Journal of Islamic Philosophy

A Special Issue on Mullā Ṣadrā

Volume 6, 2010

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

A Special Issue on Mullā Ṣadrā

Volume 6, 2010

ISSN: 1536-4569 – eISSN: 1536-4755

Printed in Canada, 2011

The editors would like to thank Mohammed Rustom for his dedication and cooperation in putting together this special issue of the Journal; indeed the idea of devoting an issue to Mullā Ṣadra was his and for this he is to be commended.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy / 2010

دراسات الفلسفة الإسلامية

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

Mission Statement

The *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* encourages the academic study of Islamic philosophy. The journal provides a unique peer-reviewed forum for scholars interested in the philosophical study of diverse topics in Islamic philosophy. Classical Islamic philosophy of past masters will be re-examined with a new focus. The underlying issues regarding the many ethical, metaphysical, existential, and epistemological challenges posed by western philosophy will be explored in comparison to Islamic philosophy. We hope to serve as an impetus toward the renewal of the rich and dynamic spirit of Islamic philosophical discourse in the current era.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

Volume 6

2010

muslimphilosophy.com/journal

Contents

Book Reviews

Contributors

David Burrell is Professor of Ethics and Development at Uganda Martyrs University.

Maria Massi Dakake is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at George Mason University.

Yanis Eshots is Associate Professor of Islamic Philosophy and Persian Literature at the University of Tallinn.

Shigeru Kamada is Professor of Oriental Culture at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tokyo.

Zailan Moris is Associate Professor in the School of Humanities at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Mohammed Rustom is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Carleton University.

Editorial

Mohammed Rustom

It is now safe to say that Mullā Ṣadrā no longer needs an introduction to students of Islamic philosophy. This is a relatively recent phenomenon, thanks to the efforts of a number of scholars over the past five decades. Today, almost all of Ṣadrā's works are available in print, and many of these titles have found their way into critical editions, courtesy by and large of the Tehran-based Ṣadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute (SIPRIn). SIPRIn also continues to publish, in Persian, monographs on Ṣadrā as well as a journal dedicated almost exclusively to him. In terms of works on Ṣadrā in European languages, there are a plethora of books and articles. In English alone, we have some eighteen books on him,[1] and at least eleven of his works are available in translation.[2]

Despite the vast amount of research that has already been done, there are many facets of Ṣadrā's thought that are as yet unexplored, or concerning which we still do not have a complete picture. These often have to do with aspects of what can be called his "religious thought."

1 Some of the newer titles in English include Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: Routledge, 2009); Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming).

2 One of these being a new translation (accompanied by the Arabic text) of Ṣadrā's *Kitāb al-mashā'ir* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and edited by Ibrahim Kalin (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, forthcoming).

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 1–3.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

While some important studies have been carried out in this regard, particularly with respect to his eschatology, many crucial questions remain unaddressed. What, for example, is the relationship between Ṣadrā's philosophy and his numerous writings on the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth? What is his attitude toward Islamic law, one of the many disciplines in which he was thoroughly conversant? How indebted is he to his Sufi predecessors, such as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, Ibn ʿArabī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī? What, precisely, is his relationship to the other giants of Shīʿī thought, namely Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī, and Ibn Abī Jumhūr Aḥsāʾī? How have Ṣadrā's works influenced the religious worldview of his "opponents," particularly Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī?

The articles presented here seek to investigate some of these and other cognate questions. Maria Dakake's piece presents us with the most in-depth investigation into Ṣadrā's understanding of *walāya*, or sanctity, which emerges amidst the broader context of a discussion of the hierarchical nature of his ontology and epistemology.

David Burrell's essay navigates its way through Ṣadrā's ontology, offering translations of some key passages from *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fi l-asfār al-ʿaqilyya al-arbaʿa* in order to demonstrate Ṣadrā's concern with being vis-à-vis the God-creature relationship. Thus, Burrell's article can be seen as a useful exploration into the importance of Ṣadrā's ontology not just for philosophy, but also for philosophical theology.

Turning again to the theme of *walāya*, Shigeru Kamada inquires into the manner in which Ibn ʿArabī influenced Ṣadrā's treatment of "sainthood." Yanis Eshots' article also brings Ṣadrā and Ibn ʿArabī into conversation with one another, this time treating, in comparative perspective, two key concepts in their thought—"substantial motion" and "new creation" respectively. Zailan Moris's paper examines Ṣadrā's eschatological teachings as presented in one of his later and certainly more "popular" works, *al-Ḥikma al-ʿarshiyya*. It also seeks to clarify the links between Ṣadrā's eschatological ideas and those of Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī.

My article offers a comprehensive inquiry into the structure and content of Ṣadrā's Qurʾānic writings. The annotations on these works illustrate how significant Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* writings and theoretical

compositions are in terms of their treatment of key ideas, range of sources employed, and complex chronology.

Following the articles are reviews of four of the more recent books in the field of Ṣadrā studies. Among the reviewers of these works we have not only scholars of Islamic philosophy, but also specialists in analytic philosophy and comparative Western philosophy—surely a positive indicator of Ṣadrā's broad appeal.

We are hopeful that the *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*'s special issue on Mullā Ṣadrā will spawn further interest in his work, particularly the relatively understudied dimension of his religious thought. But, just as important, we also hope that the questions raised here will help draw the attention of students of philosophy and intellectual history to the vast riches of the later period of Islamic thought.

Hierarchies of Knowing in Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary on the *Uṣūl al-kāfī*

Maria Massi Dakake

Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī was one of the most intellectually independent philosophers of his time. Though influenced by many well-developed strands of thought in Islamic intellectual history—the Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools of philosophy, as well as a number of different mystical traditions, including those of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-ʿArabī—he was able to create a synthetic whole that did not merely reconcile these divergent perspectives, but rather used them as reference points for his own mystico-philosophical perspective. Mullā Ṣadrā, however, unlike most of the mystical and philosophical thinkers who influenced his thought, was an Imāmī Shīʿī. Despite the struggles he may have had with some of the Shīʿī authorities of his day, the nature of which continue to be a matter of scholarly debate,[1] he embraced the principal doctrines of the Imāmī school of thought, and revered the Imāms as infallible sources of spiritual guidance. In this article, I explore the relationship between Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics of knowledge and his own Shīʿī confessional views through an analysis of his commentary on a major work of Shīʿī canonical tradition—Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī*—with a particular emphasis on his commentary on the chapter entitled, "The Superiority of Knowledge" (*Faḍl al-ʿilm*). Before turning to his commentary, however, it is useful to present some of the key questions about Ṣadrā's life and thought that complicate our understanding of his adherence to the Imāmī Shīʿī school, and explain how our reading of his commentary on the *Uṣūl al-kāfī* might help us answer them.

Throughout his writing, Ṣadrā consciously strives to reconcile his own philosophical insights, and those of some of his predecessors, with the "scriptural" sources of Islam—the Qurʾān and, occasionally, the *ḥadīth* literature—the latter of which, for a Shīʿa, include the

1 For an overview of the issues related to Ṣadrā's relationship with the scholars of his time, see Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 1.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 5–44.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

sayings of the Prophet and the Shīʿī Imāms. Yet while the centrality of the Qurʾān to Ṣadrā's mystical philosophy can hardly be denied, the influence of the Imāms' teachings on his thought is a harder case to make. The Imāms are mentioned somewhat rarely, relative to other important thinkers dealt with in Ṣadrā's philosophical works. Even in Ṣadrā's many works of Qurʾānic commentary, the teachings of the Imāms are invoked much less than one might expect.[2] When he does cite the traditions of the Imāms, it is often as part of a concluding section to a metaphysical discussion in which he provides a set of transmitted or scriptural (*samʿī*) proof texts to support his philosophical point.[3] Even in such cases, however, Ṣadrā does not necessarily privilege Shīʿī traditions over Sunnī ones; and at times, this gives the impression that the Imāms' teachings have been mentioned as a matter of expected formality, almost as an addendum to a philosophical point. Yet, near the end of his life, Ṣadrā wrote his lengthy commentary on Kulaynī's canonical collection of Imāmī Shīʿa traditions. The devotion of time and effort to such an endeavor seems to indicate a reverence for the traditions of the Imāms as a rich source of spiritual and religious knowledge. But if this is the case, then why do these traditions, unlike the Qurʾān and the works of other Islamic thinkers, have relatively little place in his philosophical works?

Perhaps more problematic, however, is the degree to which Ṣadrā's gradated and fluid ontology and epistemology implicitly

2 On Ṣadrā's relatively limited use of Shīʿī *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* literature as sources for his exegetical writing, see Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming), ch. 2.

3 See, e.g., Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqilyya al-arbaʿa*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar, et al., 9 vols. (Beirut, 1981), 8:303–324 (esp. 316–317, where several traditions from the Imāms are cited); *Kitāb al-mashāʿir*, ed. with French translation, Henry Corbin (Tehran: Institut Français d'Iranologie de Téhéran, 1982), 58–63, where he quotes from the works of several Imāmī traditionists, including al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī's *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* and Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, as well as from some prominent Imāmī theologians near the conclusion of this treatise. See also James Morris, *Wisdom of the Throne* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 141, where he lists some traditions from the Imāms to support his views of the pre-existence of the soul; and *ʿIrfān va ʿārif namāyān* (*Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya*), trans. M. Bīdārfar (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zahrāʾ, 1992), 150–157, where this treatise concludes with a series of *aḥādīth* from the Prophet and the Imāms.

contradict Twelver Shīʿī *ḥadīth* narrations on the status of the Imāms. For Twelver Shīʿa, the Imāms occupy an ontological category all their own; one that exists below that of the prophets, but transcends that of ordinary human beings. This hierarchy is clearly articulated in Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature, which also represents this spiritual hierarchy as fixed from pre-temporal times. In Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature, the Imām's biological connection to the Prophet was mythologized to mean that he was created from pure Muḥammadan light (*nūr Muḥammadī*),[4] or in an alternative formulation, from a pure clay, superior to that from which other human beings were crafted.[5] Thus, no matter how pious, learned, or spiritually pure an individual might be, he could never ascend to the level of the Imāms. Even if many Shīʿī scholars have rejected some of these mythological traditions as exaggerations, at least with regard to their literal meaning, the doctrine of the unique and superior knowledge of the Imām has continued to fund Shīʿī conceptions of their own unique claim to religious knowledge as the community of their followers. Imāmī *ḥadīth* literature indicates that the Imāms surpassed all others in knowledge, even, perhaps, the pre-Muḥammadan prophets. For just as the Prophet had inherited the knowledge of all previous prophets, the Imāms were believed to have inherited the knowledge of the Prophet Muḥammad, and thus the knowledge of all pre-Islamic prophets as well.[6] Moreover, the Imāms were considered to be in sole possession of the true interpretation of the Qurʾān, as recorded by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib from the Prophet himself, and as passed down from Imām to Imām. Beyond this, the Imāms were said to receive a form of divine knowledge and inspiration on a continuous basis.[7]

4 For Imāmī traditions about this, see al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Sayyid Ḥusayn, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Jawād al-Aʾimma, 2007), 1:59–60; al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, 2 vols. (Qum: Manshūrāt al-Riḍā, 1970), 211, 235, 258. See also Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shīʾism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 57–59.

5 Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Jaʿfar Shams al-Dīn, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1990), 2:5–8; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1951), 133–135. See also Etan Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period," in Said Arjoman (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʾism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 31.

6 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:280–283; Qummī, *Baṣāʾir*, 1:246–250.

7 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:308–310; Qummī, *Baṣāʾir*, 2:118–120.

These traditions about the superior knowledge of the Imāms, many of which crossed the line into obvious exaggeration (*ghuluww*), nonetheless made it clear that the epistemological stature of the Imāms was as eternally unreachable as their ontological status. Even if we were to put aside the more exaggerated claims of the Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature, the epistemological superiority of the Imāms is sufficiently established in the Imāmī doctrine of the Imāms' inerrancy (*ʿiṣma*) in matters of religious knowledge, a quality otherwise attributed only to the prophets. The hierarchical categories of knowledge in Shīʿī thought continued below the level of the Imām, with those scholars well-versed in the teachings of the Imāms holding the highest status, followed by other devoted Shīʿīs, non-Shīʿī Muslims, and everyone else. Moreover, Shīʿī tradition developed these hierarchical categories of knowledge in the context of an early Shīʿī electionist perspective—well-attested in the Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature—according to which one's status as a Shīʿī or a non-Shīʿī was considered to have been determined by God, or at least to have been established from pre-temporal times, indicating the futility of changing one's status in this life.[8]

Mullā Ṣadrā's ontology and epistemology is also clearly hierarchical in nature, but it differs from the Imāmī Shīʿī perspective, particularly as found in canonical books of Shīʿī *ḥadīth*, in two fundamental and interrelated ways. First, the establishment of a hierarchy among men takes place in the course of earthly life, not prior to it. From Ṣadrā's point of view, all human beings begin in the same place, originated in the common human mold, or *fiṭra*, and as a single "species," and are only differentiated ontologically and epistemologically through their actions and acquired knowledge in earthly life. They undergo a second "origination" after death, whereby the inner hierarchy of spiritual states acquired in this life becomes a manifest hierarchy of corresponding psychic bodies of different species.[9] Second, Ṣadrā's conception of a human epistemological and

8 For a discussion of this, see Maria Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shiʿite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 212–218.

9 *Asfār*, 9:19–22, where Ṣadrā claims to have obtained knowledge of these different originations through inspiration, but also considers this to be the esoteric meaning of Qurʾān 10:19: *Mankind was but one community, then they differed* and 59:14: . . . *You suppose that they are together, yet their hearts are divided.* See also, *Wisdom of the Throne*, 144–145; Ṣadrā, *Taʿlīqāt ʿalā Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*

ontological hierarchy is predicated upon the gradated and constantly changing nature of both existence (*wujūd*) and spiritual knowledge, allowing for innumerable ontological levels;[10] and unlike traditional Shīʿī conceptions of spiritual hierarchy as static and fixed, Ṣadrā's system assumes the possibility of a fluid and continuous movement from lower to higher states.

Given the questions discussed above, Ṣadrā's commentary on the earliest and most comprehensive canonical collection of Shīʿī *ḥadīth*, Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, would seem an obvious place to look for answers. While this commentary is not complete in its extant form, what does remain offers a window onto the way in which Ṣadrā attempted to understand his lifelong religious affiliation with the Shīʿī school and his devotion to the Imāms in the context of his now fully developed philosophical perspective. Ṣadrā's commentary on the first chapter of Kulaynī's collection, entitled *Kitāb al-ʿaql wa-l-jahl* (The book of intellect and ignorance), contains an extensive philosophical and mystical discussion of the intellect which, of course, is foundational to his own metaphysics, as well as to that of his philosophical predecessors, and, some would argue, to the spiritual worldview of Twelver Shīʿism as a whole.[11]

In this article, however, I have chosen to focus on Ṣadrā's commentary on Kulaynī's chapter on the *Kitāb faḍl al-ʿilm* (Superiority of knowledge). Ṣadrā's commentary on this section is complete, in that he treats every *ḥadīth* found in Kulaynī's chapter, and it comprises nearly 400 pages of the extant *Sharḥ*. Ṣadrā's commentary on this chapter is particularly relevant because, for Ṣadrā, knowledge represents the purpose and ultimate end of all human creation; it is the source and the consequence of all worthwhile human endeavor and virtue, and it alone saves. Thus Kulaynī's chapter offers Ṣadrā a platform from which he can address some of the epistemological issues he wrestles with in his philosophical works, as they relate to the teachings of the Shīʿī Imāms. Moreover, because the chapter is concerned with "knowledge" in general, rather than with the more

on the margins of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (Tehran, 1898), 476.

10 Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣul al-kāfī*, vol. 2: *Kitāb faḍl al-ʿilm wa Kitāb al-ḥujja*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājavī, 3 vols. (Tehran: Muʾassasa-i Muṭālaʿāt va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1988), 5.

