionally, but it always had the same impact: it made me restless. I could never feel totally at home; I was always looking for my other parts. I could not see all parts of my being together, in one place, in one text. I found different parts of my being in different places, in different texts at different times at HOME. . . but some parts of my being were always obscure. . . missing. . . invisible. I had to move again, but this time, a big move. I needed a big transition. I couldn't see those parts at HOME.

Home, away from Home is a theoretical paper on my Self-cultivation in an understanding journey in between hermeneutics and my native tradition in my PhD research. The paper involves the journey of my Self to my tradition in kinship with hermeneutic tradition after my transition to Canada. My *Bildung*, the process of my *self-formation* and becoming educated² in my philosophical journey, starts with some basic questions raised in reading the hermeneutic texts that moved me back to Persian, Islamic tradition. The underlying mystic basis of hermeneutic texts with echoes and traces from Persian, Islamic tradition evoked a spiritual and aesthetic sense in its core definitions and images of understanding (e.g., “circle of understanding” or “fusion of horizons”) that had a key role in my Self-understanding and exploration journey. In turning to my tradition, I revive the *invisible existence* within the text,³ re-cognize the forgetfulness of language,⁴ and turn to another mystic, rich, and ancient tradition on light and being to better know and understand my Self with Others in between the two traditions. In my transition and in this paper, I rely on my understanding of the common basis of all traditions, or the *transcendent unity* in Suhrawardi's illuminationist terms, and reconstruct hermeneutic tradition in light of Persian, Islamic tradition. In an illuminationist perspective, humans are united in being of the same essence and

¹ My first memorable experience of existential understanding as joyous and frightening: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader*, trans. Richard. E. Palmer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

² Jean Grondin, “Gadamer's Experience and Theory of Education: Learning that the Other May Be Right,” in *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield (New York: Continuum, 2011), 5–20.

³ Andrzej Wierciński, “Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience,” *Analecta Hermeneutica* 1 (2009): 3–14.

⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” in *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1984), 54–65.

origin.⁵ Others are essentially related to Self as descending lights from the “Light of lights.” Human *Bildung*—with mystical hermeneutic underpinnings of the man carrying the image of God in his soul and cultivating God in himself⁶—and Self-formation and elevation is humans’ Illumination and rise to the “Light of lights” in Suhrawardi’s ideology. Human *Bildung* involves approaching his original Self, his Self in unity with Others in its original nature. Self-cultivation and *Bildung* involves approaching Others and reducing the distance between the Self and Others. Others in this inter-traditional perspective are the lights to human Self: Others enlighten human Selves, approach humans to their Origin, and abate their uncanny sense of un-home-likeness. Understanding or the fusion of horizons involving the “unity and integrity with the Other”⁷ moves human to his original Self, his Self illuminated in light of Others. The illuminationist idea of the unity between the knowing/understanding subject and object (Self and Other) involves Self-realization, a Self-realization that involves the unity of knowing and being, with the light of knowing with Others *transforming* and *illuminating* the being of human.⁸

The existing global tensions and misunderstandings of Islamic tradition reinforced my steps in using hermeneutics in dialogue with Persian Sufism and Islamic tradition. I aimed at reviving deep connections and the old familiarity and intuited kinship between the two worldviews⁹ as a step for philosophical fusion and reconciliation, and hopefully, for real-life manifestations and positive impacts in education. Illuminating the rooted connections, despite current, apparent distance between the two traditions, my paper conveys philosophical and pedagogical implications for generating a wider and more inclusive inter-traditional perspective in educational contexts to create more peaceful academic and social relations between individuals of diverse traditions, more specifically, between the people of Muslim and non-Islamic traditions. The hermeneutic texts mainly used in education did not discuss the origin and nature of human beings and the *telos* of existence and the significance for human education and peace. Mere philosophical texts, disconnected from other traditions, could barely serve the *Bildung* and educational purpose of philosophy. In

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, ed. Mehdi Amin Razavi (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1996).

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 83.

⁸ Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

⁹ David W. Jardine and Rahat Naqvi, “Learning Not to Speak in Tongues: Thoughts on *The Librarian of Basra*,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 31, no. 3 (2008): 639–66.

transition from hermeneutics to my home tradition, while experiencing various interhuman tensions, I found hermeneutics used in education as a half-opened book where I could see the middle but not the beginning and end of the text. While hermeneutics, and mainstream philosophical thoughts, talk about Self and Other, and their fusion of horizons, they do not explain how cooperative understanding of Self and Other or their fusion of horizons can re-connect humans and improve their relations; and especially, how knowing and educating about the origin and nature of human existence, human understandings, and the *telos* of education can help in reconciling disconnected traditions and humans in tension. Integrating hermeneutics with Persian and Islamic Wisdom, I investigate the origin and nature of human being and the *telos* of the existence, and human education, for the impacts on human understandings and relations. The implications for teaching philosophy and traditions and education in general are elaborated throughout the paper and at the end.

A Note on Home, away from HOME

Home, away from HOME is used in its original existential sense of understanding as self-understanding- the excursion of my Self to the Other tradition and my reunion as a more fully, transformed Self (as an alienated spirit visioned by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel¹⁰). This existential, spiritual sense echoes the inner way of understanding and fusion of Self and Other presented in Persian Wisdoms of Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra.

The understanding metaphor, *Home, away from HOME*, also implies my physical transition from my homeland Iran (HOME) to Canada (Home). It represents “homecoming” in my philosophical exploration through reviving my forgotten ancestors and re-cognizing their contribution to the world wisdoms and current state of knowledge. For my strong captivation to the place of my birth, place of my origins and ancestors, I distinguish between the two homes by capitalizing my birth land. HOME represents place of my birth, Iran, Isfahan, at an initial level, and ultimately refers to the Original abode of our longing souls beyond this world. The opening picture (Figure 1) from the famous Naqsh-e Jahan Square (or Half of the World), in my hometown Isfahan, stands for “home, away from HOME.” It presents a faraway perspective of the whole square from one focused point of view that is home but also

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gadamer and Hermeneutics: Science, Culture, Literature*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (London: Routledge, 1991).

away from HOME. This figure metaphorizes the phenomenon of understanding in various degrees of closeness to the text/object of understanding. The picture represents how a text of understanding, or a scene, might look and mean differently, from different standpoints, and in different eyes—the way it is viewed differently by one inside my hometown (my past), in the inner context of the town, and one outside and within a broader horizon (my outside Iran perspective exploring hermeneutics in dialogue with Persian Wisdoms). The view presents my growing Self-understanding and my Self-transformation as I move beyond my country and see my tradition in a far perspective; as I see my Self connected to my ancestors in reading hermeneutics, finding the two traditions as parts of my being, as descending sun rays from the Light of lights.

Here is the journey of my transition and philosophical *Bildung*, the cultivation of my soul and my Self-education,¹¹ in between the Oriental and Western worlds, my learnings and transitions in encounter with the two traditions and fusion of the past and present:



Figure 2. Si-o-se-pol River (Thirty-three Bridges), Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
<https://iranianholiday.com/top-most-beautiful-bridges-in-iran/>

¹¹ Grondin, “Gadamer’s Experience and Theory of Education.”

Isfahan, away from Isfahan: My Home Forefathers of the Hermeneutic, Existential Philosophy

My Traditional Fusion: Transition to My Ancestral, Persian Islamic Treasures

Reading Western hermeneutic, existential philosophy, I was captivated by the sections on human liminal state in this world, the infinitude of human understanding and interpretation¹² and humans' constant feeling of un-home-likeness, or "*unheimlichkeit*."¹³ The existential sections on our transformation and self-understanding through excursion toward Others and reunion with ourselves as more fully Selves,¹⁴ and understanding as something that "happens to us over and above our wanting and doing"¹⁵ highly resonated with my lifelong feelings of not being fully at home and my deep, intimate feelings for Others as parts of one Self—an understanding ingrained in my culture—which echoed the big, ever-present existential mysteries in my mind. Facing other quotes on humans, however, as having no essence, such as Nicholas Davey's note on our new self-understandings: "precisely because we have no essence that we must endeavor to move on,"¹⁶ I found things somehow contradictory. In my readings of hermeneutics, I was haunted by two fundamental questions. The first question enquired the reason for our constant feeling of *unheimlichkeit*, or in my lifelong understanding, the feeling of homelessness. What was that feeling for? And what was the reason for the infinitude of our understanding? My second question was how does excursion to Others, who are different from us, illuminate our Selves to us? How do our encounters with Others and knowing about Others cultivate, refine, and complement our Selves? Or, in Gadamer's metaphor, how does our "fusion of horizons" lead to a more "fully" Self, which is both new and familiar? And create and a new self-understanding through the "unity and integrity of the other"?¹⁷ Also, how could understanding be (fundamentally) possible if there would be no essence to our Selves? All these questions were related to the key

¹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1975).