11 Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*, 6–13.

abstract, philosophical concept of the intellect (*ʿaql*), it provides Ṣadrā an opportunity to comment on some of the more mundane aspects of the role of knowledge in Islamic social life, and to offer, at times, stinging criticism of the ways in which religious knowledge was defined, measured, valued and peddled in the Safavid Shīʿī society of his time.

In what follows, I begin with an overview of the key aspects of Ṣadrā's philosophy of knowledge as they are represented in this commentary, including the ontological and eschatological function of knowledge in Ṣadrā's thought. From there, I discuss the implications of this theory of knowledge for the recognition of an ontological and epistemological hierarchy among human beings—a "hierarchy of knowers." In this second section I begin with an examination of Ṣadrā's views on various approaches to religious knowledge and his criticism of the common understanding and assessment of religious knowledge among the scholars of his own time. His criticism of these scholars is well embedded in his commentary on this chapter, and they serve as an important foil for his own philosophical claims about the significance of knowledge in religious life and in human eschatology, and for his conception of an epistemological hierarchy among human beings. From there I discuss Ṣadrā's conception of spiritual knowledge among the upper echelons of the epistemological hierarchy, a conception that embraces some elements of the traditional Shīʿī view of spiritual hierarchy, but also departs from it in subtle, but ultimately radical, ways.

Ṣadrā's Philosophy of Knowledge in the *Sharḥ kitāb faḍl al-ʿilm*

Ṣadrā's epistemology as systematically formulated in his philosophical writing clearly undergirds his commentary on the *Kitab faḍl al-ʿilm*. As with most aspects of his thought, Mullā Ṣadrā presents his perspective on knowledge and its significance for the human state as rooted in the Qurʾān and his own mystico-philosophical interpretation of the sacred text. While the Qurʾān sets out an egalitarian principle—all human beings are created according to the same primordial norm (*fiṭra*)[12] and all human actions are weighed on the same scale and entail the same recompense[13]—it also establishes a hierarchical principle. If all human beings begin in the same

12 Qurʾān 30:30.

13 Qurʾān 7:8–9; 21:47.

place, they do not all end in the same place, and the twin bases of this teleological differentiation, as expressed in the Qurʾān, are the qualities of reverential piety (*taqwā*)[14] and knowledge.[15] *Are those who know and those who do not know equal?* (39:9)[16] the Qurʾān asks rhetorically. The answer is meant to be clear, as the Qurʾān directly links faith with knowledge and intellect,[17] while connecting unbelief to ignorance and short-sightedness.[18] The believers are those who reflect on and contemplate God's revelation in scripture and in the world around them, those who use their intellects and seek to understand.[19] The unbelievers are those who refuse to see and to reflect, those who are heedless—willfully ignorant—of what is before them and what is to come.[20]

The role that Ṣadrā assigns to knowledge in the human spiritual vocation and spiritual destiny goes somewhat beyond the Qurʾān's explicit teachings on this matter. While the Qurʾān establishes a relationship between faith and knowledge, it is nonetheless faith and good works that are specifically associated with salvation in the scriptural text, although in Islamic doctrinal formulations, true faith had to be based upon knowledge (*maʿrifa*). For Ṣadrā, however, both faith and good works are only "good" (and thus spiritually efficacious) because they are forms of knowledge.[21] It is knowledge alone that is spiritually transformative and that ultimately saves. As Ṣadrā writes in his commentary:

> You know from what has come before, that religious acts, such as prayer, fasting and so on, are only for the purpose of [attaining] states, [by which] I mean, the cleansing and purification of the heart from evils, earthly desires, and attachments. The purpose of states is the [acquisition]

14 See Qurʾān 49:13: *Truly the most noble of you before God is the most reverent.*

15 See *Sharḥ*, 61, where Ṣadrā says that "the provision (*zād*) of the Hereafter is knowledge and piety (*taqwā*)," perhaps invoking Qurʾan 2:197, where it says that the best provision (*zād*) is *taqwā*.

16 See also Qurʾān 6:50; 11:24; 13:16, 19; 35:19; 40:58.

17 See, e.g., Qurʾān 3:7, 190; 13:19; 38:29.

18 See, e.g., Qurʾān 7:179; 10:7; 16:107–108.

19 See, e.g., Qurʾān 3:190–191; 10:24; 13:3; 16:11; 25:61–62.

20 See, e.g., Qurʾān 7:146; 21:1.

21 *Sharḥ*, 74; a similar point is made on 53. See also 127, where Ṣadrā comments, "knowledge is the root of every righteous act, whether it is an act of commission, such as worship, or an act of omission, such as renunciation (*zuhd*)."

> of the sciences (*ʿulūm*), and this is the meaning of [the Imam's] words (a.s.): "the perfection of religion is the seeking of knowledge."[22] That is, the ultimate objective of religious acts and the obligations of the *sharīʿa* is the seeking of knowledge.
>
> Knowledge, then, is of two types: the knowledge of unveiling (*ʿilm mukāshafa*), that is: knowledge of the Essence of God and of His Attributes and Actions; and knowledge of daily actions, that is: knowledge that pertains to the manner in which one should accomplish the acts of obedience and refrain from disobedient and evil actions. The objective of the first type is knowledge for its own sake, and the objective of the second is [so that one may] act in accordance with it. But the objective of action is also knowledge. Knowledge is the first and the last, the origin and the end.
>
> Thus one kind of knowledge is a means and the other is an end; [the latter] being the more noble and lofty. Action is only a means, since it belongs to this world, and this world is only a means to the next, and likewise all that belongs to it. There is no benefit in obedience that is not a means to knowledge, and likewise, [there is no benefit] in knowledge that pertains to [obedience], if it is not a means to action which leads to the state, which leads to pure knowledge (*ʿilm*) and sincere knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the Face of God.[23]

While some knowledge can be a means to other knowledge, knowledge is the true end in itself. Even knowledge whose immediate benefit is a proper understanding of religious practice and obedience to divine law is ultimately a means of acquiring more knowledge, since religious practice has no meaningful purpose other than to grant increased spiritual knowledge. If "the objective of action is knowledge," the objective of knowledge is not merely proper action. Rather knowledge must be sought for its own sake.[24]

---

22 Quoting the *ḥadīth* he is commenting upon here, which is found on 14–15 of the *Sharḥ*.

23 *Sharḥ*, 15–16.

24 Ibid., 22–23.

The Analogous Nature of Being (*wujūd*) and Knowledge

When examining Ṣadrā's views on knowledge, it should be noted that while knowledge is, ultimately, the only means by which a person may advance along the spiritual and ontological ladder, and thus is part and parcel of Ṣadrā's ontological theory, knowledge and being (*wujūd*) are also construed, independently, in analogous ways. Ṣadrā's theory of *tashkīk al-wujūd* (ambiguity or gradation of being) posits Being (*wujūd*) as a single, unified reality that underlies and is the source of all existent things, not as something divided and apportioned among them. Rather existent things are differentiated by their varying degrees of participation in *wujūd* as such, resulting in differing levels of "intensity" of being (*wujūd*). An individual's "intensity" of being can increase, raising that individual to higher, nobler and more intellectual levels of existence, without the occurrence of ontological disjuncture—every lower level of being is subsumed within the higher, as all being is essentially one,[25] with God (the "Necessary Being," *wājib al-wujūd*) alone possessing *wujūd* as such.[26] Mullā Ṣadrā understands knowledge in precisely the same way:

> . . . the word "knowledge" (*ʿilm*) like the word "being" (*wujūd*) is one of those ambiguous (*mushakkak*) words that has a single common meaning, but differs in the degree of perfection or imperfection, intensity or weakness, with which it obtains. . .[27]

Despite its "single common meaning," Ṣadrā explains elsewhere that the word "knowledge" may refer to three different, but related things: 1) "a connection between the knower and that which is known" (*iḍāfa bayna al-ʿālim wa-l-maʿlūm*), which is similar to the principle of the union of the intellecting subject and the object of his intellection (*ittiḥād al-ʿāqil wa-l-maʿqūl*), a fundamental theme in all of Ṣadrā's writing; 2) "the image that obtains in the soul" of a concrete reality that it knows, be it knowledge of a universal reality or a particular one; and 3) the faculty rooted in the human soul (*al-malaka al-rāsikha*) through which things come to be known

25 *Asfār*, 8:134.

26 Ibid., 1:108–115.

27 *Sharḥ*, 5.

and truths are manifested.[28] For Ṣadrā, knowledge exists in itself and for its own sake, while it also denotes that faculty by which all things come to be known and a mode of relation between knower and known. Analogously, "being" (*wujūd*) exists in and of itself, and is also that by which all other existent things have their being, just as light exists and can be seen in itself, but is also that by which all other things are seen.[29]

If knowledge is analogous to being in its gradated existence, it is also, from another perspective, a reality possessing being or *wujūd*—and indeed, possessing being in the highest degree. This is because, for Ṣadrā, the highest echelons of being are occupied by those existents that are immaterial in nature. Knowledge—both as a faculty and as the final end of this faculty—represents purely immaterial reality: "Knowledge, for the intellect, is a conveyor of the presence of immaterial form to the exclusion of materials and bodies, and there is no doubt that the noblest of possible existents and the highest and the most radiant of them is that existent that is not attached to bodily things."[30] Being immaterial in its own nature, the acquisition and possession of knowledge advances an individual toward increasingly intellectual and immaterial modes of his own existence. For Ṣadrā, knowledge plays the most important role in the final entelechy of every human being, given that it represents the faculty and the means by which an individual proceeds from one ontological level to the next.[31] Knowledge nourishes the intellectual faculty, whose increasing maturation and intensification in turn yields the possibility of acquiring higher levels of spiritual—indeed salvific—knowledge. Both pure knowledge itself and the faculty for acquiring that knowledge, the intellect (*ʿaql*), are immaterial realities. The more one strengthens the faculty of intellect, the more one grasps the true knowledge of things—that is, in their immaterial reality—for the like can only know the like.

---

28 Ibid., 72.

29 For Ṣadrā, both knowledge and being (*wujūd*) are analogous to light. For references to knowledge as light, see, e.g., *Sharḥ*, 96. It is, however, an "intellectual" light, not a "sensible" light, in that unlike sensible light, it is "radiant by its own essence" (96). For the analogy between being and light, see, e.g., *Asfār*, 1:63–64.

30 *Sharḥ*, 4.

31 Ibid. See also 28.

The more one knows the reality of things, and is able to extract their immaterial reality from their bodily and imaginal manifestations, the more one extracts one's own spiritual reality from its bodily form, thereby making "epistemology an exercise in ontology."[32] Ṣadrā writes:

> . . . the intellect (*ʿaql*) is a form (*ṣūra*) which is separate from matter, change, deficiency, nothingness, and evil. [It is] the closest of all created things to Him, the All-High, and the noblest of all existentiated things in His sight. Man, in his first mode of being, is potential in intellect (*ʿaql bi-l-quwwa*) and actual in corporeality (*jismānī bi-l-fiʿl*) and it is part of his vocation to move from potentiality to actuality and from darkness to light, and thus to become actual intellect after having been potential intellect and actual soul. And it is only through knowledge that one becomes an illuminated substance (*jawhar nūrānī*), that is to say, through that faculty which is established and obtained in the human soul subsequent to repeated intellectual perceptions and insights and through prolonged, intelligent thought and contemplation. . .
>
> And this intellectual faculty is the source of all happiness and goodness and the repulsion of all misery and evil, and it is the goal of all effort and movement and the end of all right action and obedience. And what virtue or good quality is better and nobler than that through which the human animal is transformed into an angel drawn nigh, and the dark substance into an intellectual light, and blindness into vision and the one who was in error into one who is rightly guided and rightly guiding, and the lowest into the highest and the one who had been imprisoned in the lowest depths (*sijjīn*) into one who soars to the the most exalted heights (*ʿilliyīn*).[33]

32 Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xv.

33 This is a reference to the Qurʾānic dyad, "*sijjīn*" and "*ʿilliyūn*" (Qurʾān 83:7–8, 18–19), which some interpret as referring to the lowest level of Hell and the highest realm of Paradise, respectively.

> Thus knowledge is the great elixir, since through it the black and stagnant heart becomes valuable currency in the market of the hereafter and hard and rigid iron becomes a white pearl, indeed a luminous star[34] which gives light to the inhabitants of heaven and earth. And it is the antidote through which one discerns truth from falsehood and through which one is able to distinguish wickedness from goodness, and it is the light which brings the dead back to life and which advances before and to the right of the believers[35] on the Day on which good and evil deeds are recompensed, and it is the capability through which one is able to ascend to the realm of the Throne.[36]

Knowledge is the sole means through which human beings can fulfill their ultimate, and indeed, only vocation. Therefore, the continuous acquisition of knowledge is incumbent upon all people, regardless of the level of knowledge they may have already attained.[37]

If the concepts of being and knowledge are parallel in their unified and gradated natures, and linked in their teleological orientation toward immateriality, Ṣadrā also posits the unfolding of knowledge from one level to the next in a way that parallels his conception of ontological movement, which he refers to as "substantial motion" (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*). According to Ṣadrā, human ontological development occurs initially through a divine overflowing or effusion (*ifāḍa*) of being until it reaches the level of the human form. Once having reached this form, a human being becomes responsible for using his own faculty of intellect to move upward toward greater degrees of ontological perfection. This view approximates the Avicennan emanationist scheme in a general way, but as Ibrahim Kalin has recently argued, Ṣadrā's formulation places much less emphasis than Ibn Sīnā does on the role of the "active intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-faʿāl*), and union therewith, as a means of intellectual advancement and realization, seeing the process as one that is primarily driven by the individual's own effort, and his

34 An allusion to Qurʾān 24:35, the "Light Verse."

35 A reference to Qurʾān 57:12.

36 *Sharḥ*, 51–52.

37 *Sharḥ*, 8–9; see also 76, where he says that the acquisition of knowledge is obligatory on the basis of *sunna*, consensus, and intellectual proof.

own internal, if potential, intellectual faculties.[38] For example, in a commentary on a *ḥadīth* attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib which states that seeking knowledge is more incumbent on men than the seeking of wealth, Ṣadrā contrasts wealth, which is divided and apportioned by divine decree, with knowledge, which is acquired only through an individual's concerted effort to acquire it.[39]

While Ṣadrā may not assign a central role to the active intellect in a human being's movement from one level of existence to another, he does acknowledge the role that human "knowers," or teachers, play in assisting the downward flow of knowledge from the divine principle of all knowledge to its human seekers.[40] These advanced knowers absorb divine knowledge into their own being, such that they are transformed into the very "coffers of God," that is, the storehouses of His knowledge in the earthly realm:

> . . . verily knowledge is stored in the coffers of God, hidden from both lofty and base minds, and [these coffers] are the people of knowledge. Mankind, in his primordial state, is empty of [this knowledge] by virtue of his being far removed from [any] relationship to the lofty world of the *malakūt*, and it is only possible for him to become one of the people of knowledge and to accumulate [it] if he seeks [it] and exercises contemplation and effort and devotes himself to the purification of the heart and its refinement until he comes to resemble the mines of knowledge and the coffers of true knowledge (*maʿrifa*), like a piece of hot iron resembles fire through its proximity to it, and thus becomes like it in its properties of illumination and burning. Likewise, individual men, if they contemplate the *malakūt* and seek knowledge with perseverance in acquiring it, come to resemble an intellectual coffer and become like it.[41]

Here Ṣadrā's transformative view of knowledge is poetically conveyed as he compares the individual seeking knowledge to a piece of iron moving ever closer to the fire. When close enough to the fire, the iron

38 Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 148.

39 *Sharḥ*, 16–17.

40 Ibid., 96, 115.

41 Ibid., 17.

becomes red hot, and so acquires not only light and heat, but also properties of illumination and burning that originally belong to the fire itself. While remaining iron, it has nonetheless been transformed so that it possesses in a virtual but efficacious way the ontological qualities of fire, and is capable of actively transmitting those qualities to something other than itself. Having sought out the coffers of divine knowledge, the seekers have become coffers themselves. The knowing human soul, enlightened by divine knowledge, comes to possess perfection and luminosity in such fullness that it overflows and becomes, not only a passive recipient of knowledge and "light," but also an active illuminator of others.[42]

Thus the transformation of the learner into a teacher is not achieved by the mere quantitative accumulation of knowledge, but via a process of substantial transformation that makes him resemble the very divine source of knowledge he had been seeking. The teacher exists on a higher ontological level[43]—a level of greater intensity of being (*wujūd*)—able not merely to disseminate his acquired knowledge, but to assist others in their own ontological transformation. The ontologically transformative process of teaching and learning is discussed throughout his commentary on the *Kitāb faḍl al-ʿilm*, and in one passage, Ṣadrā makes this point through an interesting reference to the Qurʾānic license to use hunting dogs. Although dogs are generally considered unclean in Islamic tradition, the Qurʾān allows people to consume the meat of animals caught by trained hunting dogs. The relevant verse reads, in part, *Say, "Lawful unto you are all good things." And as for the hunting dogs you have taught, teaching them from that which God has taught you, eat of that which they catch for you* (5:4). Ṣadrā does not quote the verse, but is clearly alluding to it when he says, "Indeed the prey of a 'taught' (*muʿallam*) dog is pure, purified by the blessing of knowledge, even though he was originally impure."[44] The implication is that because the dog has been "taught" some of the knowledge that God had "taught" its master, the dog's original ontological state of impurity (*najas*) has been transformed.

42 Ibid., 84.

43 See *Sharḥ*, 3–4 where Ṣadrā cites several *aḥādīth* on the status of the "men of knowledge" in the next world on account of their having taught others.

44 Ibid., 88.

Given the importance of human teachers in the acquisition of knowledge, and thus in human ontological transformation, Ṣadrā stresses the importance of seeking knowledge from qualified teachers and through interaction with learned men:

> Verily, many religious as well as earthly aims cannot be obtained except by seeking the assistance of another and the greatest of all of these is the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in religion, for this is the greatest and most important of all acts of worship and obedience and this is impossible except through interacting (*mukhālaṭa*) and conversing with teachers and learned men. . .
>
> Thus the one who is in need of learning, inasmuch as it is a religious duty upon him, which he cannot fail to accomplish, for such a person, seclusion is forbidden. And he would be in disobedience to God were he to seclude himself in his home, unless it was the case that he was not capable of the discussion and examination of the sciences (*ʿulūm*), and he would prefer to occupy himself with worship and content himself with following what he has heard, and with what he has believed from the outset. It is thus not unreasonable that seclusion in the case of such a man should be preferable. . . though in the worship of an ignorant man there is little good.
>
> As for one who is capable of acquiring distinction in the sciences of religion and the principles of certitude, in his case, secluding himself before he acquires learning and understanding is clear profligacy. For this reason, someone said: "Acquire understanding, and then practice seclusion."[45]

Although Ṣadrā himself retired from public life for lengthy periods of time at least twice in his life, he insists that the practice of seclusion is only legitimate for one who is truly incapable of learning and thus of benefitting from learned company, or for one who has already acquired sufficient learning from others.[46]

---

45 Ibid., 34.

46 Ṣadrā elsewhere describes the true "friends of God" (*dūstdārān-i khudāvand*, likely a direct Perisan translation of the Arabic, *awliyāʾ Allāh*) as those who prefer solitude to engaging too much in the world and the company of others;

Knowledge and Eschatology

For Ṣadrā, salvation is dependent upon the progressive and inexhaustible seeking of knowledge, and upon the sincerity and faithfulness of the seeking. But knowledge is not only the path to a blissful life in the hereafter, it is also the essential content and ontological reality of that life, for "the hereafter is none other than the capacity for knowledge and perception (*idrāk*)."[47] The Garden is pure knowledge, for

> verily the perfection of pleasure is in the perception of the Beloved and the perfection of pain is in remoteness from the Beloved. . . the deeper and more intense the perception, and the nobler, more perfect, more permanent and purer that which is perceived, the nobler and more intense will be the pleasure.[48]

Pleasure in the hereafter is not material in nature, nor can it be measured in physical terms; rather pleasure and pain in this context are measured by one's ability to perceive the divine realities of the hereafter. To the extent that one has cultivated the faculty for such perception in this life, one will be joyful in the next; to the extent that one has allowed this faculty to atrophy, one will be tortured by the eternal obscuration of these blessed realities. Most people, according to Ṣadrā, never reach the level of pure intellect, and remain at the level of the imaginal soul. Even these may be resurrected, however, since they have managed to reach an ontological degree that has some separation from pure matter.[49] But because their capacity to perceive intellectual realities has not been fully developed, they are unable to fully enjoy the intellectual pleasures of Paradise.[50]

Those who reach the highest levels of spiritual knowledge and being are most removed from their physical nature, and have

---

see Ṣadrā, *ʿIrfān va ʿārif namāyān*, trans. Bīdārfar, 97–98. In the passage above, however, he indicates that gaining real knowledge from others must precede this, at least for most people.

47 *Sharḥ*, 50; see also 51, where Ṣadrā says, ". . . the life of the Hereafter is life through knowledge."

48 Ibid., 69–70. For the role of perception in the experience of the hereafter, see *Asfār*, 9:121–125.

49 *Sharḥ*, 297; 315–316.

50 Ibid., 211–212; see also 145, where he states, "But as for the supreme triumph in salvation, none attains it save the gnostics (*ʿārifīn*)."

thus virtually attained or approximated "immateriality." They are not only more capable of perceiving intellectual realities, but also more capable of being intellectually perceived themselves since they are more "intelligible." Thus when commenting upon the controversial issue of God's "gazing upon" the righteous in the next life as mentioned in the context of a *ḥadīth* attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Ṣadrā indicates that God, being perfectly immaterial, can only know, or "gaze upon," immaterial realities, that is, the inner, non-material aspect of things. Thus only those who possess an inner "heart illuminated by knowledge" will enjoy the otherworldly blessing of God's gaze.[51]

All acquisition of knowledge leads to ontological transformation, but it does not always lead to spiritual advancement or salvation. Knowledge must be sought out and acquired from human teachers, but one must use this knowledge in conjunction with various religious and spiritual practices to bring about a positive spiritual transformation. Ṣadrā often speaks of intellectual advancement in conjunction with the purification of the soul, *tazkiyyat* or *taṣfiyyat al-nafs*,[52] while also warning of the danger of seeking mystical insights without the intellectual preparation that sufficient knowledge provides. In his commentary on the *Kitāb al-ḥujja* [The book of proof] in Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, Ṣadrā states that the true path to God is found at the juncture (*barzakh*) of intellectual contemplation (*tafakkur*) and spiritual purification (*taṣfiyya*). This, he tells us, was the way of both al-Ghazālī and the Illuminationists (Ishrāqiyyīn).[53] Thus there are those who acquire knowledge in this life, but perish in the next for lack of spiritual practice and sincerity. In fact, Ṣadrā asserts that their punishment will be even more intense than that of ordinary sinners, because of their heightened faculties of perception:

> . . . for the changes brought about by the practice of the speculative sciences and educational exercises move

51 Ibid., 25.

52 See, for example, 47, where he states that God has favored mankind with two potential capabilities—one for knowledge and the other for patience and suppressing passions and vain desires; and when both are brought to fruition, they yield spiritual advancement. Ṣadrā frequently connects the acquisition of knowledge with the purification of the soul; see, e.g., *Sharḥ*, 17, 20, 46, 59, 83.

53 Ibid., 423.

> souls intensely, and bring whatever characteristics or actions were hidden in their essences from potentiality to actuality, regardless of whether these are good or evil in nature. And the soul, when it strengthens and intensifies and moves from potentiality to actuality, its experience of pain and loss. . . is stronger, and its experience of torture derived from its perception of torturous things and its attaining to hateful things is more intense, in contrast to more deficient souls who remain in potentiality regarding both evil and good [characteristics], such as the mentally deficient (*bulh*), children and others who are weak of soul, and the rest of the common people who are not capable of saving themselves (*lā yastaṭīʿūna ḥīla*) and are not guided to any way (*lā yahtadūna sabīl*).[54] For these, because of the limitedness of their substances and the deficiency of their minds, when they are punished, their punishment is not intense, but likewise, when they are rewarded, their reward is not great.[55]

Here, as elsewhere, Ṣadrā indicates that acquiring knowledge hardly lets one off the hook, so to speak, in terms of the next world. In fact, he asserts that "the danger of knowledge is greater than the danger of ignorance, and God's argument against the people of knowledge is more certain, and He will tolerate from the ignorant that which He would not tolerate a tenth thereof from the knower."[56] The corruption of the best is the worst.

---

54 A reference to Qurʾān 4:98. A *ḥadīth* attributed to the Imāms adduces this same Qurʾānic verse to explain the status of those who do not subscribe to the Shīʿī perspective, but fail do so out of inability, rather than willful rejection. See Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2:383–385; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. Ḥasan al-Muṣṭafawī (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1969), 141–142.

55 *Sharḥ*, 211–212.

56 Ibid., 119–120; see also 214, where Ṣadrā states that one of the exquisite torments of the false or worldly knower in the hereafter is witnessing his former students who, unlike himself, took his teachings sincerely and used them to spiritually transform and advance themselves, in the bliss of paradise, while he is in hell; indicating that the power of knowledge exists independent of its conduit.

The Hierarchy of True Knowers

It is clear that knowledge forms the basis of Ṣadrā's conception of ontological and spiritual hierarchy in this world and the next. However, this hierarchy is not based on the pure accumulation or quantity of knowledge, but rather on the quality of that knowledge, the purity and perfection of its source, and the reality and profundity of its transformative effect on the soul. One must begin the ontological journey by seeking knowledge from human teachers, as Ṣadrā makes clear, but which knowledge and which teachers? Are there certain religious sciences that should be preferred to others as a means of acquiring, or preparing oneself to receive, higher forms of knowledge, and who holds the keys to these sciences? These questions lead us to examine Ṣadrā's views on the nature of religious learning and the religious sciences of his time, which take up considerable space in his commentary on the *Kitāb faḍl al-ʿilm*.

Ṣadrā on the Religious Scholarship of His Time

Ṣadrā lived within the intellectually vibrant and contentious social context of the Safavid empire at its political peak. Both Sufi and Shīʿī approaches to Islam flourished concurrently, and often competed with each other for political and social influence. Within Safavid Shīʿism and Sufism, the intellectual approaches of the scholarly elite co-existed, sometimes uneasily, with popular and purely devotional manifestations. Ṣadrā stood, no doubt, with the scholarly elite, but the Shīʿī scholars were themselves divided into two approaches to religious knowledge: the Akhbārīs, who viewed the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet and the Imāms as the most reliable sources of religious knowledge and religious law, and collectively as a sufficient source; and the Uṣūlīs, who felt that religious law had to be arrived at through an arduous process of *ijtihād* which included a careful weighing of the Qurʾān and traditions of the Prophet and the Imāms within a system of jurisprudential and rational principles (*uṣūl*). While the Akbārī/Uṣūlī debate principally concerned Islamic law, it came to have implications for other fields as well. For example, since the Akhbārīs relied primarily upon "transmitted" (*naqlī*), rather than "intellectual" (*ʿaqlī*) sources of religious knowledge, they tended not to look favorably on the more *ʿaqlī* sciences of philosophy and

certain forms of mysticism.[57] Lying at the heart of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī debate was the fundamental issue of what should be considered the true source of religious knowledge and, by extension, who could claim religious authority on the basis of such knowledge. Ṣadrā has much to say about the provenance of true religious knowledge in his commentary, and is highly critical of those who claim status and authority on the basis of what he considers to be the mere pretense of scholarly attainment. So where do we locate Ṣadrā with regard to these two approaches to religious knowledge?

The very fact, noted above, that Ṣadrā devoted precious time during what is believed to be the last years of his life to this commentary on the transmitted traditions of the Imāms would suggest some sympathy for the Akhbārī view. This was the view ascendant in his own time, which held that such traditions represented an essential and reliable source of religious knowledge. Moreover, Ṣadrā devotes extensive space in this work to discussing the *isnāds* attached to the traditions he comments upon, providing sometimes voluminous notes on the transmitters as found in the *rijāl* literature. He thus gives the appearance of taking the transmitted (*naqlī*) science of *ḥadīth* quite seriously, and he is careful to attend to the methodological concerns of this science before launching into his metaphysical commentary on the traditions.

At the same time, throughout the commentary, Ṣadrā is critical of those who limit themselves purely to the acquisition of the transmitted (*naqlī*) sciences. He derides and belittles those who memorize the words of dead men,[58] and who collect reports, traditions, and scholarly opinions like trinkets, rather than concerning themselves with the divine sciences and the transcendent knowledge they need to transform themselves from lower ontological and epistemological states to higher ones. For example, he describes those who falsely claim knowledge, while being spiritually "ignorant":

> [This is] the one who is ignorant of heart, deceived and deluded, claiming to possess knowledge because he has memorized opinions (*aqwāl*), and undertaken journeys, and because he is seated in the company of *shaykh*s

57 See Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 201, and Rizvi, "Reconsidering the Life of Mulla Sadra Shirazi (d. 1641): Notes Toward and Intellectual Biography," *Iran* 40 (2002), 187.

58 *Sharḥ*, 44.

> and learned men (*rijāl*), when his true state is that he is ignorant and possesses no knowledge, and his heart is blind, without insight (*baṣīra*), self-satisfied with what he possesses of the outward aspects of opinions, and the forms of *aḥādīth*, and theological disputations, and philosophical sophistries, or supposedly Sufi fantasies and distortions, or poetic orations through which he attracts common souls and the rest of the "worldly scholars" (*ʿulamāʾ al-dunyā*) who are fooled by him, and [who is] drawn to money and high position and prestige and fame, and he is one whom the life of the world has deceived away from the hereafter.[59]
>
> . . . Know that most of those in delusion and conceit are a group who are limited to the knowledge of *fatwās* and rules, and the memorization of issues of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, and who claim that this is knowledge of religion and knowledge of the Book of God and knowledge of the *sunna* of the Lord of the Messengers [Muḥammad], and who abandon knowledge of the path to the hereafter, and struggling against the soul, and purifying one's inner state of blameworthy qualities, and forbidding the soul from passions, and purifying the heart through ascetic practice. . . and who reject entirely the path of gnosis and religious understanding. . .[60]

One might be tempted to read Ṣadrā's contempt for those who marked religious and intellectual status on the basis of an ability to reproduce the words of others as a stance against the Akhbārī school, which advocated reliance on transmitted teachings in the attainment of religious knowledge. Reading this and other passages carefully, however, we see that Ṣadrā's critique is not directed at any one school of thought, but is rather an attack on intellectual pretension,[61] on worldly approaches to religious learning,[62] and on small-mindedness in all its forms.

---

59 Ibid., 57

60 Ibid., 58–59; for similar criticism, see 50, 126–127.

61 For a lengthy *ḥadīth* on intellectual pretension with Ṣadrā's commentary, see *Sharḥ*, 297–301.

62 For criticism of those who use knowledge primarily for worldly gain, see *Sharḥ*, 57, 135, 139, 211. For similar criticism of worldly *ʿulamāʾ*, see, e.g., Ṣadrā, *Seh*

In the passages quoted above, Ṣadrā is equally disparaging of those obsessed with other matters he considers petty and spiritually useless, even when they fall in the domain of the *ʿaqlī* sciences, including theological debates, "philosophical sophistries," and "Sufi fantasies." He is critical in general of those who spend their time in what his contemporaries might have considered "intellectual pursuits," but which bring one no closer to an understanding of spiritual reality. For example, he criticizes those who concern themselves with the legal minutiae of various hypothetical legal scenarios,[63] or who engage in theological debate merely to prove their intellectual dominance.[64] In fact, at times he compares the perspective of the *naqlī* traditionists favorably with those who substitute their own individual opinion (*raʾy*) on a religious matter for the known teachings of the Prophet and the Imāms.[65] In his commentary on the numerous *aḥādīth* in Kulaynī's chapter on the Imāms' strident rejection of the practice of *qiyās* in determining legal rulings, Ṣadrā follows the tone of the Imāms' antipathy to this practice. He asserts that *qiyās* offers "neither sound knowledge nor a strong opinion" (*ẓann qawī*),[66] and in fact leads to a spiritually destructive pride and desire for worldly dominance that one does not find among those who limit themselves to the *naqlī* sciences, which do not provide the same prestige.[67] Of course, even the Uṣūlīs did not engage in *qiyās* strictly speaking, given the Imāms' widely reported prohibition, but Ṣadrā's commentary elsewhere suggests criticism of those who consider *ijtihād*, more generally, as a reliable method of arriving at truth.[68]

---

aṣl, ed. M. Khwājavī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mullā, 1997), 17–20.