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 233.

¹⁴ Joel Weinsheimer, "Gadamer's Metaphorical Hermeneutics," in *Gadamer and Hermeneutics: Science, Culture, Literature*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (London: Routledge, 1991), 181–201.

¹⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroads, 1986), xvi.

¹⁶ Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 57.

¹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2004), 83.

questions of “Who we are” in relation to each Other, “How we understand,” and “Where we are going/moving on in our understandings.” Or, “What is the *telos* of our understandings, the *telos* of our education and our existence?”

Reading hermeneutics, many times I was reminded of some main Islamic principles that I had read, lived, and was raised with in Iran and I was tortured by their absence many times after my transition from Iran—the great emphasis on the Other as the one realizing our Self-understanding, Others as external lights to our being and our inner side, detachment and keeping a distance from our dominant Self, and accepting Others as illuminating our Selves—what I highly relished was echoed in hermeneutic texts but I was disappointed to find practical manifestations in academia and society oftentimes. The beauty and poetic style of the existential texts of hermeneutic philosophy—which dimly echoed rich Persian literature, art, philosophy, and mysticism deep-rooted in my cradle city of art, Isfahan, and in Iran and Persia—made me more restless to dig into my own tradition. I aspired to explore old connections in two vastly far-apart world perspectives. Hermeneutics seemed like a *humane* approach that considered the Other as significant. Islamic philosophy, including mysticism as the fruit of Islamic philosophy,¹⁸ with its delicate and beautiful imprints on Persian culture, art, literature, and philosophy, places a special emphasis on the Other. In Islam, the Other is considered even before the Self and emphasis on Self and “I”ness, or self-centeredness, is considered a “fault” of humanity and a sign of being far from a true human. Humans, as is beautifully put in the masterpiece *Bani Adam* by esteemed Persian poet Sa’di Shirazi (1210–1292), are considered as parts of the same body who belong to each other and share the same pains and joys: “*Adam’s sons are body limbs, to say; For they’re created of the same clay.*”¹⁹ One Self, or a body member, separate from Others, has no real existence or meaning. That is the way human beings, and all beings in the universe, are pictured in Persian philosophy. Self-sacrifice is another key concept in Islamic philosophy that reveals the high status of the Other and the significance of brotherhood and unity in this sacred tradition.

Reading an amazing book, *Pedagogy Left in Peace*,²⁰ I became more inclined and considered it my responsibility to delve back into the Persian, Islamic sources of my upbringing. Chapter ten of the book, “Learning Not to Speak in Tongues,” points to the ancient ancestors of current Western philosophy, the “hidden,” “silenced,” “tabooed,” even “hated” forefathers of current modern science and philosophy. The

¹⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (New York: Longman, 1975).

¹⁹ Sa’di Shirazi, *Golestan*, 1258 AD, chapter 1, story 10.

²⁰ David W. Jardine, *Pedagogy Left in Peace: Cultivating Free Spaces in Teaching and Learning* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

chapter involves an introduction of an allegorical, true story of *The Librarian of Basra*, Alia, who took 30,000 books, including ancient books such as the 700-year-old biography of prophet Mohammad(s), from the library in Basra, Iraq, to her “home” and “heart,” to her friends’ homes at the time of the invasion of Iraq by America. The story is followed by a review of the Dark Ages in the West (roughly 476–1000 CE) when the great wisdoms of ancient Greece, Persia, and Rome were lost in the West and Muslim countries experienced The Golden Age of their intellectual growth. The chapter refers to Islamic heritage as “our *shared* Islamic past,”²¹ referring to the great Islamic scholars, including the Persian sages, their contribution to knowledge in the Dark Ages, and their influence on Christian scholarship. The chapter recalls Persian sages such as Farabi (c. 870–950), or “the Second Master” after Aristotle, Ibn Sina (L. Avicenna) (c. 980–1037), the celebrated polymath, my since-childhood hero, and the father of modern medicine, and Ghazali (1058–1111), whose impact on Vico (1668–1744) for his work on imagination and *sapientia poetica*²² as a source of knowledge creation later affected Gadamer’s formulation of philosophical hermeneutics.²³ *What a magnificent moment!* I could trace the thread of my passion for hermeneutics in my own ancient Persian ancestors.²⁴ What I had intuited in Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics were the echoes of the divine doctrines original to the philosophy of Ancient Iran, Persia, Zoroaster, Greek philosophy, and later Islamic philosophy. I found another secret for my gravitation to Gadamer’s philosophy.

My shift to my ancient home philosophy, my home tradition and history, is presented in Figure 2. The picture presents the famous bridge in my hometown Isfahan—Sio se pol River (Thirty-three Bridges)—with reflections of the bridge in the river. My shift to the past, the mirror image of the bridge in the water, revealed the past as the root and the key to the present; it revealed the present as echoing tradition, as reflecting the Other, which is a root tradition and an ignored Other. The picture mirrors the hidden past that I felt and traced from my Persian tradition in Western hermeneutics.

²¹ Jardine, *Pedagogy Left in Peace*, 205.

²² Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. and ed. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

²³ Jardine, “Youth Need Images for Their Imaginations and for the Formation of Their Memories,” in *Pedagogy Left in Peace*, chapter 8.

²⁴ Similar to my notice of the traces of Persian art in Roman historical sights.

My shift to my tradition was illuminating more invisible parts of my existence; I found my Self moving in between the mirror image of the past and current philosophy, in between my Home tradition and the echoes of my Home tradition in hermeneutics.

David W. Jardine reminds us of ALL of our past ancestors—Greek, Persian, and Muslim—and highlights their contribution to the current state of knowledge.²⁵ He describes the “mutuality” within which East and West became what they are,²⁶ and views our current tradition as existing in the “multifariousness” of all our voices.²⁷ Jardine refers to the mass pillage of over 170,000 items from the Iraq museum by American troops in 2003,²⁸ which somehow reveals the inhuman transfer of knowledge from ancient Persia to America, a recurring pillage of Persia since very ancient times.²⁹ The picture of Islam depicted by the chapter and the book is a true image of Islamic tradition that does not match the popular, televised image that is known, and many times followed blindly, in the West.³⁰

Finding the reasons for my intuitive understanding of the closeness of Gadamer’s philosophy to my Persian, Islamic tradition, and the chain of connections between my chosen research philosophy and my ancestors’ philosophical orientation, the absence of key Muslim and Persian philosophers and scholars in most current scientific and philosophical texts (as the hidden roots mirrored in the river); and more importantly, my suffering for some academic and societal tensions, injustice, lack of attention and support, and the global clashes with the Muslims, Iranians, and the Muslim world, I deemed it my duty to delve down into my own background, my own past, and our Collective Self for my research, and for our awareness. I embarked on exploring some past roots for the present (Figure 2) and reconciling the two far apart mother-and-son traditions in my research.

In the following, I summarize part of a “shadowed” treasure that I explored in my transition, which directed my Self-cultivation and provided answers to my basic hermeneutic and existential questions. The final goals for answering my questions and re-connecting the two traditions in my research and paper have been to encourage

²⁵ Jardine, *Pedagogy Left in Peace*. (Ancient Iran was still missing.)

²⁶ David Geoffrey Smith, “‘The Farthest West Is but the Farthest East’: The Long Way of Oriental/Occidental Engagement,” in *New Horizons in Curriculum: Eastern Thought, Educational Insights*, ed. Claudia Eppert and Hongyu Wang (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), 1–34.

²⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), 284.

²⁸ Jardine, *Pedagogy Left in Peace*, 210.

²⁹ A reminder of historical lootings and fires of Persian libraries during wars with Greeks, Moghuls, etc.