63 *Sharḥ*, 214.

64 Ibid., 42.

65 Ibid., 294. See also *Sharḥ*, 39, where Ṣadrā recommends that regarding subjects that cannot be adequately apprehended by one's intellect, one must defer to the teachings of the Prophet.

66 Ibid., 315.

67 Ibid., 303.

68 See Ibid., 108–109, where Adam's fall is said to result from an "error of *ijtihād*"; and 320 where true knowledge comes neither from "hearing," that is the *naqlī* sciences, nor from *ijtihād*. On 97 the knowledge of the *mujtahidīn* and those who practice the speculative sciences is likened to the light of flames and lamps, in contrast to the more "celestial" light of true knowers, because their knowledge does not come directly from the essential source of knowledge, just as the light of flames and lamps does not come directly from the sun.

Taken as a whole, his commentary indicates that he is not critical of any one school of thought or any one branch of the religious sciences; rather his criticism is directed against all who seek knowledge with worldly intention, as well as those who would limit necessary and worthwhile religious knowledge to any one form, be it theology, jurisprudence, Qur'ānic recitation, *ḥadīth* transmission, or the experiential knowledge of Sufism divorced from other forms of religious knowledge.[69] For Ṣadrā, these sciences are a means to an ultimate end, which is access to the divine knowledge that transcends and is the source of them all.[70] He writes,

> . . . every universal principle of knowledge has an opening onto the acquisition of this luminous faculty called guidance, since even if it is speculative, it has an essential effect on the illumination of the heart; and if it is practical, it has an effect through the intermediary of acting upon it, with regard to purifying the inward nature and refining the mind and purifying the soul.[71]

The truth may be accessed by many different paths, and all sound knowledge, when it is undertaken with proper intention, leads in the direction of "purifying" and "refining" the soul.

Whatever the political situation of Ṣadrā may have been at various points in his life—and the existing biographical evidence does not seem sufficient to determine his political position with any real certainty[72]—the virulence of his criticism of those who trafficked insincerely or ignorantly in the religious sciences can be sufficiently explained by his transcendent conception of knowledge itself, as the single path by which one might purify and save one's soul, and by which one reaches the very proximity of God. It seems clear that one who held such a view as consistently and, it appears, sincerely, as Ṣadrā did, would have little tolerance for those who peddled knowledge in the intellectual marketplace for worldly

69 Ibid., 4–5.

70 Ibid., 55, 60.

71 Ibid., 83.

72 See, in general, Rizvi, "Reconsidering the Life of Mullā Ṣadrā." Nonetheless, hints of political motivations behind at least some of his criticism can be seen in places where he chides the "worldly scholars" for aiding the "*sulṭāns* of oppression" and the "commanders of injustice" (*umarā' al-jawr*); see *Sharḥ*, 135.

gain. Furthermore, for Ṣadrā, knowledge, like being, was a unitive reality, differing only in intensity, and so there could be no tolerance for those who would divide knowledge into separate, isolated branches, or make them compete in importance. Most importantly, for Ṣadrā, the acquisition of knowledge was theorized, and meant to be experienced, as a purely vertical movement toward greater intensity of being and proximity to the divine. Those who considered knowledge to be the mere collecting of variant opinions would seem, by contrast, to be traversing a purely horizontal plane—and the "journey for knowledge," much celebrated in Islamic intellectual history but dismissed by Ṣadrā,[73] is a perfect metaphor for this "horizontal" pursuit.

Perhaps a more important consideration when trying to situate Ṣadrā's epistemology in the context of the intellectual politics of his day, particularly in relation to the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī debate, was the extent to which those on both sides of this debate represent an epistemological break from the Shīʿī scholars of earlier times. While it might seem natural to view the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī divide as a continuation of the traditionalist/rationalist scholarly divide of the fourth/tenth–fifth/eleventh centuries, Robert Gleave explains in two recent studies of the Akhbārī school that while the traditionalist and rationalist Shīʿī scholars of earlier times held that the attainment of certain religious knowledge was possible, albeit via competing scholarly methodologies, both the Akhbārīs and the Uṣūlīs of the Safavid era accepted and worked with the assumption of varying degrees of "inevitable doubt" in religious knowledge, particularly as regards formulations of the law.[74] Ṣadrā, by contrast, was clearly in pursuit of certain knowledge that approximated, or perhaps even reached, the knowledge of the prophets themselves.[75] Given this, the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī debate, with its competing strategies for managing uncertainty in matters of religious (particularly legal) knowledge, would have meant little to Ṣadrā, at least intellectually.

73 Ibid., 57, 66–67.

74 Robert Gleave, *Inevitable Doubt: Two Theories of Shīʿī Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 28, 107–110; and Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shīʿī School* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 5–7, 77, 88.

75 See *Sharḥ*, 218, where he compares those whose knowledge is based on certitude with those whose faith is acquired "from the mouths of men" and from "blind imitation" (*taqlīd*), and whose knowledge is therefore shaken by the slightest doubt.

Ṣadrā has a terminology and a set of metaphors that he repeatedly draws upon to distinguish between the spiritually and ontologically transformative knowledge that he considered to be the only real vocation of human life, and the various intellectual and transmitted sciences that passed for religious knowledge in the society of his time. He refers to those scholars who were masters of the traditional religious sciences as the "conventional knower(s)," using the phrases *al-ʿālim al-rasmī*[76] or *ʿulamāʾ al-rusūm*, which he claims to have adopted from ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's, *Iṣṭilaḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*.[77] He also makes widespread use of Ghazālī's division of religious knowledge into "knowledge of transactions" (*ʿilm al-muʿāmalāt*), which can be known through transmitted reports and through human reasoning, and "knowledge of unveiling" (*ʿilm mukāshafa*),[78] which can only be attained through divine bestowal, usually after a long period of spiritual and intellectual preparation. Like Ghazālī, Ṣadrā maintains that only a tiny minority of people attain to the "knowledge of unveiling," and that such people are "rarer than red sulfur,"[79] although he criticizes Ghazālī for limiting the pursuit of this knowledge to those who are spiritually unsatisfied by the *ʿilm al-muʿāmalāt*.[80] In keeping with Ṣadrā's continuous metaphorical association of knowledge (and being) with light, he also explains the

76 Ibid., 211.

77 Ibid., 67. See ʿAbd al-Razzāq Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-iʿlām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām: muʿjam al-muṣṭalaḥāt wa-l-ishārāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 2 vols., ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1995), 1:489, where *rusūm* is defined as all that pertains to the created world and all that is other than God.

78 *Sharḥ*, 5–6, 36–37. Ṣadrā opens his treatise, *Iksīr al-ʿārifīn* with a similar distinction between ordinary religious knowledge and the "knowledge of unveiling"; see Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, trans. W. Chittick (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), 4. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī presents this distinction in the introduction to his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 1:12, but says that the "knowledge of unveiling" is not something to be written in books, but only something to be attained by the true seekers, for even the prophets did not speak of this knowledge except in symbolic terms.

79 *Sharḥ*, 36–37. The phrase "rarer than red sulfur" seems to have been a common metaphor for rarity, employed in at least one Shīʿī *ḥadīth* to describe the rarity of the Imāms' true followers (Kulaynī, *Kāfī*,2:241–242, h. 1; Daylamī, *Aʿlām al-dīn* [Qum: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 1408/1988], 123). For other references to the "knowledge of unveiling," see 16, and 20–21 (where he quotes Ghazālī's own discussion of these terms).

80 *Sharḥ*, 8–9.

differences between various kinds of knowers through an analogy to different intensities and sources of light. The knowledge of the prophets and the saints (*awliyāʾ*) is like the light of the sun, which illuminates by its own divinely-bestowed essence and nature, and is dependent upon no external source for its light; the light of the advanced and serious "knowers" who take their knowledge from the prophets and the saints is like the light of the moon and the fixed planets, which give off a less intense light that is nonetheless a reflection of the light of the sun, and on which they are dependent; the sincere worshippers, who do not possess or seek advanced knowledge, are like the stars, which give off even less light, and whose minimal light is effaced by the presence of the full moon.[81] According to Ṣadrā, it was the ancient Persian philosophers who first realized this analogy, but it was later expounded by his Ishrāqī predecessor, Suhrawardī, whom he quotes in this context.[82]

If Ṣadrā borrows much of the terminology for his hierarchy of knowledge from his predecessors, his discussion of this hierarchy as it is found in the *Sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfī* also makes use, perhaps inevitably, of Shīʿī terminology and conceptual frameworks that would be deeply resonant to a learned Shīʿī audience; but he broadens and nuances those terms and frameworks in ways that simultaneously reinforce and undermine key Shīʿī notions of spiritual hierarchy. I will review some of these hierarchical conceptions of knowledge as found in Twelver Shīʿī tradition, and then analyze Ṣadrā's use and modification of these ideas in his commentary.

Shīʿī Views of Ontological/Epistemological Hierarchy: The Fixed Status of the Imams

At the heart of Shīʿī notions regarding the spiritual authority of the Imāms is the belief that they possess extraordinary—even miraculous—knowledge. The term "*ʿālim*" is used in Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature to refer to the Imām,[83] and the Imāms are collectively identified with select groups of "knowers" in the Qurʾān. When the Qurʾān asks, "Are those who know and those who do not know equal?,"[84] a

81 Ibid., 74–75.

82 Ibid., 74, where he quotes Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, although the editor notes that the corresponding passage is found in Suhrawardī's *Hayākil al-nūr*.

83 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:269–270.

84 Qurʾān 39:9.

Shīʿī *ḥadīth* attributed to Muḥammad al-Bāqir reads this as a reference to the spiritual distinction of the Imāms.[85] When the Qurʾān declares that none knows the inner meaning of its verses except "those firmly-rooted in knowledge" (*al-rāsikhuna fī l-ʿilm*),[86] this is likewise understood as a reference to the Imāms.[87] The Imāms were considered to be the referents of other Qurʾānic terms of nobility: they were, of course, the "People of the House" (*ahl al-bayt*),[88] and the possessors of authority (*ūlū l-amr*)[89] who had to be obeyed.[90] They were also the *awliyāʾ* (sing., *walī*), the true possessors of the spiritual station of *walāya*. This is based, in part, on an interpretation of Qurʾān 5:55 that identifies the *awliyāʾ* of the believers as being God, the Prophet, and *those who believe, who perform the prayer, and give the zakāh, while bowing down*. Both Shīʿī and Sunnī sources widely consider this verse to refer specifically to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib; thus ʿAlī is the *walī* of the believers, a title that can then be extended to the Imāms among his descendants. The identification of ʿAlī and the other Imāms as *walī/awliyāʾ* is also based on the famous Ghadīr Khumm *ḥadīth*, wherein the Prophet said, "For whomever I am their master (*mawlā*, var. *walī*), ʿAlī is also their master; O God, befriend (*wālī*) the friend of ʿAlī (*man wālāhu*) and be the enemy of his enemy."[91]

The Imāms were the true "heirs of the Prophet" and are believed to have exclusively inherited esoteric knowledge of the Qurʾān and other spiritual teachings from the Prophet Muḥammad through ʿAlī. According to Shīʿī *ḥadīth* literature, this exclusively "transmitted" knowledge was further enhanced by miraculous and divinely bestowed intellectual capabilities (for example, a knowledge of multiple sacred languages),[92] by secret esoteric writings and books

85 Kulaynī, *Kāfī*, 1:269; al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, 127–128.

86 Qurʾān 3:7.

87 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:269. I.e., to the inclusion of the Imāms along with the Prophet among those "firmly rooted in knowledge."

88 Qurʾān 33:33.

89 Qurʾān 4:59.

90 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:262.

91 For an extensive discussion of this tradition in relation to the terminology of *walāya* in early Shīʿī *ḥadīth* tradition, see Dakake, *Charismatic Community*, ch. 2, 5.

92 See Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:283–284.

in their possession,[93] and by a form of indirect divine inspiration.[94] No single technical term was definitively ascribed to the Imams' special mode of divine inspiration;[95] rather, the Imāms were said to be those who were "spoken to" (*muḥaddath*).[96] The followers of the Imāms were similarly considered to enjoy access to a more elite spiritual and intellectual station by virtue of their attachment to the Imāms. A tradition attributed to Muḥammad al-Bāqir, for example, identifies his Shīʿī followers with the Qurʾānic *ūlū l-albāb*, or "people of intellect;"[97] and a widely reported tradition states that the teachings of the Imāms are difficult, and that only "an angel drawn nigh, or a sent prophet, or the heart of a believer that has been tested for faith" (understood to mean the learned among the Imāms' followers) can truly grasp them,[98] thus placing learned Shīʿīs in the company of angels and prophets as those who alone can bear the weight of the Imāms' teachings.

A Ṣadrian View of the Hierarchy of Knowers: The Prophets and the *Awliyāʾ*

In his commentary, Ṣadrā frequently mentions "the prophets and the *awliyāʾ*," as those who together occupy the highest level of his ontological and spiritual hierarchy. He considers both to be analogous to the sun, radiating knowledge from their very essence, rather than passively transmitting the knowledge of others. However, the role of *walāya* in Ṣadrā's formulation of ontological hierarchy,

93 Ibid., 1:283–285, 294–298.

94 Ibid., 1:298–309.

95 In a few places, it is referred to by the terms *ilhām*, or more rarely, *waḥy*, which is usually used for prophetic revelation, see Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide in Early Shiʾism*, 72.

96 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:230–231; for a fuller discussion of this term in Imāmī Shīʿī thought, see Etan Kohlberg, "The Term *Muhaddath* in Twelver Shiʾism" in *Belief and Law in Imami Shiʾism* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), 5:39–47.

97 This is a Qurʾānic phrase used often to refer to those who piously "remember" [God] and who reflect on the signs of God around them. See, e.g., Qurʾān 2:269, 3:7, 13:19, 39:9. For Shīʿī traditions that identify this phrase as a reference to the Shīʿīs, see Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:269; al-Baraqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, 127–128.

98 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:466–467; Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 110 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1957–), 2:183–197, 208–213; Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaḍramī, *Aṣl Jaʿfar al-Ḥaḍramī* in *al-Uṣūl al-sittat ʿashar* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Kitāb, 1951–2), 65. Ṣadrā adduces this *ḥadīth* in the *Sharḥ* (49) to indicate the essentiality of knowledge and its acquisition to the Shīʿī community.

coupled with his obvious reverence for the Imāms, has led some to overstate, perhaps, the importance of strictly Shīʿī conceptions of *walāya* and *imāma* in his work.[99] For it is clear, even in Ṣadrā's commentary on the sayings of the Imāms themselves, that the category of the *awliyāʾ* includes not only the Imāms, or even the Imāms and their most learned followers, but rather extends to all who have been ontologically transformed through the acquisition of knowledge and the practices of spiritual purification. Ṣadrā describes this expanded category of saintly knowers using terms often associated with the Imāms in mainstream Twelver Shīʿī tradition: they are those "firmly-rooted in knowledge" (*rāsikhūna fī l-ʿilm*),[100] they are the "People of the House,"[101] and they are the "possessors of authority" (*ūlū l-amr*).[102] Ṣadrā bases his more inclusive view of the category of saintly knowers (*awliyāʾ*) on a correspondingly broader interpretation of "descent" and "inheritance" from the Prophet.

If access to extraordinary sources of knowledge was an inheritance that Shīʿī tradition claims the Imāms received from the Prophet, for Ṣadrā they were not the only heirs. In Ṣadrā's view, the Prophet and ʿAlī had both genealogical descendants and "spiritual" descendants, such that it was possible to speak about a group of "spiritual heirs" to prophetic knowledge—a group that includes the Imāms, but was not limited to them. Ṣadrā writes, citing a "recent authority":

> One of the contemporary, distinguished [thinkers] has said, with regard to [this issue], in brief: "The family of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.) are all those who descend from him, and of these there are two types. The first is the one who descends from him as a formal and bodily consequence, such as his offspring and those of his blood relations who proceed from him, for whom the accepting of charity is forbidden according to the Muḥammadan *sharīʿa*; and the second is the one who descends from him as an immaterial and spiritual consequence, and these are his spiritual children among those

99 See, e.g., Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: Routledge, 2009), 129–130, and Henry Corbin's introduction to his translation of Ṣadrā's *Mashāʿir*, 13–15, 80–82.

100 See *Sharḥ*, 43, 66–67, 72, 157–158.

101 Ibid., 41, 43.

102 Ibid., 91–92.

> firmly-rooted in knowledge and the perfected saints and the divine sages who draw from his lamp-niche, whether they precede him in time or are contemporary [or posterior] to him." And there is no doubt that the second relation is surer than the first, and if the two are combined, then it is "light upon light," such as is the case with the well-known Imāms from the pure family (a.s.) And just as formal [material] charity is forbidden to his formal [bodily] offspring, likewise is spiritual charity forbidden to his spiritual children—that is to say, the blind imitation (*taqlīd*) of another in the sciences and in true knowledge.[103]

Here the spiritual descendants of the Prophet are identified as those who "draw from [the Prophetic] lamp-niche," as well as those "firmly-rooted in knowledge"—a phrase that, as noted above, was usually understood as a reference to the Imāms in Imāmī *ḥadīth* literature. Thus these spiritual descendants of the Prophet, like the Imāms, have access to extraordinary sources of knowledge that place them in a category hierarchically above the ordinary believer. Ṣadrā then makes the apt analogy that just as the material (genealogical) descendants of the Prophet are forbidden from accepting material charity, so too are his spiritual descendants forbidden from accepting spiritual charity—that is, the blind acceptance of the doctrinal positions of others—since like the genealogical descendants of the Imāms, they are "fed" from a higher source.[104]

Ṣadrā does not put all "spiritual descendants" of the Prophet on equal footing. The Imāms who can claim both genealogical and spiritual descent from the Prophet occupy a unique rank—they are "light upon light."[105] Elsewhere, Ṣadrā tells us that the "trustees" (*awṣiyā'*), meaning the Imāms, are "the most exalted of the knowers, the best and the greatest of them [other than the prophets], while the knowers are the lords of the [ordinary] people (*nās*)."[106] On the

103 Ibid., 41.

104 See also, *Sharḥ*, 49–50, where Ṣadrā notes that a follower of the Imāmī Shī'ī sect has a responsibility to be well-informed and have a deep understanding of the principles of religion and must not be a "commoner" who follows the doctrinal positions of others blindly.

105 A reference to Qur'ān 24:35.

106 *Sharḥ*, 48.

basis of this comment, Ṣadrā's conception of a spiritual hierarchy based on knowledge would place the prophets at the pinnacle, followed by the trustees (*awṣiyaʾ*), then the saintly "knowers" outside the categories of the prophets and the *awṣiyāʾ*, and finally, the ordinary people. This is similar to what one finds in Shīʿī tradition as well, which recognized a hierarchical relationship between learned Shīʿa[107] and the more purely devotional Shīʿī population, as well as non-Shīʿa. The learned Shīʿīs were the elite (*khāṣṣa*) as compared with the "commoners" (*ʿāmma* or simply *nās*). In places, Ṣadrā seems to embrace the idea that the learned Shīʿa occupy a spiritual and intellectual position above others,[108] although this is somewhat belied by the greater extent to which he relies on non-Shīʿī thinkers as influences for his own philosophical thought.

Having explicitly expanded the concepts of "true knowers," "those firmly rooted in knowledge" and even the "People of the House" (*ahl al-bayt*) beyond identification solely with the Imāms, and having identified them as the *awliyāʾ* and the "spiritual descendants" of the Prophet, Ṣadrā goes on to make bold statements about the cosmological and spiritual role of this expanded group. In particular, Ṣadrā attributes to the "saints" the same, or similar, access to extraordinary sources of knowledge as enjoyed by the Imāms, and indeed, as we shall see, even the prophets. While Ṣadrā often groups the prophets and the saints together as those who have access to the highest form of knowledge—knowledge that comes directly from the divine, rather than through human transmission—he usually refers to the divine inspiration received by the saints as *ilhām*, a less direct form of inspiration than that designated by the terms *tanzīl* or *waḥy*, usually associated with the prophets. In one passage, Ṣadrā comments on a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet through Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq which says, "For every harmful religious innovation (*bidʿa*) that will arise after me, and that threatens to undermine faith, there will be a *walī* from the People of my House who will be charged with refuting it, speaking through inspiration (*ilhām*) from God,

107 Ṣadrā distinguishes between those who identify themselves as Shīʿī because of their love and devotion to the *ahl al-bayt*, and those who truly understand the esoteric sciences taught by the Imāms, and the true interpretation of the Qurʾān and the sayings of the Imāms (see *Sharḥ*, 66–67), a distinction also articulated in the Shīʿī *ḥadīth* tradition.

108 See, e.g., *Sharḥ*, 49–50, 66–67.

publicly proclaiming and illuminating the truth. . . "[109] For Ṣadrā, this *ḥadīth*, which employs the terms "people of the house" and "*walī*" in connection with *ilhām*, indicates that the *awliyāʾ*, along with the prophets and the Imāms, have an important role to play in bringing corrective divine guidance to the human community. In his commentary on this *ḥadīth*, he presents the officially accepted distinction between the prophets and the *awliyāʾ*, indicating that the prophets are aided by *waḥy* and evidentiary miracles (*muʿjizāt*), while the *awliyāʾ* are aided by *ilhām* and lesser miracles (*karāmāt*). Nevertheless, he indicates that both types of divine "aid" are the result of the overflowing of divine light upon the hearts of the prophets and the *awliyāʾ*,[110] thus locating the origin of the epistemological and ontological status of both groups in their direct relationship with the divine.

Ṣadrā argues that true knowledge comes not from books or scholarly transmission, but only from divine inspiration that falls upon a heart spiritually prepared to receive it.[111] Shīʿī tradition, however, maintains that one of the primary sources of the Imāms' knowledge is a unique series of books and written texts in their possession, whereby the special knowledge of the Prophet, or even previous prophets, was conveyed to them. Ṣadrā does not refute this belief directly, but suggests that such references might be meant as metaphors for inward states of knowledge.[112] Commenting on a *ḥadīth* that states that the answers the Imāms give their disciples' come directly from the Messenger of God, Ṣadrā writes:

> Know that the meaning of what [the Imām] said: "I do not give you a response to anything except that it comes from the Messenger of God (s.a.w.a.s.)" is not what the exoterists (*ẓāhiriyyūn*) among the people understand, namely that it is [the Imām's] vocation to memorize sayings from one generation to the next such that their superiority in relation to the rest of the people is the strength of their memorization of transmitted things, or the great number of things they have memorized.

109 Ibid., 290.

110 Ibid., 290–291.

111 See, e.g., Ibid., 322–323.

112 Ibid., 310.

Rather, the intended meaning is that their holy souls are filled with the light of knowledge and the strength of gnosis because of following the Messenger (s.a.w.a.s.) in spiritual striving (*mujāhida*), and spiritual exercises (*riyāḍa*), along with their inherent state of spiritual preparation (*istiʿdād aṣlī*) and clarity (*ṣafāʾ*) and purity (*ṭahāra*) of mind, such that they become like a polished mirror turned in the direction of the truth through the intermediary of another mirror, or without intermediary. Do you not see that the mirror prepared for reflection and the reflection of the other mirror are turned in the direction of the sun and reflect the radiance of the sun to all? Thus the state of one who follows the Messenger (s.a.w.a.s.) with a true following becomes the beloved of the Real, the All-High, and in His words, the All-High: "If you love God, then follow me and God will love you" (3:31). And whomever God loves, He makes divine lights overflow upon him (*afāḍa ʿalayhi*), as He makes them overflow upon His beloved [Muḥammad] (s.a.w.a.s.), although the difference is firmly established between the followed and the follower.

And in general, one should know that the knowledge of the Imāms (a.s.) is not based on *ijtihād*, or on hearing transmitted reports through the senses. Rather their knowledge is unveiled (*kashfiyya*), presential (*laduniyya*), the lights of knowledge and gnosis having overflowed upon their hearts from God, glory be to Him, not through the intermediary of something based on sensible hearing or writing or upon a report, or anything of this sort.

An indication of what we have just explained and its clarification is [found in] the saying of the Commander of the Faithful, [ʿAlī] (a.s.), "The Messenger of God taught me one thousand doors of knowledge, each door opening upon a thousand doors. . .

And the meaning of the Messenger's teaching (s.a.w.a.s.) was the preparation of [ʿAlī's] noble soul, receptive to the lights of guidance, over the course of his companionship [with the Messenger] and constantly being by his side,

> through his teaching him and guiding him as to how to travel on the path to God by taming the animal soul and strengthening it for what it has been commanded, and making it subservient to the divine, intellectual spirit; and [through] his teaching him by allusion the means of taming [it] and spiritual exercises [ʿAlī] (a.s.) was prepared for the extraction of hidden things, and to be informed about the unseen things.[113]

Thus the most important spiritual bequest from the Prophet to ʿAlī was not specific religious teachings that could then be transmitted verbatim to other Imāms and their disciples; rather it was knowledge of the spiritual exercises—similar to those practiced by other mystics in Islam—which prepared the heart to receive the overflow of divine knowledge, and to be a clear mirror for the reflection of divine truth. Rather than "horizontal" knowledge that becomes attenuated as it is transmitted from generation to generation, the Prophet gave ʿAlī the key to the door of "vertical" knowledge, coming straight from its eternal source. The implicit but provocative aspect of Ṣadrā's commentary here is his suggestion that other human souls, perhaps all human souls, have the potential to acquire those same "keys" to vertical knowledge if they, like ʿAlī, engage in the spiritual practices necessary to purify their own hearts and souls.

For those who succeed and thus reach the level of the *awliyāʾ* and the true "People of the House," Ṣadrā indicates that their degree of knowledge approximates, not only that of the Imāms, but even that of the prophets themselves. He writes:

> Thus the People of the House (a.s.) are those firmly rooted in knowledge, and they possess the interpretation of the traditions. The people of the outward husk are distanced from true knowledge of the inner meanings of the Qurʾān, and the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of traditions; since the husk can only know the husk, while the kernel (*lubb*) is only known to the possessors of understanding (*ūlū l-albāb*).[114] They are those whose spirits have

113 Ibid., 319–320.

114 For a similar comparison between the people of the husk and the people of the "kernel" (*ūlū l-albāb*) as it relates to knowledge of the Qurʾān in particular, see *Asfār*, 7:39–40.

> been conveyed from the world of form and sense to the world of spirit and intellect, for they acquire their knowledge from God through the light of [spiritual] states, while others acquire their knowledge from men, whose method is but the collection of words.
>
> Know that the difference between the People of the House (a.s.)—that is, the perfected saints—and other learned men with regard to the inheritance from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.) is that the saint, protected against error (*maʿṣūm min al-khaṭaʾ*), does not acquire that knowledge, which is the inheritance of the prophets and the messengers, until God inherits it from [the prophets] and sends it to [the saint]. And as for other men, learned in written documents, they acquire knowledge transmitted from generation to generation . . . while the relation [to the initial source] becomes increasingly remote. As for the saints (a.s.), they acquire the inheritance of the prophets (s.a.w.a.s.) from God, insofar as it is His inheritance and He gives it freely to them, for they are heirs to the messengers and the transmitters of their traditions, through something like the exalted and preserved authority that does not allow falsehood to enter into it from in front or from behind—a revelation (*tanzīl*) from the Wise, the Praiseworthy.[115]

A number of extraordinary claims are put forth here. Ṣadrā ascribes to this expanded group of "spiritual descendants," whom he here refers to as the "perfected saints" (*awliyāʾ*), immunity from error (*ʿiṣma*) and a form of divine inspiration (*tanzīl*) that is usually said to be the preserve of the prophets and the Imāms. These two distinctions are directly related. Ordinary knowers receive knowledge by way of human transmission from one generation to the next. As the transmission becomes more remote from its initial source, it becomes increasingly attenuated and sometimes corrupted. The "perfected saints," however, acquire prophetic knowledge directly from God—who bequeaths it to the prophets, and takes it back upon their deaths, and then transmits it in pure, unadulterated form directly to the *awliyāʾ*. Ṣadrā refers to this transmission of prophetic

115 *Sharḥ*, 43.

knowledge through the intermediary of divine inheritance and bequest as a kind of *tanzīl*—a remarkable statement, considering the nearly exclusive association of this term with historical prophecy, rather than with some form of inspiration (*ilhām*).

While Ṣadrā keeps the categories of prophet and *walī* nominally distinct, he elsewhere describes the nature of *walāya* in a manner that brings it very close to the status of prophethood. For example, Ṣadrā describes the saintly knowers as "following a clear proof from their Lord" (*ʿalā bayyina min rabbihim*),[116] a phrase used repeatedly by the prophets in the Qurʾān to assert the divine provenance of their missions.[117] In one passage that occurs in Ṣadrā's commentary on a *ḥadīth* found in Kulaynī's chapter, *Kitāb al-ḥujja* [The book of divine proof], he equates *walāya* with the lowest degree of prophethood, which is occupied by a prophet who receives a divine message in his own soul, perhaps through *ilhām*, but is not required to convey that message beyond himself. Here Ṣadrā adds:

> . . . this is the degree of the *awliyāʾ*. . . except that the title, *walī*, was not applied to any of the *awliyāʾ* (a.s.) before the sending of our Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.s.); rather they were called "prophets" (*anbiyāʾ*). For there is no difference between prophethood that does not bring with it a scriptural message (*risāla*) or a divine law (*tashrīʿ*), and *walāya*, except in name rather than meaning. Thus before the sending [of Muḥammad], every *walī* was a prophet (*nabī*) in name.[118]

Ṣadrā is not alone in defining *walāya* in such a way that it approximates the level of prophethood, at least the level of the non-lawgiving prophets before the time of Muḥammad. Ghazālī, for example, suggested that one can attain to the properties of prophethood through the "fruitional experience" that some acquire by following "the way of Sufism."[119] Rūzbihān Baqlī, in his *Unveiling*

116 Ibid., 57.

117 See Qurʾān 6:57, 157; 7:73, 85, 105; 11:28, 63, 88; and also Naṣr b. Muzāhim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut, 1990), 484, where one of ʿAlī's followers describes him in a similar manner.

118 *Sharḥ*, 423.