³⁰ Jardine, *Pedagogy Left in Peace*, chapter 3.

inclusion and inspire further reconciliatory approaches in education for creating peace, in theory and practice, in academic and social contexts.



Figure 3. Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Naqshe-Jahan Square, Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
<https://www.persiaadvisor.travel/attraction/sheikh-lotfollah-lotf-allah-mosque/>

Illuminationist Tradition: Suhrawardi and the Doctrine of the Primacy of Essence

Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (1154–1191), known as Shaikh al-Ishraq or the master of illumination, revived the hidden, ancient Iranian wisdom or theosophy, much of which was destroyed during the invasion of ancient Iran by Alexander, the Moguls, and others.³¹ Suhrawardi largely replaced Ishraq for the peripatetic philosophy, which was already criticized by Ghazali.

Suhrawardi's works have not been translated into the Western world until recently by a few scholars including Henry Corbin. The school of Ishraq, hence, has

³¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn 'Arabi* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1964).

remained almost unknown outside Iran. Suhrawardi's masterpieces include *The Theosophy of the Orient of Light* and *Hikmat al-Isbraq*, with Ishraqi doctrines in Arabic, and *Partaw-nameh* (Treatise on Illumination) in Persian. The term Ishraq itself is an Arabic term associated with both the East and the world of light, or illumination. Following Avicenna, Suhrawardi uses the sacred geographical base of Ishraqi doctrine and its inherent symbolism of direction with horizontal dimension of Orient–Occident converted into a vertical one. Orient is thus used to refer to the world of pure lights or archangels devoid of matter and darkness and invisible to mortal eyes beyond the visible sky. Middle occident refers to visible astronomical heavens where light is combined with darkness, and Occident refers to the earthly existence, or the world of matter or darkness. It is within this geographic symbolism that the language of Suhrawardi can be understood in his visionary narratives. In his *Tale of the Occidental Exile*, a spiritual vision adopted from Avicenna's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, the exile of the man in the West (the terrestrial prison) is visioned as his fall into a bottomless well, the dark abode of ignorance, which is located in the far West. The man, seeker of Truth, embarks on his vertical trip to the celestial abode, aspiring his ascension from the shadows of the well, the dogma of the contingent world, to the sight of the Sun in his original home, the Orient of Lights.³²

The basic tenets of Ishraqi school are mentioned in *Hikmat al-Isbraq* (532–1186), a book of remarkable literary style that begins with logic and reasoning and ends with spiritual union and ecstasy. Unlike Avicenna and the Aristotelians who assumed essence as dependent on primary existence, Suhrawardi considered essence as primary and viewed existence as an accident added to essence. Suhrawardi's view of the principality of essence (*isalat al-mahiyat*) was later criticized by Mulla Sadra who again substituted a metaphysics of existence for metaphysics of essence. Suhrawardi criticized Aristotle for not following "Platonic ideas" and the belief in the world of archetypes and higher orders of being.³³ Similar to Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, and Plato, under the influence of the wisdom of ancient Iran (*Hikmat Khosravani*), Suhrawardi sees *intuition* as a divine gate to the unseen and the things that reason is not able to immediately achieve. He calls inner intuition *Ishraq*, complementing the rational wisdom. Suhrawardi's angelology, concerning the angelic substances between this shadowy world and the Supreme Light, plays a key part in Ishraqi doctrine. Human being has his guardian angel who resides in the angelic world. Suhrawardi considers a previous existence for each soul in the angelic world before man descends in the domain of the

³² Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

³³ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*.

body. Upon descending in the domain of body, the soul of man, which is immortal and of angelic core, is divided into two parts, one remaining in heaven and the other descended into the dungeon of the body. Human's distance from his angelic soul is the cause of his wander, as a lost child or *alienated spirit*,³⁴ in the complex labyrinth of his terrestrial abode in search of his angelic half in celestial abode.³⁵ The image of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque from Naqshe-Jahan Square (Figure 3) of the sunbeams illuminating the art, spiritual colors, and the words of the interior resonate the Illuminationist tradition that enlightens human's uncanny feeling of un-home-likeness, or *unheimlichkeit*, the constant existential feeling of yearning of human soul in departure from his angelic half and his aspiration for ascension from the dogma of the contingent world to the Light of lights.

The Illuminationist tradition enlightened my human Self, illuminated the root for my constant, unsettling feeling of being away from HOME. The sunbeams to my angelic Self illuminated my far-apart mortal Self in my worldly structure, the dungeon of my body seeking the lost light of its existence. I surrender my Self to the lights, to the beams leading to my Origin, to my place of peace, my celestial abode.

The Ishraq school is the treasure house of Islamic wisdom, comprising symbols from many traditions including Zoroastrianism, Pythagoreanism, Platonism (influenced by Zoroastrianism and ancient Persian Wisdom), and Hermeticism added to Islamic symbols and *Qor'anic* evidences. Suhrawardi often turned to the wisdom of ancient Persia, whose sages were direct inheritors of the wisdom revealed to Hermes. In his symbolism of light, Suhrawardi relies on Zoroastrianism while not following the esoteric teachings of the Zoroastrians. Suhrawardi identified himself as a reviver of the hidden tradition in the Zoroastrian community that believed in the Divine Principle. Through the universality of Islamic philosophy, Suhrawardi integrated many diverse elements from different forms of traditional wisdom, revealing the *transcendent unity* underlying different versions of Truth. This integration is crucial for revealing the underlying unity and the unified basis of different philosophical thoughts and traditions. The often-missed attention to the underlying transcendent unity of different traditions reflected in Suhrawardi's Illuminationist tradition, unlike hermeneutics and most modern Western traditions of divine basis, can lead to re-deeming the lost unity in between far-apart traditions and humans.

³⁴ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

³⁵ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

Considering himself as the unifier of ancient Divine Wisdom, Suhrawardi believed that Divine Wisdom is universal and perennial, and existed in different forms among the ancient Persians, Hindus, Babylonians, and Greeks up to the time of Aristotle who put an end to this tradition by limiting philosophy to its rationalistic dimension. According to Surawardi, like many other medieval authors, wisdom, or theosophy, was revealed to man by Hermes, or Idris the father of philosophy, who was known as the founder of philosophy and science in the Middle Ages. Hermes's Wisdom was divided into two branches, one came to Persia and the other to Egypt, and then from Egypt into Greece. Finally, the wisdom from Persia and Greece entered into Islamic civilization. Suhrawardi considered the early Sufis as his most immediate predecessors in the Islamic world. The master of Ishraq unified the wisdom of Zoroaster and Plato, which were inter-rooted and once issued forth from the same source.³⁶

Dating to the pre-Aristotelian period when intellectual intuition existed and philosophy was not fully rationalized, Ishraq offers an assembly of discursive reasoning and intellectual intuition,³⁷ a philosophy that synthesizes rational intuition with intuitional reason and considers both as the two eyes required for elevated positions in society.³⁸ Connected to Figure 3, Suhrawardi redirected the beams into the sun-deserted house of reason. The existential and spiritual aspects of hermeneutics, another tradition of mystical and theological underpinnings—involving the feelings of homelessness or *unheimlichkeit*, and *Bildung* or human cultivation of God as an *alienated spirit*³⁹ in this world—resemble the intuitional aspects of understanding. Tapping into deep essential and existential understandings of humans, these traditions transcend the rational aspects of human understanding. It remains a key task in education to unravel and apply the intellectual intuitional knowledge ingrained in traditions and encourage reflection on this ignored knowledge for general application, addressing some essential needs of humans and re-connecting fragmented individuals.

³⁶ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

³⁷ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

³⁸ Muhammed Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendental Philosophy* (London: Ashgate, 2006).