119 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, trans. R. J. McCarthy (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1980), 85; for the fuller discussion, 84–86.

of Secrets (*Kashf al-asrār*) asserts that God chose him for *walāya*,[120] but also recalls that when he was a young boy, he heard a voice that identified him as a prophet.[121] And Ibn al-ʿArabī claimed to have reached a state of sanctity such that he became receptive to direct divine inspiration, reporting in his massive work, *The Meccan Openings* (*Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*), that all the words that would follow had been "dictated" to him by God.[122]

In fact, Ṣadrā's assimilation of the state of *walāya* with certain kinds of prophethood seems, in places, to have a strong Akbarian flavor. For example, in Ṣadrā's commentary on a *ḥadīth* in Kulaynī's *Kitāb al-ḥujja*, he presents a metaphorical image of the Prophet Muḥammad as the center point of a necklace, with the pre-Islamic prophets who came before him ranged on one side, and the saints (*awliyāʾ*) who come after him ranged on the other. Each saint is positioned opposite a pre-Islamic prophet whom he resembles in some way. Ṣadrā says that ʿAlī, the closest of the *awliyāʾ* to Muḥammad, faces Jesus, who is correspondingly the closest of the prophets to him, and notes that ʿAlī and Jesus resemble each other insofar as their spiritual stations were exaggerated by certain of their followers.[123] The conceptual relationship between the *awliyāʾ* and the prophets suggested in this passage is highly similar to Ibn al-ʿArabī's discussion of saints who take on the spiritual characteristics of various Islamic prophets.[124] Ṣadrā is not the first thinker to try to reconcile Twelver Shīʿī belief with an Akbarian conception of *walāya*; Ḥaydar al-Āmulī is known for doing the same. But by comparison, al-Āmulī's formulation was more firmly wedded to Twelver Shīʿī imāmology. For example, he accommodates the doctrine of the occultation of the Twelfth Imām in this discussion of sainthood by identifying him as

120 Rūzbihān Baqlī, *The Unveiling of Secrets*, trans. C. Ernst (Chapel Hill: Parvardigar Press, 1997), 13.

121 Baqlī, *Unveiling of Secrets*, 10.

122 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. O. Yahia, 14 vols. (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1972), 1:10 and 2:246. See also Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R. W. J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 45–46, where he claims this book was given to him by the Prophet to share with others, making him not prophet in his own right, but an "heir" to the Prophet's knowledge.

123 See *Sharḥ*, 433.

124 See, e.g., Ibn al-ʿArabī's discussion of the affinity between the spiritual natures of certain saints and the various Islamic prophets in *Futūḥāt*, 3:372.

the "seal of sainthood" (*khātam al-awliyā'*), just as Muḥammad was the seal of the prophets.[125] Ṣadrā does not show similar concern for such doctrinal matters. His conception of *walāya* and the spiritual position and characteristics of the *awliyā'*, as he describes them, are more closely aligned with Sufi formulations of the term, and have a lesser, and at times almost nominal, connection to Twelver Shī'ī imāmology.

Like the Sufi thinkers who influenced his thought, Ṣadrā is aware of the hesitation and even repulsion with which ordinary people and "conventional" religious scholars viewed claims of divine inspiration outside the category of prophethood. Such a response would have to be expected, even from a metaphysical point of view—for how can the lower grasp the higher, how can the limited know that which is free of those same limits? As he says above, those who receive their knowledge in this extraordinary way are "those whose spirits have been conveyed from the world of form and sense to the world of spirit and intellect." By virtue of the purification of their souls, they have acquired a form of prophetic knowledge through a divine conduit that has transformed their ontological state. Those who remain at a lower level of being—in the realm of sense and form—deny the existence of what transcends them:

> . . . understanding the stages of *walāya* and prophecy are difficult [for those] at the stage of intellect the majority of people have reached. As it is the nature of common people to deny what they have not grasped, so it is also their nature to deny the state of *walāya* and its wonders, and the state of prophecy and its unique qualities. In fact, it is their nature to deny the next level of being and the life of the hereafter, which is the life of knowledge and of witnessing the angelic realm, because the ontological levels of *walāya* and prophecy are also among the manifestations of authority in the hereafter, and whoever denies the reality of the hereafter inevitably denies these two states. He does not recognize the prophet as a prophet, nor the *walī* as a *walī*.[126]

125 Haydar Āmulī, *Inner Secrets of the Path*, trans. Assadullah al-Dhaakir Yate, with notes by M. Khwājavī (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Zahra Publications, 1989), 121.

126 *Sharḥ*, 60. For a similar argument, see Baqlī, *Unveiling of Secrets*, 7.

For Ṣadrā, who viewed all of reality as a gradated continuum of being, the existence of the state of *walāya* between prophethood and ordinary humanity was a logical necessity. Sharp ontological distinctions made no sense within the logic of this system, and so between the exalted stage of prophecy and the pitiful state of ordinary humanity, there had to be grades of closeness to the light of prophecy itself, and the movement upward through these grades of nearness and perfection was ontologically transformative. Not only should ordinary people not deny or begrudge the *awliyā'* their ontological station, they should seek to reach it themselves through, in part, a humble obedience to these same perfected saints.[127]

Conclusion

Ṣadrā's commentary on Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī* is naturally assumed to be an exercise in reconciling his philosophy of knowledge and being with the transmitted sayings and doctrinal positions of the Twelver Shī'ī community to which he unambiguously belonged. Yet what we find in this commentary is a faithful presentation of the fluid, gradated, and hierarchal epistemology and ontology he expounds in his systematic, philosophical works. There is little evidence that Ṣadrā tailors his views to accord with the *aḥādīth* on which he comments. Knowledge is intimately connected to being, it is the ultimate purpose of all human activity and the vocation of all human life, it is the path to salvation and the very essence of life in the hereafter. It is the light that leads the soul on its journey through higher ontological levels and degrees of spiritual perfection in this world, and that guides it across the *ṣirāṭ* in the next.

This journey is powered by the soul's own effort, but initially requires the guidance of true teachers and knowers, who not only possess higher levels of knowledge, but who also occupy a higher ontological level, although among them there is a hierarchy as well. There are the worldly knowers whose "light" is like that of a lamp, emanating from earthly, not celestial, sources; they provide limited guidance, but are saved by their knowledge if their teaching and learning are sincere. Then there are the true knowers, whose knowledge is taken directly from the prophets and the saints (*awliyā'*), and as such are like the moon, illumined by the light of the sun and transmitting it to those below them. And finally there are the

127 *Sharḥ*, 115.

prophets and the *awliyāʾ* themselves, radiant by their own essence like the sun, with knowledge bequeathed to them directly by God. These categories are not fixed: Every learner, in the right company, with proper intention and effort, may become a true knower. Every true knower has, in principle, the potential to reach the level of the *awliyāʾ*, occupied by the Imāms but not exclusive to them—like the iron rod that moves ever closer to the fire, and eventually becomes like the fire itself. The category of prophethood is exclusive to the prophets, although the status of the *awliyāʾ* approximates it in ways many might find controversial.

The hierarchical nature of Ṣadrā's ontology, its close correlation with degrees of knowledge, and its positing of an intermediate spiritual level between the Prophet and the ordinary believer are all consistent with the Shīʿī religious perspective. But the lack of fixed ontological categories below the level of the Prophet, and Ṣadrā's concomitant broadening of the category of the *awliyāʾ* beyond the Imāms—even if he maintains a certain privilege for them within this category—challenged more traditional conceptions of the Imāms' uniqueness. Moreover, Ṣadrā's inclusive definition of the category of *awliyāʾ* puts the Imāms in the company, not of the exoteric Shīʿī religious scholars who claimed to be heirs to the knowledge and authority of the Imāms, but of the saints and gnostics who in Ṣadrā's description look far more like Sufi mystics than Shīʿī devotees. The challenge to exoteric Shīʿī tradition that this represents is largely smoothed over throughout the commentary by Ṣadrā's use of multivalent terms—*walī, ʿālim, ʿārif,* even *imām*—and the continual grounding of his spiritual hierarchy in the terminology of the Qurʾān—*ūlū l-albāb, rāsikhūna fī l-ʿilm*—terms used by Shīʿīs and Sufis alike as Qurʾānic proof texts for their own conceptions of spiritual hierarchy. But his view of the highest form of knowledge (the knowledge of unveiling), and of the penultimate rung on the human ontological ladder (*walāya*), are recognizably Sufi rather than Shīʿī in orientation. Given his reported and repeated demonstrations of reverence for the Imāms, Ṣadrā's commentary is not likely meant to undermine their position, but rather to demonstrate the way in which the teachings of the Imāms, if read correctly, open onto an esoteric dimension missed by the majority of his scholarly contemporaries.

Mullā Ṣadrā's Ontology Revisited

David B. Burrell

Convening in Tehran in 1999, the Mullā Ṣadrā Institute drew numerous participants who had never before heard of this philosopher. Indeed, I had known little more than the name until I read Henry Corbin's edition of a summary work—*Les penetrations metaphysiques*—and was fascinated to find many affinities with the work of Thomas Aquinas, notably in his exposition of existence.[1] The gathering itself inspired me to translate the passage on existence from Mullā Ṣadrā's magnum opus, *al-Ḥikma al-muta'āliya fi l-asfār al-'aqilyya al-arba'a* [The transcendent wisdom on the four journeys of the intellect].[2] The experience of translating encourages me to present Mullā Ṣadrā by extending the standard narrative of Islamic philosophy to make way for both Sunnī and Shī'ī successors to Ibn Rushd, while making al-Ghazālī—the scapegoat of the standard narrative—into the axial figure in this recasting of the history of Islamic philosophy.

The new narrative will need a plot, which sustained efforts on the part of thinkers in each of the Abrahamic faiths readily supply: the struggle to articulate the relation between the created universe and its singular source.[3] Moreover, what makes the relation quite ineffable is the unique "distinction" of creator from creation; a distinction that proves axial to each faith-tradition's averring that creating is the free act of one God.[4] So it is not surprising that it

1 David Burrell, "Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and Mulla Sadra Shirazi (980/1572–1050/1640) and the Primacy of *esse/wujūd* in Philosophical Theology," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 207–219. Mulla Sadra on 'Substantial Motion': A Clarification and a Comparison with Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 2, no. 4 (2009): 369–386.

2 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikma al-muta'āliya fi l-asfār al-'aqilyya al-arba'a*) 9 vols., ed. Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar, et al. (Beirut, 1981).

3 David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

4 Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994); and David Burrell, "The Christian Distinction Celebrated and Expanded," in *The Truthful and the Good*, ed. John Drummond and James Hart, 191–206 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996).

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 45–66.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

is philosophical theology that shapes the now extended narrative, moving us beyond the ways in which al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā employed the model of logical deduction to present creating as a timeless and even necessary emanation from the One. For while emanation is a metaphor that can move in diverse directions, as it clearly does in Plotinus, the deductive model inhibited a clear elucidation of "the distinction," since the initial premise of a logical deduction differs from its consequences only by its pre-eminent position. Even Ibn Rushd, who had little patience with al-Ghazālī's critique of "the philosophers" in Islam, had even less hope that Ibn Sīnā's scheme, adapted from al-Fārābī, could elucidate the act of creating. Yet his own attempt to clarify that, while subtly intimating Islamic tradition and Qur'ānic precedent in its focus on "practical reason," set the stage for further development more than it resolved the outstanding issues. This development would follow Islamic thinkers from Andalusia back to the heartland of the Levant, in the persons of Suhrawardī (1154–1191), Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), and Ṣadrā al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī [Mullā Ṣadrā] (1572–1640). All of these thinkers are explicitly beholden to Ibn Sīnā, yet each endeavors to adapt his philosophical mode of inquiry to articulate the relation between creation and the creator. So their agenda, singly and cumulatively, brings explicitly theological issues to the fore; however each of them is still taken up with philosophical concerns ancillary to that central task: Suhrawardī with epistemology, Ibn ʿArabī in searching for ways to articulate so unique a relation, and Mullā Ṣadrā with bringing a bevy of philosophical issues under the ambit of *existing* as resulting from the One who is existing.

As the last of this trio, Mullā Ṣadrā is hardly intelligible without his two predecessors in the Levant, so these efforts to identify his specific position and contribution demand that we present their achievements in the process of elucidating his. Yet economy demands that Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī be included by way of background briefing, as we present specific issues in Mullā Ṣadrā's thought. Superb explications of Suhrawardī are readily accessible in the work of John

Walbridge[5] and Hossein Ziai,[6] together with their joint translation of Suhrawardī's central *Philosophy of Illumination*,[7] and of Ibn ʿArabī in William Chittick's two works: *Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* and *Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-Arabi's Cosmology*.[8]

I offer excerpts from our translation from Mullā Ṣadrā's *Asfār* to convey the flavor of his mode of inquiry, utilizing as well the work of Christian Jambet,[9] illuminating articles by Hamid Dabashi,[10] Hossein Ziai,[11] and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.[12] A lasting gratitude is due to Henry Corbin, whose pioneering work opened this field to so many, most of whom will also endeavor to reflect the particular orientation he celebrated in Ishrāqī ["oriental"] thought. It should be clear by now that this later extension of Islamic philosophy enjoys far less publicity than the earlier Peripatetic phase; yet, unless it is brought into focus, to show how it both develops and alters earlier themes, any presentation of Islamic philosophy will unwittingly falsify the picture. It has surely been the case, however, that short of a distinctly "postmodern" sensibility, philosophers have found their inquiries bordering on the esoteric, and are thus hardly fit for sober

5 John Walbridge, *Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); *Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

6 Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination: A Study of Suhrawardī's "Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq"* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990).

7 Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1999).

8 William Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) and *Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

9 Christian Jambet, *L'acte d'etre: la philosophie de la revelation chez Molla Sadra* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

10 Hamid Dabashi, "Mir Damad and the founding of the 'School of Isfahan,'" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Leaman and Nasr, 1:597–633 (New York: Routledge, 1996).

11 Hossein Ziai, "Mulla Sadra: His Life and Works," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Leaman and Nasr, 1:635–642.

12 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Mulla Sadra: His Teachings," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Leaman and Nasr, 1:643–662.

philosophical elucidation. Indeed, Corbin's presentation had the effect of intensifying those fears, so the guides whom I have indicated are intent on offering an alternative view of their work, as am I. Yet the fact remains that any attempt to elucidate the ineffable relation between creator and creatures, which is the central task of these thinkers, challenges categories exclusively tailored to created things.

The Primacy of *Existing* over *Essence*

Mullā Ṣadrā is best known for taking issue with Suhrawardī, and insisting that *existing* take precedence over *essence* in explicating the metaphysical composition of creatures, as well as their mode of emanating from the Creator. But the very distinction between *existing* and *essence*, as well as the role it played in offering a way of identifying creatures as created, anchors our narrative in Ibn Sīnā, and shows the inherent continuity in a philosophical saga whose second phase often appears to be very different from the first. Yet both, as we shall see, were shaped by Ibn Sīnā. The overall context is Mediterranean, and lest this sound banal, we need only remind ourselves that the bulk of western reflection on medieval philosophy was crafted in western and northern Europe. So the standard accounts we have received spoke little of the philosophy (or the philosophers) in the Muslim or Jewish traditions, yet we have found that they were, where possible, in contact with one another, and beholden to one another.[13] Yet all three traditions had to contend with Plotinus' radical adaptation of Aristotle to focus on the origination of the universe, retrospectively seen as paradigmatically "neo-Platonist." For it had come to occupy the philosophical center stage, so that later thinkers who sought to incorporate a revealed creator into the Aristotelian worldview would spontaneously begin with a Plotinian scheme, with which some found it necessary to contest. This is especially clear in al-Fārābī, who adopts the emanation pattern quite directly to signal the relation between "the First" and all that emanates from It; that is, everything else.[14] Ibn Sīnā modifies the scheme inherited from al-Fārābī (and so from Plotinus), and introduces his initial version of the essence/existing distinction to clarify how al-Fārābī's "First," now Ibn Sīnā's "necessary being,"

13 John Inglis, ed., *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

14 Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

relates to everything else: being possible in itself, when it exists, becomes 'necessary' by the existence it derives from the One, who is distinguished from all else as necessary being. It will prove crucial to the later development of the *essence/existing* distinction that this One, ancestrally related to Plotinus' One (explicitly "beyond being") is now denominated "necessary being." The Jewish interlocutor in this discussion, Moses Maimonides, was well-instructed by Ibn Sīnā, yet took issue with his apparently seamless adaptation of the Farabian/Plotinian scheme to display the free creation of the universe by the one God, now revealed in the Torah. In so reacting, he may well have been emboldened by al-Ghazālī's trenchant critique of Ibn Sīnā's apparently necessitarian picture of creation, for Maimonides' cultural context was thoroughly Islamic.[15]

The opening lines of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's cosmological/political treatise, *Mabādiʾ arāʾ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* [On the perfect state] offer the following straightforward assertion of the original distinction, with clear intimations of the metaphysical one:

> The First Existent is the First Cause of the existence of all the other existents. It is free of every kind of deficiency, whereas there must be in everything else some kind of deficiency... but the First is free of all their deficiencies. Thus its existence is the most excellent and preceded every other existence. No existence can be more excellent than or prior to its existence. Thus it has the highest kind of excellent existence and the most elevated rank of perfect existence. Therefore its existence and substance cannot be adulterated by non-existence at all. It can in no way have existence potentially, and there is no possibility whatever that it should not exist.[16]

He continues with a host of nearly equivalent statements, capped by: "it is the existent for whose existence there can be no cause, . . . and it is impossible for anything else to have the existence it has." Note that he has not taken the boldest step of all: to identify the First in what it is (its essence) with existing, for he still speaks of the First as "having" existence. But he has taken us to the brink, by

15 David Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

16 Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 57.

emphasizing how utterly different is the "First Cause" from all that emanates from it; that is, from all else. Ibn Sīnā, with Maimonides in his wake, makes that further precision.