³⁹ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

The Light of Lights and Ontology

In Suhrawardi's school, light, in various degrees of intensity, composes all reality. Everything is made evident by light and nothing is more clear and evident than light.⁴⁰ Light for Surawardi is not just the sensible and physical light. Light in Suhrawardi's experiential philosophy implies "to see, to experience and to know",⁴¹ light is imagination, perception, any new understanding, and mind is the highest light before the Light of lights who is the pure light that illuminates all other lights. The greatest manifestation of light wisdom is in the *Holy Qor'an* with highest recommendation and emphasis on human reasoning and contemplation. Reasoning and reflection are considered the key tools for understanding the existence and Being in the *Holy Qor'an*.⁴²

In Suhrawardi's terms, the pure light is the *Light of lights* (nur al-anwar), whose intensity blinds the eyes, which is the Divine Essence. The universe merely consists of degrees of light and darkness with the Supreme Light as the source of all existence. The ontological status of all beings, then, depends on their degree of proximity to the Supreme Light, or their illumination.⁴³ All beings are an outflow in a descending order of waning intensity from their Origin, their Origin that is not affected by their multiplicity and gradation of light.⁴⁴ The signs of the Light of lights, or His "vice-regents," are manifested in every domain, the Sun in the sky, fire (as a form of light) among the elements, and the lordly or *signeural* light (al-nur al-ispahbadi) in the soul of man.⁴⁵ Human's *Bildung* or rising to the universal, and the Light of lights, requires the individual's openness to others' views.⁴⁶ Human task of universality and *Bildung*, approximating to the Supreme Light and ascension to their Origin, entails Otherness; it demands devotion of self through sacrificing the individuality, moving beyond the rational side and alienating oneself from immediate desires and personal needs and interests.⁴⁷

The soul of man, in whatever the degree of perfection, is "seeking the Supreme Light at each moment of his life," he is involved in cultivating his Self and *Bildung*, even if he is not aware of the goal of his endeavor.⁴⁸ Illumination or the rise of man to

⁴⁰ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*.

⁴¹ Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, 17.

⁴² Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.

⁴³ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*.

⁴⁴ Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*.

⁴⁵ Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*.

⁴⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

⁴⁷ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

⁴⁸ Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 76.

the sight of “Light” involves Self-refinement, reducing the distance between the self and the Light of lights (Other). This *Bildung* and proximity of lights or the essences to the Essence or the Light of lights entails “knowledge by presence” (ilm al-huduri) that is an immediate and intuitive mode of cognition and understanding.⁴⁹

As the sunbeams extend from the Light of lights (Figure 3), the rays enliven and animate the words and architecture. They illuminate the mind of the artist, and the cultivating being of the artist, to the eyes of the beholder; they refine and educate the being of the beholder.

Decrypting the artistic codes under the pure light, my Self glorifies: the light penetrates my being. . . in dialogue with the illuminating words, my Self rejoice in fusion and animating unity with the artist and the illuminating Light.

My alienated spirit is approaching home. . . in circular structure of my Bildung,⁵⁰ in my excursion from home and familiarity into the strange and unfamiliar, in my reunion in becoming home in the alien, I am becoming my Self, I am re-understanding my Self, seeing more of my Self, within a broader horizon.

Echoes of “Fusion of Horizons” and Understanding as Self-understanding

The illuminationist method of understanding is based on intuitive knowledge with an immediate grasp of the object (of understanding) by the subject (what is called *agkhhinoia* by Aristotle⁵¹). This involves a special mode of perception, with the psychological state of the subject—the man’s mood of being—as a key determinant in obtaining the intuitive knowledge. This mode of understanding thus involves the unity of knowing and being, with the light of knowing *transforming* the being of the man.⁵² The transforming fusion of the sunbeams with the soul of the art (Figure 3), the fusion of the sunbeamed artistic structures with my Self, changes my being. Unravelling the sacred, enlightened ciphers, re-meeting the other in the language of art,⁵³ my being illuminates in light of perceiving the codes, my unknown being is enlightened.

⁴⁹ Kamal, *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendental Philosophy*.

⁵⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

⁵¹ Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

⁵² Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

⁵³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, ed. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson, trans. Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 235. See also Gadamer, *Gadamer and Hermeneutics*.

The view of knowledge as “the form of the thing in the mind,” which is the same as its form in sense perception,⁵⁴ where the borders between the mind and sense blur, is a fundamental principle in the philosophy of illumination.⁵⁵ The illuminationist method of obtaining knowledge through the unity between the subject and object (Self and Other) involves Self-realization. Self-realization in knowing an object and gaining knowledge, or “the unification of the knower and the known and the mind,” is a central concept highlighted by Suhrawardi and also the main figures of the School of Isfahan including Mulla Sadra,⁵⁶ which are introduced next. The fusion of the horizons of the being of the knowing subject and the object (text) of understanding involves developing the spirit of dialogical openness to the Other, to the text, and any object of understanding. Understanding or fusion of horizons involves respecting other than personal expectations and preferences.⁵⁷ Knowing an object, or understanding and fusion of horizons, requires a willingness to open ourselves to other viewpoints. Understanding and Self-educating requires *reconciling* our view with the Other’s view on the subject matter. In knowing an object, in knowing an Other, we integrate our Self with the Other and understand our Self through integrating and understanding the Other.⁵⁸



Figure 4. Naqsh-e-Jahan Square, Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
<https://www.iranroute.com/sights/452/naqsh-e-jahan-square>

⁵⁴ Suhrawardi, *Opera II*, 73–74.

⁵⁵ Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

⁵⁶ Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, 639.

⁵⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

⁵⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2004).

School of Isfahan

The School of Illumination, advocating the primacy of essence, thrived in Persia, especially in Isfahan during the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736). The combined philosophical (mystical) and rational orientation of Safavid sages—including Mir Damad, entitled as the “Third Teacher” following Aristotle and Farabi, Mir Findiriski, and Shaykh Baha’i—marks the intellectual tradition of the School of Isfahan.⁵⁹ The three sages considered intuitive knowledge superior to discursive or rationalistic knowledge,⁶⁰ the way that the great poet Molana (Rumi) saw doomed the battle of eyes of the head with the eyes of the inner:

The eyes of the head with the eyes of the inner secret quarrelled.

No need to prove that the eyes of the inner secret became victorious.

چشم بر با چشم سرد جنگ بود غالب آمد چشم سر حمت نمود

The picture of Naqshe-Jahan Square (Figure 4), the key place in Isfahan, represents Isfahan involving the School of Isfahan in a wider perspective of its rational and intuitional sides. The harmonic structures represent the rationality and the light overspreading the whole square and the structures embodying the encompassing light of intuition. A shadowed structure on one side symbolizes lightless rationality, which is artistic but not as intelligible. While displaying the magnitude of the square, the picture presents the artistic, mystical, and philosophical merits of the city of Isfahan.

The enlightened square, the unity of the light and harmonic structures within a widened perspective is my enlarged horizon, the horizon of my being, my full being of body and soul, reason and intuition. Getting closer to my Self, learning more about my deserted soul, I feel the lightness of my enlightened Self, I feel the outflow of my being levitating freely as the waterdrops of the free fountain in the square, dancing in the air under the shining, enlightening sun.

⁵⁹ A fresco in the ruins of Safavid royal building in Isfahan nicely reveals the three forms of discourse in a story on friendship of the three thinkers. See Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

⁶⁰ Ghazali and thinking heart, as an organ for both discursive and intuitive knowledge (Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazali and the Poetics of Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). See also Kamal, *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendental Philosophy*.

In my road of Bildung, the highest and most harmonious development of [my] powers to a complete and consistent whole,⁶¹ I find my Self harmonized in accord of the artistic structures, under the illuminating light, the light harmonizing my profound experience of encounter with the enlightened art, with an ancient and (un)familiar part of my Self. . . celebrating my endless fusion, the formative process of my reconciling⁶² with the harmonious art, with the artistic square, with the whole world around me, with Others.



Figure 5. The Grand Entrance to Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
<https://www.iranasia.com/sheikh-lotfollah-mosque/>

Mulla Sadra: The Doctrine of the Primacy of Being

Sadr al-Din Shirazi or Mulla Sadra (1572–1640) is the foremost, celebrated philosopher of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy and Safavid Persia (1501–1722). Mulla Sadra

⁶¹ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action* ed. John Wyon Burrow (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1993).