Ibn Sīnā takes the next step of integrating the original (creator/creature) distinction into the very metaphysical "composition" of every created thing, thereby offering a signal innovation to Aristotle's metaphysics of substance. This may indeed reflect his awareness of the *aporia* that Edward Booth has identified as central to the Aristotelian tradition: that between the essence of a thing and the individual thing itself.[17] Aristotle had, of course, taken pains to identify the individual existing thing with its essence, precisely to avoid Plato's notorious "third man" argument; much as he had insisted that the paradigm for substance is the individual existing (even better, living) thing. Yet when it came to his exposition of *substance* in book Lambda (VII) of the *Metaphysics*, the best he could do in explicating *substance* was to identify it with *form*.[18] So in the end, if you will, Plato won, despite Aristotle's opening polemic (in the same book) against Plato's apparent insouciance for individual things. This *aporia* recurred throughout the commentary tradition, which largely attempted to suppress it rather than address it; much as it will emerge in the course of an introductory class. Nor did Ibn Sīnā himself succeed in neutralizing it, though the distinction he proposed helped others to resolve it. Like Aristotle, in other words, he has the essence in mind, but unlike Aristotle, he needs to offer an explicit account for its existing only in individuals. That is, of course, Aristotle's anti-Platonic assertion, but he was unable to explain how it works; while Ibn Sīnā saw clearly that Aristotle's paradigmatic individual existence cannot be accounted for by the essence itself. So, in what we might dub a neo-Platonic manner, Ibn Sīnā identified essences with possible beings, and asserted that, "as regards the possible existent, . . . it necessarily needs some other thing to render its existing in actuality."[19]

17 Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporectic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Writers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

18 Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1031a10.

19 Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of Healing*, trans. Michael Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 38; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilahiyyat*, ed. G. C. Anawati and S. Zaydi (Cairo: al-Maʿārif, 1978), 47, ll. 10–11.

As if to show how the distinction for which he is reaching reflects the original distinction of creator from creatures, Ibn Sīnā draws the contrast in philosophical language. There is one alone whose existence is necessary, and that One, "the first, has no essence [*māhiyya*] except in its existence [*anniyya*]." So necessary being has no essence [*māhiyya*] except that it be necessary being, and this is its existence [*anniyya*].[20] By proposing another term for the essence of necessary being, *dhāt*, Ibn Sīnā intended to remove consideration of its *whatness* from that attending creatures, whose quiddities [the Latin answer to the question 'quid est?, or 'what is it?', as *māhiyya* functions in Arabic] will ideally be articulated in the normal form of genus/species (e.g., 'speaking animal'). Contrary to the essence of the one necessary being, however, Ibn Sīnā's insistence that all other essences require something else to bring them into existence introduces a new mode of composition into all creatures, beyond that of matter and form, which he presumes throughout: one of essence [*māhiyya*] with some other factor that causes the individual thing to be. That factor is never identified by Ibn Sīnā; the elusive term *anniyya* expresses the "real existence of a particular individual" rather than identifying what it is that makes the individual exist. Yet by distinguishing what something is from that which makes it be, he seeks to introduce a notion of essence without any qualification: "mere essence," best parsed as what the normal formula (e.g., 'speaking animal') signifies. Neither universal nor particular, essence is taken simply as what can be predicated of individuals, in which it alone exists, thereby formulating what Aristotle was reaching for. (C. S. Peirce shows how the modern proclivity to identify essences with universals misses the point of the relation peculiar to predication; for in saying that Socrates is a man, we are not saying something universal about him, but simply stating what he—in all his individuality—is.)

So far, so good; a brilliant stab at the kind of reformulation of Aristotle required to accommodate the grounding fact that all such substances are created. Yet some infelicities remain. One respects identifying such essences with *possibility*, and doing so in such a way that "they" *receive* existence, which he would name (in Arabic) as an "accident," or something which "happens" to essence. Ibn

20 Ibid., 344, l. 10; 346, l. 11.

Rushd fastens onto this error, which any student of philosophy can quickly identify: if *existing* is an *accident*, there would have had to *be* something in which it could inhere. But "simple essences" cannot be said to be, nor is it possible for there to *be* anything to receive *existence*. Later commentators on Ibn Sīnā will neutralize the *aporiae* stemming from a simple-minded identification of *existing* with an ordinary *accident*, but the dilemma imbedded in the language of "receiving existence" will perdure.[21] The identification of "simple essences" with *possibility*, and especially with "possibilities," extends to discussions in our day, so Ibn Sīnā cannot be said to have the last word, either on the subject itself, of relating created to uncreated and creating being, or on the distinction intended to suggest that relation without pretending adequately to display it.

Ibn Sīnā's distinction set the stage not only for comparing *essence* with *existing*, but also for employing the distinction itself to find something of their source mirrored in creatures. Yet since the essence of a thing corresponds quite simply to *what* it is, and revelation tells us that things are created according to their kinds, essences structure the created universe without bespeaking its dynamic. So the obvious candidate for articulating the founding relation of creation would seem to be *existing*. Yet when it came to articulating that relation, Suhrawardī contented himself with the classic metaphor of *light* to model the issuing forth of creatures from the creator.[22] Moreover, in this respect, Mullā Ṣadrā parted company with his distinguished master, Mīr Dāmād, who may be considered the founder of the illustrious "school of Isfahan" in which Mullā Ṣadrā can be located.[23] Hamid Dabashi offers this translation of Mīr Dāmād's way of arguing for the primacy of *essence* over *existing*:

> The essence of a thing, in whatever shape or format it might be, is the occurrence of that very thing in that vessel; not the attachment or appendage of something

21 Fazlur Rahman, "Essence and Existence in Avicenna," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 4, ed. Richard Hunt, et al. (London: Warburg Institute, 1958); Alexander Altmann, "Essence and Existence in Maimonides," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, 108–127 (London: Routlege and Kegan Paul, 1969).

22 Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination*.

23 Dabashi, "Mir Damad."

> to it. . . . Yet the bringing into being of a thing in itself is the bringing-into-being of that thing in that thing.[24]

Taken by themselves, these words do little more than re-state philosophers' general predilection for essences as grounding "scientific" inquiry into things by their kinds. Little or nothing is said about the "bringing-into-being" of things. So we might be prepared for Mullā Ṣadrā's passionate recounting of his "conversion" from this default position:

> In the earlier days I used to be a passionate defender of the theist [belief that] the quiddities are extramentally real while existence is but a mental construct, until my Lord gave me guidance and let me see His own demonstrations. All of a sudden my spiritual eyes were opened and I saw with utmost clarity that the truth was just the contrary of what philosophers in general had held. Praise be to God who, by the light of intuition, led me out of the darkness of the groundless idea and firmly established me upon the thesis which would never change in the present world and the hereafter. As a result [I now hold that] the individual existences of things are primary realities, while the quiddities are the "permanent archetypes that have smelt even the fragrance of existence." The individual existences are nothing but beams of light radiated by the true Light which is the absolutely self-subsistent existence. The absolute existence in each of its individualized forms is characterized by a number of essential properties and intelligible qualities. And each of these properties and qualities is what is usually known as quiddity.[25]

As we shall see, Mullā Ṣadrā's account depends directly on Suhrawardī's master metaphor of light to depict the relation between self-subsistent *existence* and *existents*, yet identifies the active principle with *existence* itself. So it seems accurate to say that his move to assert the primacy of *existing* offers an attempt to articulate the relation between existing things and their source. We shall also have

24 Ibid., 616.

25 Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-qabasat*, ed. Mehdi Mohagheh, et al., trans. Toshihiko Izutsu (Tehran, 1977), 13–14.

to explore the way he identifies *essences* with "permanent archetypes that have smelt even the fragrance of existence," in an effort to ascertain what such "things" might be. So let us examine his sober prose rendition of this spectacular "conversion," by attending to the introductory remarks of his magnum opus, the *Asfār*, as they locate this inquiry in a wisdom tradition that sees our life and inquiry as a journey with significant stages.

> The First Journey: from creation to the One who [alone] is real and true [*al-Ḥaqq*], by way of investigating the nature of existence [*wujūd*] and its essential attributes, in distinct stages. The First Stage: the knowledge which human beings require for this task, from among all the [modes of] knowing, with an introduction and six stations.
>
> *Introduction.* Concerning our knowledge of philosophy with its primary divisions, its goals and its dignity.
>
> Know that philosophy is able to perfect the human soul by bringing it to know the reality of existents according to their proper essences, as well as accurately assessing their existence by way of proofs grasped by the mind; or else accepted by tradition, as befits the majority of human beings. Now if you wanted, you could say that the order of the universe is intelligibly ordered according to human capacity, which can attain to a certain qualified resemblance [*tashbih*] of the Creator most High, since human beings came to be as something kneaded from dough—that is, [by way of] intelligible form together with created sensible matter—"We created man from clay, from earthy substance duly fashioned" (15:26). Yet there is also a dimension of the soul which remains independent and separate, capable of being attracted to wisdom, as is the case with the party of the zealous and whoever is endowed with power to continue inquiry into things free of matter, and such intellectual endeavors.
>
> For inquiry with these aspirations [has the effect of] drawing out the soul, along the lines of the form of existence, to [perceive] its order, its expression and its perfection, after which it can become knowing and

> rational and conformed to knowledge of things seen not in matter but in their forms, thereby adorning, [21] shaping and embellishing the soul. Indeed, this sort of wisdom is that to which the chief Messenger—praise and blessing to him—aspires as he asks in his invocation to his Lord, saying: "Lord, show us things as they really are." And also to the friend of God [Abraham]—may he be praised and blessed, when he asked: "Lord, grant me wisdom" (4:83). Now the wisdom in question must be right judgment regarding existence, attending to what may be needed to conceive things properly.

So it is clear that such an inquiry will entail a spiritual journey, as intimated in the very title of the work itself, and clarified in these introductory remarks. As we shall see, each thing is linked with its creator by its very existence, so the link itself will share in the inexpressibility of God. In this way, a philosophical inquiry into *existence* cannot be a merely conceptual (or "abstract") endeavor. It is fascinating to note how carefully Mullā Ṣadrā proceeds, altering ways of inquiry already standard to "philosophers," notably Ibn Sīnā, to meet his stringent demands for articulating *existence* as the link of creatures to their creator.

> So it seems that the best way one can proceed here is by an interior path, since there can be no definition of existence, and so no demonstration regarding it. For definition and demonstration can only proceed when the definitions concern those things between which we can distinguish [by weighing them] on proper scales. But what if one must believe what one cannot perceive, without perceiving anything else preceding it? So, for example, when we wish to know whether intelligence exists, we must first have arrived at yet other beliefs, yet will certainly come in the end to a belief without any other belief preceding it [27], indeed one necessarily [imbedded] in the soul, offering a primary elucidation from the intelligence itself—like saying that something is a thing.[26] For a thing has nothing contrary to it; while

26 Avicenna on being as the first notion in the intellect: "We say: ideas of 'the existent', 'the thing', and 'the necessary' are impressed in the soul in a primary

> two contraries cannot come together, nor can one be elevated above the other in position or according to position, for were one to reason that way, one would be entering the realm of conceptions.[27] Yet here there is no need to begin conceiving prior conceptions, as one must in any [sequence of] conceptions, for [any such sequence] will certainly be able to be traced back to an initial conception—like necessity, possibility or existence—not dependent upon a preceding conception. Now these conceptions, and those similar to them, provide trustworthy meanings at the very center of the intellect, inscribed in [our] intelligence by the inscription of the first intelligence [*fiṭr*]. So when one intends to clarify these meanings by way of *kalām*, that can act as a stimulus to the mind, [turning them into] objects of attention by focusing on them as significant signs among the other items at the center of the intelligence. Indeed, these [conceptions] are better known than others, since they do not come to the mind from things.

So *existence* will partake of the primary notions available quite naturally to intellect, yet there will be further peculiarities with this "notion" which must be more than a *notion*, since what it expresses cannot properly be expressed in a predicate form. For that reason Ibn Sīnā's strategy of articulating *existence* as something which "comes to" [*arada*, *accidit*] the essence will not do, for existing must be more interior to existing things than a feature of them could ever be. One way to see this is to remark on the inherently ambiguous character of the term 'exists' as we apply it. And closely linked to that, we shall notice his recourse to *participation*. He begins chapter 2 by announcing its subject.

> [1.35] On understanding [that] participated existence [is] predicated according to the ways in which what [participates in it] comes under it: gradated predicates rather than conventional predicates.

---

way. This impression does not require better known things to bring it about" (*Metaphysics*, trans. Marmura, 22; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, 5.

27 Mullā Ṣadrā is following Aristotle, who insisted that substance has no contrary, though predicates will always have them.

> Given that essences participate in existence in such a way that existence brings them nearer to the first beings, it is also the case that intelligence mediates between one existent and another by way of relation and similarity, while nothing can mediate between an existent and nothingness. For if existents were unable to participate in a [single] understanding, so that they would differ in all respects, their situation would be like that of existence with respect to nothingness: no relation at all between them. . . . But we have here before us an infinity of things that can be understood, though one can only consider each one of them singly, asking whether it participates [36] in existence or not; unless it were [clear that] its existence is participated, so one would not need to inquire into it. . . . Regarding existence being attributed to what is below it in gradated ways—that is, regarding their being unities or one or eternal or perduring—existence in some existing things is determined by their essence, while in others it issues from them by way of nature, while in still others it will be perfected and powerful. Now the existence which has no cause has primacy over what takes its existence from another, and so is naturally prior to all existing natural things. Similarly the existence of each one of the active intelligences is prior to that of subsequent ones, as the existence of substance is prior to the existence of accidents.

The Aristotelian way of speaking of "systematically ambiguous" discourse, which Aquinas will ennoble as "analogous," proceeds "according to *prior* and *posterior*."[28] Mullā Ṣadrā explores this route to help us see how terms used equivocally may lead to unambiguous understanding.

> [37] Indeed, without considering existence, there can be no priority or posteriority, since being prior or posterior, perfect or deficient, strong or weak, are found in existents,

28 G. E. L. Owen, "Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle," in *Aristotle and Plato in mid-Fourth Century*, ed. I. Düring and Owen (Goteborg, 1960).

> which properly give rise to them without [needing] any other thing. For with regard to things and essences taken in themselves, their existences do not properly belong to them, as you saw again quite clearly in this chapter, following the investigation of such ambiguities in this book, where it has already been clarified how existence—in so far as it can be understood—is something common to be predicted of existing things according to differences and not merely conventionally.

Yet the most telling ambiguity in the term "existence" stems from its ordinary use to identify individuals, by contrast with its more "philosophical" use as "common existence," an ambiguity already present in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Mullā Ṣadrā takes great pains to separate these two meanings in chapter 3: "That common existence, [known] spontaneously, is equivalent to intellectual existence, and so differs from what subsists or is individual."