⁶² Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*.

represents the full maturity of Islamic philosophy.⁶³ The grand entrance to Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Naqshe-Jahan Square of Isfahan (Figure 5) represents the innovation, complexity, and magnitude of Mulla Sadra's comprehensive philosophy. Mulla Sadra's philosophical school, called *Transcendent Wisdom* or *Theosophy* (al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah: higher Wisdom) introduced a number of new concepts and formulations, some of which were considered revolutionary and highly innovative within the broad Islamic tradition. His most significant contribution to Islamic philosophy is the study of Wujud (existence) and its applications in different fields. Mulla Sadra epitomizes a "paradigm shift from the metaphysics of fixed substances proposed by Aristotle (which created numerous problems for Muslim Peripatetics) to the analysis of existence as the ultimate ground and dynamic source of all things."⁶⁴ Wujud in Mulla Sadra's philosophy composes the reality and truth of beings and a key for a proper philosophical analysis to begin and end with. The idea of dynamic existence somehow corresponds to the concept of Self-transformation and *becoming* theorized in hermeneutic phenomenology. Similar to hermeneutic phenomenology, Mulla Sadra defines Wujud or existence as being dynamic. He also considers Wujud/existence as being a dynamic and multifaceted reality. By reality (*baghibat*) of existence, Mulla Sadra does not mean its concept (*mafhum*), which is the mental representation of existence, but the reality by which all things come to exist, an existence beyond mental representation, one that is "dynamic, continuous, self-renewing, and self-effusing."⁶⁵ Existence involves three different modalities: of intellect, of soul, and of dark with no perception. All modalities involve hierarchies, from One to the many, with one single reality travelling through the whole existence, leaving infinite shades and modes, named as "unity in plurality" (*al-wahdah fi al-kathrah*) by Ibn Arabi. Wujud for Mulla Sadra is the fundamental reality that composes all the things.⁶⁶ Besides the reality of existence, the key aspect of hierarchies and shades in modalities of existence distinguishes Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence from the existential philosophy of being proposed in hermeneutic phenomenology.

Mulla Sadra rationalized and perfected existentialism in Islamic philosophy. Compared to existential hermeneutics, there is a special place for human, among other beings, in Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence. As the miniature of other beings,

⁶³ Mulla Sadra, *Metaphysical Penetrations: A Parallel English–Arabic Text*, trans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed. Ibrahim Kalin (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2014).

⁶⁴ Mulla Sadra, *Metaphysical Penetrations*, xvii.

⁶⁵ Mulla Sadra, *Metaphysical Penetrations*, xviii.

⁶⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness: An Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Law and Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014): 76–91.

man is considered as the door to knowing other beings: upon man's creation the Source of Being praised Himself as the best of creators: "Blessed is God the best of creators."⁶⁷ Beings reach perfection in human existence as the highest form of Being in the realm of multiplicity beneath the realm of unity.⁶⁸ Man's involvement with the beings, though, has many times distracted him from his sublime status among all other beings and from the Source of his existence.⁶⁹

Mulla Sadra proposes a dynamic cosmology of gradational ontology—different from Aristotle's metaphysics of a static world and fixed substances—that conceptualizes the whole world as a living being. Mulla Sadra used his novel, well-known concept of "substantial motion" (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*), which considers all existing beings including substances in constant change towards their ultimate goal or *telos* (ghayah).⁷⁰ In this perspective, every moment, human being is changed into a new Self⁷¹:

After thousands of 'I's and 'we's I'm surprised at who I am!!
(Molana, *Divan-e Shams*, Ode 1397)

Gadamer's reference to the theological undertones of *Bildung* of humans as beings "in motion," creatures whose essence resides in ceaseless negotiation and transformation,⁷² echoes the "substantial motion" in Mulla Sadra's conceptualization of human being and existence. The major distinction of Mulla Sadra's philosophy of existence is the recognition of the ultimate goal or *telos* for the substantial motion of existence. The identification of the end goal of the "substantial motion" of existence, including interconnected human beings, highlights and gives substantial meaning to life and education with and through others. Education of a *telos* for human *Bildung* and Self-cultivation reinforces the necessity of openness to others in our life journey and for achievement of our final goal. This again can strengthen human ties in their educational and life journeys towards their original status.

Mulla Sadra proposes a deeper conceptualization of existence. He defines changing substances in terms of "degrees of existentiating" and conceptualizes various levels and planes of Wujud (existence). Mulla Sadra's "cosmological vitalism" is based

⁶⁷ *Holy Qur'an*, 23:14.

⁶⁸ Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, vol. 1 (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999).

⁶⁹ Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.

⁷⁰ Nasr, "Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness: An Islamic Perspective."

⁷¹ Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.

⁷² Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1989), xxx.

on his understanding of existence as the creative Act of God. Accordingly, all that exists shares the “vital qualities” of existence: life, intelligence, volition, and goodness, in a hierarchical order: “The abode of existence is one, and the whole universe is a big living being. Its dimensions are conjoined with one another. . . . All existence, from its highest to the lowest and from its lowest to the highest. . . all things are united in spite of their external diversity. . . *the whole universe is one single animate being* (*‘hayawan wabid’*) just like a single soul.”⁷³ This fundamental idea of the interconnectedness of all existence despite the external diversity necessitates an openness to others for sustained substantial motion and attainment of *telos*. Speaking of human beings, practicing openness to others is a spiritually transformative phenomenon. Becoming open to others involves re-unifying our Selves with Others in our external diversity. In our reunion with one-an-other, with humans and other beings, we expose ourselves to our highest growth; we approach our greatest *Bildung* and cultivation of our Selves in our journey to our realm of unity with Others. The spiritually transformative and Self-cultivating experience of reunion with other humans, and other beings, can relieve our painful sense of un-home-likeness, or *unheimlichkeit*, in our confused and in-between stage in this world.

Mulla Sadra’s fundamental conceptualization of the universe as one animate being seems a most significant point of divergence from existential hermeneutics. It draws attention to the substantial interconnectedness of our beings and the significance of our openness to diverse others and other traditions not only for our Self-growth and perfection, but also for our survival and relief from our ever-present, painful existential feelings of this world. The inclusion and application of this key, universal aspect of our being in education (philosophical pedagogy and education in general) can fundamentally enlighten many biased and Self-centered perspectives, which ultimately can bring about an overall healing experience for everyone troubled by human tensions and fragmentation. In philosophical pedagogy, such enlightenment demands a shift towards an inter-traditional education of philosophical thoughts and traditions. Enriching philosophical education by fundamental and valuable concepts from other neglected traditions can reform and elevate education and unify humans of diverse, inter-rooted traditions. Mulla Sadra’s existential proposal of one reality travelling through the entirety of existence re-affirms the interconnectedness of human beings and the elevating and relieving outcomes of similar education for human beings.

⁷³ Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Arba’a*, 342–50, cited in Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness”.

Mulla Sadra regards Wujud/existence as the most manifest of all evident things through presence.⁷⁴ The Necessary Being is perfect and emanates upon all other beings or contingent and deficient essences—existences whose Wujud (existence) depend upon the Necessary Being as their origin and end.⁷⁵ The Necessary Being is hidden for its pervasive presence but is seen through the contingent beings that are illuminated by His light.⁷⁶ All beings are contingent essences of different grades of perfection and deficiency that find their full completion with Necessary Being. The relation between Necessary Being and contingent beings is similar to the relation between the rays of the sun that are dark in themselves and become illuminated by the sun (as the sun illuminating the art in Figures 3 and 4). The contingent beings, different in their proximity and distance from the Necessary Being, are all unified in proceeding from the Necessary Being.⁷⁷ Similar to the rays of the sun, contingent beings are not Being, but at the same time are nothing but being. Being and its multiple modalities belong together. Unity and multiplicity are two different aspects of the same reality. Mulla Sadra refers to this identity between Being and beings as *tashkik al-wujud*,⁷⁸ or the systematic ambiguity of Being. All beings are of the same essence, light; they also are multiple and represent different shades of light in their proximity to the Sun. Every being is thus both identical and different, eternal and temporal.⁷⁹

In proceeding from the Necessary Being, we contingent humans are unified. In moving together, we regain peace in our original unity. Being dark and unknown in ourselves and without our interdependencies, together we reach our full potential, our full light and universalized Self. Our Again, our *Bildung*, and Self-elevation depends on our interconnectedness and being receptive to others. With others as multiple modalities of our being, as enlightening parts of our being, we reach the fullest version of our Self. In our dialogical integration with others, we re-cognize our Selves with initially alien Others and develop a universal point of view that makes us feel at home in difference and plurality.⁸⁰ In our circular movement of understanding from familiar Self to the alien Other, we end in reunion with our Self and becoming home in the

⁷⁴ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness.”

⁷⁵ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness.”

⁷⁶ Mulla Sadra considers Being as possessing letters that are the keys to the invisible world, from their combinations results “the book of existence” (kitab al-wujud) (Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*). Similarly, the whole world is viewed in Ibn Sina’s works as a sacred text (Jardine, *Pedagogy Left in Peace*) that is written and given existence by the Necessary Being. See also Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.

⁷⁷ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness.”

⁷⁸ Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Arba’a*, 35.

⁷⁹ Kamal, *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendental Philosophy*.

⁸⁰ Hegel in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

alien.⁸¹ In fusion of our horizons with Others, we identify a new, *unrecognized* possibility of our Self⁸² and approach a fuller version of our Self.

Temporal Origination of the World: Process of Perfection of Essences as Substantial Motions

Inspired by several *Qor'anic* verses such as: “Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them to be firmly fixed; but they shall pass away as clouds pass away,”⁸³ or “If He so will, He can remove you and put [in your place] a new creation,”⁸⁴ Mulla Sadra suggests the key theory of *substantial motion and incessant renewal of the world*. In Mulla Sadra’s theosophy, the whole world including all corporeal things—celestial or elemental, body or soul—have temporal and renewable existence.⁸⁵ The world (or Jahan in Persian meaning jumping and moving forward) is always restless and in motion. Human as a being among all other beings is in “a permanent state of change, flow, renewal, rupture, cessation, and destruction.”⁸⁶ It is through this incessant renewal that the temporal and eternal are connected: Wujud (existence) of nature, which is gradual, subsists in its generation, and its stability lies in its renewal. The Being who possesses permanence and stability is the One who originated human beings among other beings whose essence and ipseity⁸⁷ are in “incessant renewal.”⁸⁸ It is through this incessant motion and understanding that man ascends to its original divine status. Understanding, involving mind and soul, involves becoming divine, or homecoming. Our *Bildung* and Self-perfection happens through our ceaseless self-renewal in dialogue with Others, in fusion of our horizons with Others⁸⁹ towards our original status.

Mulla Sadra’s theory⁹⁰ of incessant, substantial motion of the world and the ipseity of man as in motion revives this verse from the *Holy Qor'an*: “Did We fail in

⁸¹ “Alien” and “strange” are used interchangeably for “unfamiliarity.”

⁸² Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014).

⁸³ “Al-Naml,” *Holy Qor'an*, 27:88.

⁸⁴ “Ibrahim,” *Holy Qor'an*, 14:19.

⁸⁵ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness,” 88–89.

⁸⁶ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness.”

⁸⁷ Ipseity involves selfhood: both nature and self, involving self, identity, nature, and essence all at the same time (Merriam Webster).

⁸⁸ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness.”

⁸⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2004).

⁹⁰ It is much relevant to the world I am situated in as a Muslim researcher, related to my understanding of what is Islam as modernity and the common false understanding of Islam; how Islam deeply embraces a full version of becoming; and the concept of temporal and dynamic understanding and self-understanding.

the first creation? But they are in confusion over a new creation,”⁹¹ which views the ever renewal and creation of man as the act of Supreme Being. Islamic philosophy or theosophy, hence, represents modernity. There is no oldness involved in Islamic philosophy, which attests to the incessant creation and the constant renewal of human mind. The world is always new for those who reflect, as is advised in the *Holy Qor’an*. In Mulla Sadra’s theory, Islam defines modernity. It defines and encourages thinking, innovating, and moving forth. False, modern propaganda on the contradiction between Islam and modernity reveals the prevalent ignorance of the true nature and modern substance of Islam. Mulla Sadra’s theory provokes man to learn constantly and be prepared to face new things. The famous verse “He is the first and the last”⁹² reveals the novelty of Being manifested in each renewal and creation of beings and the timelessness of His presence,⁹³ as beautifully composed by Molana:

One deep inside thought of the man would overturn worlds of hundreds

Through constant renewal of Wujud, origination is realized gradually (through our deep and gradual understandings). *Bildung* and continual evolutionary change and illumination of man (along all other beings) towards perfection and Light happens in gaining a sublime understanding that glorifies his passage to the world of Light and the Source of being: “The true life is in the Abode of the Hereafter.”⁹⁴

The substantial motion and incessant renewal of Wujud is a process of perfection of contingent essences. This world of incessant motion is thus a temporal abode for transferring the contingent essence of human beings through constant motion. It is not a permanent abode or home of fixed substances to stabilize. This world is a station on the man’s circular road of understanding and perfection towards his Origin.⁹⁵ The sense of un-home-likeness, or *unheimlichkeit*, exists in worldly excursion of human towards his original abode of peace. In his excursion from his Self and circle of his Self-understanding, human re-unites with his original Self with the Other, ascends to a Self in union with Others and resumes his Collective Self.

The soul of human as a contingent being is created for subsistence and not annihilation. Human soul, as a stranger imprisoned in his mortal body, subsists in

⁹¹ *Holy Qor’an*, 15:50.

⁹² *Holy Qor’an*, 57:3.

⁹³ Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.

⁹⁴ *Holy Qor’an*, 29:64.

⁹⁵ Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.

passage from one abode to another.⁹⁶ Having lost his Origin in this world, for his special spiritual status among other beings, human is wandering for his true place of sublimity, a place free of contradiction and plurality, a home of unity.⁹⁷ As Rumi says in his *Masnavi Manavi* “We were one gem like sunshine”:

We are from above and above we go to, We are from ocean to ocean we go to.
(Molana, *Divan-e Shams*, Ode 1674)

The opening figure of the grand entrance to Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque (Figure 5) symbolizes Mulla Sadra’s comprehensive philosophy that was the fruit of his study of thousands of years of theosophy back to Ibn Sina and earlier ancient Iran/Persia. The picture represents full maturity of Islamic philosophy, and the complex interconnectedness of beings, their ceaseless motion and fusion of horizons with Others, their constant Self-renewal in their incessant motion towards unity and oneness.

The grand entrance of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque reflects the complexity of my Self-understandings in encounter with Others in different places before and after my transition. My Self-understandings in between my HOME tradition and hermeneutics are approaching their common roots, creating joyful emotions of unity between my two Selves before and after leaving Home, unity of my Self before my excursion from Home and my Self after reunion with my Home tradition in encounter with hermeneutics, my Selves being cultivated in transforming fusion with the Other. In my ongoing fusion with the Other and my incessant Self-renewal, parts of my Selves are approaching one another, they are uniting outside my Homeland. I am approaching my “Home, away from HOME.”

⁹⁶ Nasr, “Happiness and the Attainment of Happiness.”

⁹⁷ Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.



Figure 6. Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque (Interior), Naqshe-Jahan-Square, Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Sheikh-Lotfollah-Mosque-in-Isfahan-Iran-under-protection-of-UNESCO-built-in-the_fig3_43336273

Home, away from HOME

Isfahan, away from Isfahan

My hard, curious departure from Home, to a new wonderland, made me see my Home in a brighter light, I feel closer to my Home. . . my journey unraveled the secret to my mysterious being, my familiar and unknown Self, my restless being. My journey made me see my restlessness everywhere, as in all Others. I felt the universal, shared pain of homelessness, the common restless motion of all beings. I could see the restlessness of the whole world, this entangled world. . . everywhere.

The Restless World of Beings “In Motion”

Back from a long, exciting, and endless journey of exploration of my Self, our world, and our being, I feel joyful to have found answers to my moving questions after reading about my home philosophy. Reading about my tradition, I have a clearer

picture of my human Self: “Who I am” and “Where I am going,” the two basic questions whose answers map the way that we exist, feel, and understand together as human beings. The Wisdom of Suhrawardi directed me to our light essence, our immortal core, after its descent from the celestial world we could not feel belonging in a terrestrial world. Our restless, in-between, homeless state, our un-home-likeness, or *unheimlichkeit*, in our worldly life is rooted in our distance from our original core and abode, in our distance from our original Self. Figure 6 from the inner space of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque illustrates my understanding or my “home, away from HOME” from a different, inner perspective. It symbolizes the complex labyrinth of my terrestrial wandering towards my angelic core, a labyrinth being gently illuminated in my excursion in between hermeneutics and my Persian tradition:

My Self excursion outside Home is terminating in reunion with my inside, in re-meeting the dark sides of my existence in light. . . I am approaching the dark corner of Self, the unknown, ending spot in the labyrinth of my existence.

The picture of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque (Figure 6) retells my home emotions, it shows my way to revive home by reviving my hidden ancestors in my philosophical and existential journey, a darkened and hidden core, my Persian Wisdom and our *shared ancestors*.⁹⁸

After the long and old exploration journey of my Self and existence, I am as much enlightened as I am astonished by the connection of our incessant renewal and understandings to the permanent and substantial flow of the whole universe, the connection of the temporality of our understandings to the temporality of the whole of existence, connection to our substantial motions, our temporal abode, and the entire “in motion” of existence. Re-viewing the hermeneutic conception of understanding, the fusion of the horizons of Self and Other,⁹⁹ finds a deeper meaning and significance as we approach our original Self in our re-union with Others. Others are the integral parts of our existence and our substantial motion towards our Self.

I am astonished by finding all beings as one single reality, one animate being, which retells the necessity of human intimate interrelations and unity with others, to see more of our selves and to feel more at home in our journey towards our original Self. I am delighted by finding our Selves as parts of this whole restless world, the world of beings “in motion,” seeking our home of peace and no contradiction and

⁹⁸ Jardine and Naqvi, “Learning Not to Speak in Tongues.”

⁹⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2004).

plurality together, seeking our abode of unity together. I am enlightened and delighted by re-finding ourselves in our *unifying* flow, in knowing and re-cognizing our Selves with and through Others in our collective transition into more perfect beings in our journey.

My journey illuminated me with this deep understanding from Mulla Sadra's key notion of *substantial motion* that we all "subsist" in our Self-perfecting understanding motion with Others, that we subsist in our ceaseless Self renewal in our understandings together, in our ongoing fusion of horizons with Others, and our endlessly transitioning self-understandings in our fusion with Others. I am enlightened that our differences and pluralities make us stronger waves in our collective flow, that they speed up our restless, understanding motion towards ALL Understanding and Light. After reading about my tradition and deep reading of mystical hermeneutics, I reply to Davey's saying "precisely because we have no essence that we must endeavor to move on,"¹⁰⁰ that precisely, we are *substantially* and essentially (in essence) in-motion beings, that precisely we *subsist* in being in motion and exist and survive in our ceaseless transitioning and understanding motions, and that our dynamic being and all our essential and substantial motions directing us to our *telos* are rooted in *ambiguity* of our being and the multiplicity and unity aspects of our existence.¹⁰¹

The Wisdoms of Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra enhanced and illuminated my reading and interpretation of hermeneutics. They highlight the role of Other rays in our Self-illuminating motion, in the expansion of our horizons and our collective understandings towards Light. The whole picture of the ultimate goal for our incessant renewal makes me think of ourselves as special beings of high status, much beyond what we can achieve in a finite, worldly life of contradictions, or within a narrow worldly perspective. Presenting a whole picture of a philosophical thought, including the mystic and theological underpinnings on the common core and origin of humans and the *telos* of our being and our worldly journey, can unite fragmented humans in their diversity. It also can reveal the common basis of all traditions and lead to the integration and unity of diverse traditions. Relevantly, reflection on fundamental questions on our existence, including the essence of our being and our essential connections, can encourage humans to re-think of Others as parts of their collective being and as their essential co-travelers in their motion toward their higher goals of their creation. We, as the sun rays of the same essence, represent *multiplicity in unity*. Our excursion to Others enables us to see ourselves, to know more, and to approach

¹⁰⁰ Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 57.

¹⁰¹ Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Arba'a*.

our Light. *Bildung* in hermeneutics takes a similar view on human becoming and human transformation and ascent through the fusion with Others.¹⁰² There is an ultimate goal and destination to all our becoming which is connected to our existential sense of homelessness, our way of understanding, and our essential connections and relations with Others. Our essential and existential *telos* reveals how our liminal existential feelings are related to the nature of our being and the nature of our understandings, and what all our understandings could imply for peaceful human relations, education, and a peaceful global life in our multiplicity and tensions. Our current COVID-19 pandemic era highly demands such deep and critical thinking and reflections on the essential inter-human connections and the human roots of such universal miseries. This pandemic and human misery is a given chance to rebuild our Selves and revisit our relations with Other humans at academic, local, and global levels. The distance from Other humans, the complementary parts to our existence and the lights to our being and understandings, in our current Self-made individual cells, demands a true re-consideration and amendment of our relations with Others. Alas, that reflection is mainly ignored, even in the worst historical reprimands. Reflection for Self-education, and for education, is indispensable in our critical era. It is highly recommended in various verses of the *Holy Qor'an* about many similar stories of man-made miseries throughout history with humans' ever ignorance of reflection and Self-education.¹⁰³

The connection of Self to Others and even to the whole universe implied in Gadamer's view of education as Self-education,¹⁰⁴ and in Illuminationist view of humans as rays of the sun or Mulla Sadra's notion of contingent beings, reveals the potential for universal change and education. Self-education and Self-knowledge happen through knowing Others. It is only the knowing human who is able to know and re-cognize Other beings in the universe, and it is through knowing Other beings that human approaches his more perfect Self.¹⁰⁵ Humans, as letters in the sacred book of existence, give meaning to the entirety of existence and can make sense of the book of creation all-together.

The answers to the two key questions of "Who we are" and "How we understand" shape the way that we define understanding and consider our Selves and

¹⁰² Dating back to the ancient mystical tradition, *Bildung* refers to the man who carries the image of God in his soul, is shaped after God, and must cultivate Him in himself. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2014); *Truth and Method* (1989).

¹⁰³ For example, *Holy Qor'an*, verse *ʾFajr*, *Araf*, *Ghafer*, etc.

¹⁰⁴ Andrzej Wiercinski, "Hermeneutic Education to Understanding: Self-Education and the Willingness to Risk Failure," in *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield (New York: Continuum, 2011), 107–23.

¹⁰⁵ Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.; Gadamer, *Gadamer and Hermeneutics*.

Others in our understandings. Ignoring or underestimating these questions entails disregarding the vital aspects of our existence as sublime and connected beings in our understandings, which leaves us helpless in our contradictions. Attending to our higher human aspects of understanding as beings of a common, sublime essence humbles us to reconcile our Selves with Others in our differences as we understand our unity.

Our restlessness, our insatiable thirst for knowing, and our universal restless motion is nothing but “love”—love for our lost part, the love for the Other, love for our Origin and our haven of peace—that is here and there, hidden and present, temporal and eternal, which is the source and balm to our deep and familiar pain. And our love for our Origin is nothing than love for all companions, Other parts of our being, Other travelers in our journey, and the illuminating rays to our Selves in our road towards Light and Perfection.

Pulled between familiarity and strangeness,¹⁰⁶ my excursion towards the Other, the Western philosophy, revealed my older Self, my ancestors, our older Self and Collective Self, the ones who made us who we are. Western philosophical texts made me aware of my Self. I found my Self in fusion of the past with the present, in fusion of philosophies, fusion of logical and intuitive knowledge, fusion of reason and heart/ soul, the complementary eyes of our Selves. I found myself in a deep-rooted, hidden voice behind the Western words. They revived some old emotions, the same emotions that arise in my passage through the ancient, delicately decorated arched architectures and mansions in my historical city of art, Isfahan, the nicely painted architecture integrating the artistic, philosophical, and geometrical minds of the Islamic, Persian scholar architects who were inspired by the depth of the beauty, harmony, and the elegance of All Beauty. I could feel a deep joy that would never arise without awakening the “silenced” voice within the Western texts.

Ending with the Divine in my philosophical exploration made me feel more certain, clear, and strong. I feel I have moved from a shallow river to the depth of an endless ocean. The invisibility of Muslim philosophers in current Western philosophy, one big part of the whole chain of philosophy and knowledge, was upsetting; philosophers whose influence and undertones moved me to my tradition. In my philosophical adventure, I was reminded of Nasr’s reference to the profound, permanent needs of the inner nature of man and Western interest in Oriental metaphysics and spirituality, of the big gap in the life of the modern man.¹⁰⁷ I was reminded of Jardine’s “The

¹⁰⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1975).

¹⁰⁷ Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, 47–66.

Sickness of the West,” and David Geoffrey Smith on the dilemma of the West for living without the securities of the old science and the spiritual resources that the old science supplanted.¹⁰⁸ I was reminded of William E. Carroll, who regarded Avicenna’s faithfulness to Greek metaphysics¹⁰⁹ and the ancient Iranian Wisdom, and who shared my feeling of clarity in transitioning to traditional texts:

The contemporary world can learn a great deal from mediaeval analyses of the relationship among physics, metaphysics, and theology. In fact, to go from Stephen Hawking to Avicenna is, in an important sense, to go from confusion to clarity.¹¹⁰

Moving on

The mystic and aesthetic overtones of the hermeneutic texts tapped into my old, deep-rooted being. It created a transforming path in immersing my Self in hermeneutic texts and imagining and reviving my home traditions in between the lines of the texts. In my existential and philosophical journey, following Suhrawardi, I attempted to unify two inter-rooted, far-apart world wisdoms. I admit that my trial stands within my limited horizon and within my temporal, existential reading and interpretation of hermeneutics. In my readings and reflections, I relied on the interiority of meaning and understanding that I intuited as a key uniting feature in reading both hermeneutics and Sufism. Figure 6 from the inner space of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque highly represents the intuited interiority of meaning in my understandings of traditional texts and my inner Self. My *traditional* reading of hermeneutics revealed and expanded the horizon of my understanding of hermeneutic tradition in a more universal and inter-traditional perspective. It provided a new space to see the deep kinship and the fundamental connections between the two Oriental and Western traditions.

Re-experiencing my Self in reading the hermeneutic texts and my Self-formation in re-viewing my Persian Islamic tradition in between the lines of

¹⁰⁸ David W. Jardine, “Foreword: The Sickness of the West,” in *Cross-Cultural Studies in Curriculum: Eastern Thought, Educational Insights*, ed. Hongyu Wang and Claudia Eppert (London: Routledge, 2008), ix–xv; David Geoffrey Smith, “Identity, Self and Other in the Conduct of Pedagogical Action: An East/West Inquiry,” *Counterpoints* 15 (1999): 11–25; *Pedagon: Interdisciplinary Essays in the Human Sciences, Pedagogy, and Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

¹⁰⁹ Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking, *The Nature of Space and Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), cited in William E. Carroll, “God and Physics: From Hawking to Avicenna,” *Islamic Philosophy Online* (2004): 1–13, <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/sina/art/gpa.doc>.

¹¹⁰ Carroll, “God and Physics,” 1.

hermeneutics involved finding my inter-traditional voice in the voice of Other tradition. Hermeneutics provided me a space to be my Self, to re-find my Self, and to educate my Self in between the said and unsaid words of a tradition,¹¹¹ a tradition that was different, but also very familiar. My *traditional* reading provided a space to learn and teach myself, ourselves, and our students to rely on our connections and the unifying aspects of our traditions. Finding my Self and my inter-traditional voice in a multicultural context, I deem it worthy to suggest applying hermeneutics beyond our Selves: to apply it to our multi-traditional educational contexts and read hermeneutics in between various “silenced” traditions, to provide the free space for our students to experience *traditional* readings of hermeneutics (and other mainstream philosophical thoughts and traditions) and revive silenced traditions; and so, to perform the existential task of Self-cultivation and building a culture of participation with Others that can contribute to transformation of our Selves and the world.¹¹²

Applied to my related field in education, my Self-transition and education in my inter-traditional fusion and exploration teaches me, as a second language educator, to offer a similar space for my multi-traditional students and to let them experience their academic texts in their own traditional ways of being and thinking with others, and to welcome Others’ traditional readings and ways of understanding. I firmly believe that inter-traditional ways of reading texts (philosophy and beyond) and applying them to our conducts and relations with Others as educators in academic contexts can contribute to creating peace and unity in our fragmented educational contexts, and ultimately can positively impact our societies and the world.

Considering the hermeneutic circle of understanding as a dialectical movement between the parts and the whole text, understanding the whole texts of human beings and their traditions as the objects of understanding¹¹³—with the contingent nature of human beings as interconnected beings carrying their cultural traditions—is not possible without knowing about other humans and their traditions. Selective learning and education of traditions and philosophical thoughts will leave dark spots in the chain of our knowledge and our understanding of the existence and the whole being of human.

¹¹¹ Jean Grondin, *Sources of Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), x; Nancy J. Moules, “Hermeneutic Inquiry: Paying Heed to History and Hermes an Ancestral, Substantive, and Methodological Tale,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1, no. 3 (2002): 1–21.

¹¹² Wiercinski, “Hermeneutic Education to Understanding.”

¹¹³ Tina Koch, “Implementation of a Hermeneutic Inquiry in Nursing: Philosophy, Rigor, and Representation,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 24, no. 1 (1996): 174–84.

In this paper, rooted in unhappy academic experiences, I examined the connections between the two philosophical traditions for potential positive and reconciliatory impacts in education and everyday life. Exploring deep connections between other traditions, especially between dominant and ignored traditions, can foster positive educational contexts for readers—educators and learners—of diverse traditions. It can re-create a sense of deep kinship and promote friendship between diverse individuals in academic and social contexts. Reforming the pedagogy of philosophy and other educational subjects through re-uniting traditions and humans of diverse traditions, we can change our academia, our societies, and ultimately our world in a positive way. Considering the great impact of education on reforming humans and societies, priming the common basis of all traditions or the *transcendent unity* in Suhrawardi’s illuminationist terms¹¹⁴ in my education, a reminder of Gadamer’s assertion “*that the other might be right*,”¹¹⁵ I deem it our duty as educators to use and practice inter-traditional approaches in our research and education to abate human tensions in our collective academic and life journey.

Re-viewing hermeneutic philosophy, which is mainly presented as being based in Greek and Western philosophy, our forgotten knowledge of the ancient, long-lasting relations between the Greeks and Persians,¹¹⁶ the great impacts of Persians on Greek and Western knowledge, philosophy, religion, politics, music, art, etc.,¹¹⁷ and the role of dialogue in the emergence of knowledge including philosophy—the “mutuality” within which East and West traditions became what they are¹¹⁸—I find it essential to focus on the commonalities of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions in education as a pedagogical tool to re-connect fragmented traditions and humans.

¹¹⁴ Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*.

¹¹⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993), 109.

¹¹⁶ For example, *Cyropedia* by Xenophon in 370 BC.

¹¹⁷ For example: Abbas nejaty, “Cyrus the Great,” *YouTube*, 30 September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knTzxMAYiV4>; Getty Museum, “The Cyrus Cylinder,” *YouTube*, 16 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRMzrz0wRw>; BBC, “Cyrus Cylinder: How a Persian Monarch Inspired Jefferson,” *bbc.com*, 11 March 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21747567>; TED, “Neil MacGregor: 2600 Years of History in One Object,” *YouTube*, 20 February 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpmsftF2We4>; “Introduction: The School of Athens,” *Before Newton: Explorations of Pre-Modern Science, Medicine and Technology* (blog), n.d., <https://beforenewton.blog/daily-readings/august-19/>; Manototy, “مستند سرگذشت موسیقی ایران از چغامیش تا چهل ستون,” *YouTube*, 24 August 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI79GQmMZNA>.

¹¹⁸ Smith, “The Farthest West Is but the Farthest East.”

Finally, focus on the essential, forgotten connections of humans in pedagogy of traditions and philosophies can help in re-constructing human relations in its original Self and Other relation. It can create pure and reconciliatory relations that fulfill the ultimate goal of philosophical pedagogy, and human education in general, which is becoming more *humane* in our relations with Others, not as separate human Selves but as parts and members of the same body, as the poet Sa'di Shirazi says, as One Self of one integrated tradition. Again, full education of philosophy including the mystical and theological underpinnings related to the common Origin and the *telos* of human beings and their incessant motion, understandings, and transitions can illuminate many biased eyes and misled hearts and promote solidarity and friendship among diverse humans.

As we can see, modern human, and human education including education of traditions, brimmed with knowledge and theories. How knowledge, theories, and philosophies are presented in full; how/if they can create and enhance human *Self-awareness* and *Self-understanding* in relation with Others; how they illuminate the *inside* of humans (which is the door to connecting to Others)—these are the questionable aspects of modern presentation and education of most knowledge and traditions. Education of traditions in full—with the roots related to human nature, goals of creation of humans, and the nature of essential human relations—can enhance *Self-awareness* and rescue modern humans.