> So we [must] say: this distinction between things and existence is not part of our comprehension of existing things, but involves attempting to grasp them together in general terms, which is like melding two discourses. For the being of an existent may or may not involve things other than existence, but its existence will shine forth in the measure that what is fitting to it emerges from the properties of a thing rather than from an attempt to comprehend existence itself. What Ibn Sīnā says in his [book on] metaphysics (*al-Shifāʾ*) clarifies this: "necessary existence is already understood by the very [expression] 'necessary existence,' just as unity is already understood by the very [expression] 'one'" (*al-Shifāʾ* 1.6). Now one can understand by this either that the essence of necessary existence is like that of humanity, or that it is an essence quite different from other essences like humanity; it simply is what it is: necessary existence. Recall what we understood about unity: whatever anything is—something or its very self or humanity, it remains one. So let it be said: we must distinguish *unity* or *existent* as essences attributed to

> something, from *unity* and *existent* in so far as a thing is one and existent.

This last animadversion should remind us of Plotinus' insistence that we cannot even say that the One is one! So *existing*, as what links the One with the many, will share in that same ineffability. Yet now, it appears, Mullā Ṣadrā is ready to say what can be said.

> Moreover, the following corollaries must be noted as well: should I be asked whether existence is existent or not, the answer should be that it is existent in the sense that the true reality of existence is existent: that is, existence is what existentializes. This can be confirmed by what is found in renowned commentaries, namely that understanding a thing need not involve an understanding of speech, for example, unless there be an accident shared within the field. Yet were one to consider the derived expression to be adequate to the thing [itself], matter would be transformed into a proper potency. [42] Hence that thing to which laughter belongs is human, which necessarily affirms the thing as what it is; for to speak of the thing in interpreting what follows upon [such considerations] can show clearly why the mind which speaks of it returns to it, which seems to be the way some recent thinkers consider the union of accidents with accidentality, but that cannot be verified. [43] Yet those allusions regarding the soul and the separate substances above it as unadulterated individuals and pure existences, presented by the divine shaykh [Ibn ʿArabī], might lead in that direction. But I cannot understand how he could be thought to have denied that existence is something happening to individuals, or if so, whether the contradiction is only verbal.

In other words, Ibn ʿArabī cannot elide the central insight of Ibn Sīnā regarding the crucial distinction of creator from creatures, as between that which exists "by right," and that to which existing is granted. Mullā Ṣadrā attempts to express this *existing* yet more intimately:

So we [must] say: if existence were not an individual true reality [*ḥaqīqa*], distinct from the properties [a thing has], how could essences differing in themselves ever be described? Or different levels [of things]? Yet they are described in this way. Now necessary existence has no need of a cause to be what it is, while the existence of possible [beings] differs from it essentially. Nor can there be any doubt of the difference, by way of negation or privation, between need and lack of need regarding the necessity of essences or levels of essence. Therefore there can be no doubt that there is in every existent something beyond its properties: namely, understanding it to exist. Otherwise, how could existences differ essentially, as even those who go astray suggest; or [how could there be] different levels [of being], as yet other sects have noticed? Yet sheer generality, by analogy with properties, yields species without any differences. . . . To realize this, [know that] existence itself establishes the essence, for a thing is not established in its essence unless there be a way of proposing the essence be established. . . .

As the master [Ibn Sīnā] said in his inquiries: . . . existence which has emanated from another has its being dependent on that other, and subsists in it as though bestowed from another which subsists according to an existence necessary in itself (*al-Shifāʾ* 1.6). Now the subsistence proper to a thing cannot be separated from it since it is proper to it. And he says in another place concerning this: either existence requires another and so is in need of another to subsist, or it is so well endowed with it that its subsistence is proper to it. So it would not be true [in general] that existence exists requiring another and depend on it as though it were not true that existence [also] exists well-endowed and independent, without subsisting from another but rather as an unlimited true reality. I say that a sensible intelligent person, exercising the power of intuition, understands from this discussion why we [47] resist proposing a demonstration of these matters, notably with respect to that time in which all

> possible existents and ordered individuals depend on necessary existence for their consideration and their nature, along with the diffusion and blockage of light which does not subsist independently with respect to its very essence [*huwiyya*]. Now it is not possible to perceive [a thing's] proper individual essence separate [from this dependence, any more than we can perceive] individual existents independently, since what is natural is also dependent upon another. . .
>
> Differing from a true reality [*essence*] in that it is pure individual realization and the bearer of individuality, [*existence* is what] individuates without needing any property to identify it. On the contrary, by its union with every essence it affords distinction and realization to the essence, bringing it out of obscurity, ambiguity, and concealment. For true existence appears *per se* in all its ways of appearing, so appearing [69] in everything else that essence appears to, with, in, and from existence. . . [71] It is as though one were to think of the degrees of existences as glowing with the light [proper to] necessary true realities, manifesting the true divine existence as it is manifested in the form of individuals, colored with the colors of possible essences, yet blocked by their created forms from [manifesting] the identity of the divine necessity.

While there can be no demonstration of these matters, primarily since *existing* defies definition, we are nonetheless led to realize that we cannot understand created things properly without a sustained attempt to grasp the internal link they have with the creator in their very existing. Yet while this mode of inquiry exceeds the bounds of philosophical inquiry as normally practiced by Islamic philosophers like Ibn Sīnā, it is arguable that they too realized that an authentically philosophical search must move into these more esoteric arenas.[29] Yet Mullā Ṣadrā's inspiration is clearly Ibn ʿArabī. It is that connection which needs to be more thoroughly explored.

29 David Burrell, "Avicenna," in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, 196–208 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

Ibn ʿArabī: "rationalizing mystic"

If Suhrawardī provides the indispensable background for Mullā Ṣadrā, Ibn ʿArabī offers the bridge from Suhrawardī to Mullā Ṣadrā, by way of intensifying the "therapeutic" role of philosophy signaled to us by Pierre Hadot, in essays Arnold Davidson introduces with a phrase from Wittgenstein: "philosophy as a way of life."[30] Sajjad Rizvi adopts the descriptor "rationalizing mystic" from Philip Merlan's way of depicting "later Neoplatonists, [to convey] absolute transparency between the knower, the known, and knowledge itself" in such a cognitive relation to the creator God. Indeed, what specifies this cognitive manner of relating to the creator, as articulated in "illuminationist [*ishrāqī*] philosophy, is its integration of spiritual practice into the pursuit of wisdom."[31] What is sought here is a way of articulating the relation itself between creator and creatures, parallel to that between *existence* and *existents*, a relation which one knows to be unique, unassimilable to relations between existents. Here the celebrated "distinction," articulated (albeit differently) in Ibn Sīnā and in Aquinas, is intensified by insisting that the One alone *exists*. Ibn ʿArabī uses Qurʾānic language to intimate the manner of bestowing a share of that existence on existents: *He originates and brings back* (85:13). While this verse had been understood to refer to "God's bringing people back at the resurrection," Ibn ʿArabī offers a more metaphysical reading linked to the conserving dimension of creating:

> There is no existent thing to which the Real gives existence without finishing with giving it existence. Then that existent thing considers God and sees that He has come back to giving existence to another entity. So it continues perpetually and endlessly.[32]

God's creating takes the form of command, the "engendering command" God said: *'be' and it came to be* (16:40). Though the Qurʾān is largely concerned with God's "prescriptive commands," the "*Be* that

30 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Arnold Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

31 Sajjad Rizvi, "Mysticism and Philosophy," in *Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 227.

32 Chittick, *Self-Disclosure of God*, 65, 66.

brings creation into existence moment by moment is . . . the more basic."[33] Ibn ʿArabī's contribution to this essentially Qurʾānic view of God's creating lies in his identifying the ensuing relation with a Qurʾānic term adapted to this use: *barzakh*. "It stands between Unbounded *wujūd* [existence] and absolute nonexistence" in this way:

> When the cosmos becomes articulated as the words of the All-Merciful, it reflects three fundamental realities from which it emerges—*wujūd* [existence], the Highest Barzakh, and nonexistence. . . . Just as the Highest Barzakh brings together *wujūd* and nonexistence, so also the cosmic *barzakh* brings together spirits and bodies. Through its very essence, a *barzakh* possesses the properties of the two sides.[34]

In other words, we are focusing on the ineffable relation between creator and creatures, to which Ibn ʿArabī finds an epistemological parallel in the imagination, posed as it is between intellect and sense, spirit and bodies. Yet the key to this partitioning is the unique relation to the creator.

Salman Bashier has delineated the key function of the *barzakh* as attempting to elucidate the relation between creator and creatures as the space of union-in-difference which characterizes such a form of knowing.[35] Identified Qurʾānically as the *barzakh*, or the isthmus between heaven and earth, it represents the limit of human understanding which also serves to relate it to its source. As such, it is the "third entity," represented epistemologically as "the perfect man." This intermediate place is identified by Ibn ʿArabī with the "imaginal world," referring to the way in which "the cosmos is real, but its reality consists in the fact that it is/is not the real [*Ḥaqq*]."[36] Citing Chittick, we are reminded how,

> according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Realizers' [who have the knowledge of the Saint: *ʿārifūn*] answer to every question

33 Ibid., 251.

34 Ibid., 259.

35 Salman Bashier, *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Barzakh: Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 68.

36 Ibid.

> concerning God and the world is "Yes and no," or, "He/not He" (*huwa lā huwa*). This is "because the cosmos is imagination, and imagination is that which stands in an intermediary situation between affirmation and denial. About it one says 'both this and that' or 'neither this nor that.' The universe is neither Being nor nothingness, or both Being and nothingness.'"[37]

How else can a believer refer to created things, except to allude to their emanating from a creator as the continuing source of their being? Yet since what links them, *being*, cannot be a feature of things, we have no direct way of expressing the relating of creatures to their creator beyond (as Aquinas expresses it) to insist that their being must be a "being-to-the-creator."

Yet such a situation cannot but be paradoxical, since authentic knowledge of the source of being must be of One beyond our comprehension: "the possessors of knowledge see that their reason delimits everything that it knows, while the divine Essence remains beyond delimitation. Thus they come to know that the only knowledge about God that reflection can provide to reason is the knowledge of what God *is not*."[38] This carefully constructed sentence deserves attention: knowledge, for reason, can only be "knowledge *about*" something, whereas the knowledge that seekers seek is "knowledge of" the One, which can only be parsed by reason as "knowledge of *what* God *is not*." Bashier cites Nicholas of Cusa at this point, for whom "the Essence of God can never be found, since it is beyond all limits,"[39] yet Ibn ʿArabī highlights this limit-situation by inviting a dialectical exchange between those in his tradition who declare God incomparable [*tanzih*] and those who declare God comparable [*tashbih*]: "this attitude holds that each of the contradictory views regarding the knowledge of the Real can be correct from a different perspective, despite the fact that the two views are exclusive to each other. The attitude of complementarity comes very close to the true knowledge of the Real." Another way of putting this is to parse Ibn ʿArabī as "saying that there *is* something that ties the real to creation, but that this something *is not* something added to

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 136.

39 Ibid., 137.

the real and creation. He is actually stating that there is something and that this something is nothing; . . . the closest definition of the limit situation."[40] So readers are taxed to follow this philosopher into regions which lie beyond the articulation to which philosophers have become accustomed, a space epitomized by Ibn Rushd. Yet what impels philosophy beyond itself is the call to articulate the faith assertion of free creation. This exercise in philosophical theology itself displays the contours of that hybrid inquiry.

However difficult it may be for contemporary philosophers to follow such a hybrid inquiry, especially those who cannot avail themselves of a faith tradition of free creation, all could nevertheless be assisted by Chittick and Bashier to move beyond the stereotype of Ibn ʿArabī as a "monist"—that is, one who elides "the distinction" of creatures from creator. For the precise function of the *barzakh* is to highlight the relation *between* creator and creatures, which however paradoxical it may be for us to formulate, remains a *relation,* even though comparing it to an ordinary relation between creatures effectively elides creation itself—as Maimonides saw so clearly. On this reading, what makes Ibn ʿArabī so radical is not a heretical denial of "the distinction" between the One and all-that-is, but rather a thoroughgoing attempt to keep that distinction from being so trivialized that the One ceases to be "the One" or "the Real," and becomes "the biggest thing around."[41] Yet to negotiate such paradoxical articulation demands the practice of a set of "spiritual exercises," as we have noted to be the hallmark of classical Hellenic philosophy as well as of later Islamic philosophical theology, yet already intimated in the later allegorical writings of Ibn Sīnā.

Concluding Remarks

There are many other features of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought worthy of attention, for which clear treatment can be found in Jambet, Nasr, Ziai, Rizvi, and most recently in Bonmariage.[42] Hamid Dabashi[43] gives especially illuminating "deep background" on the sociopolitical

40 Ibid., 139.

41 David Burrell, "Creation, Metaphysics, and Ethics," *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001): 204–221.

42 Cécile Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités: Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī et la structure de la réalité* (Paris: Vrin, 2007); Jambet, *L'acte d'être*; Ziai, "Mulla Sadra"; Rizvi "Mysticism and Philosophy."

43 Dabashi, "Mir Damad."

situation in Isfahan and Shiraz, which helps us to appreciate the difficulties which philosophers faced in this time of otherwise spectacular development and opulence. I have focused on the relation between creator and creatures, and Mullā Ṣadrā's identification of *existence* as the philosophical strategy for articulating that relation in order to offer some suggestions how his inquiry may attend to issues that continue to bedevil philosophical theology.

Mullā Ṣadrā's *imāma/walāya*: An Aspect of His Indebtedness to Ibn ʿArabī

Shigeru Kamada

This brief paper examines the role of the Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) in the formation of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought, by examining the short passages that he quotes from an Akbarian text.

Ibn ʿArabī's thought has been widely disseminated in Muslim countries from Andalusia to China.[1] The philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640) was also heavily influenced by the worldview of Ibn ʿArabī, often epitomized in the doctrine of the Oneness of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[2] All existents are different manifestations of the Absolute, which is technically explained as manifestations of the absolute non-articulated Existence. However different they are, all existents are one in the sense that all are different manifestations of the same Absolute. Mullā Ṣadrā reformulates this mystical intuition in his philosophy and presents the thesis of the Primacy of Existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*).[3] He grasps different existents as different modes or different articulations of one Reality, namely, Existence, giving them their reality with different shades of meaning. Their identities, insofar as they are different from others, derive from their corresponding different quiddities (*māhiyya*), which are

1 Ibn ʿArabī's influence covers a wide range of historical and geographical settings. A recent publication easily convinces us of his great influence on later generations. See *Catalog for the Printed Books of the School of Ibn ʿArabī Collected in Japanese Libraries*, ed. Tonaga Yasushi and Nakanishi Tatsuya, Center for Islamic Area Studies at Kyoto University, 2010 [Mostly in Japanese with bibliographical information in original scripts].

2 Among many research works on Ibn ʿArabī, Izutsu deals with the *waḥdat al-wujūd* theory in a wider philosophical framework in his "An Analysis of *waḥdat al-wujūd*—Toward a Metaphilosophy of Oriental Philosophies—," in *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971), 35–55.

3 On the issue of the position and relation of existence (*wujūd*) and quiddity (*māhiyya*), Izutsu gives a clear survey of Islamic philosophy in his "The Fundamental Structure of Sabzawari's Metaphysics," *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 57–149.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 67–78.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

mentally constructed in the human mind. Through their quiddities, non-articulated Existence transforms itself into actual things different from each other. Similar to Ibn ʿArabī's worldview, Mullā Ṣadrā intuits unity or oneness in different existents of the phenomenal world in the depth of pure Existence. In this way, Ibn ʿArabī and Mullā Ṣadrā share the same kind of mystical intuition, that is to say, the actual phenomenal world seemingly consists of many different things, but is one in the real sense, because seemingly different things are simply different manifestations of the same Absolute or Existence.

In Ibn ʿArabī's thought, the idea of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) also plays an important role as a mediator of the process of the self-manifestation of the Absolute in the actual world.[4] A hierarchy of a series of Perfect Men spiritually controls the world. In his discussion of the spiritual hierarchy, Ibn ʿArabī introduces such various notions as messengership (*risāla*), prophethood (*nubuwwa*), and sainthood (*walāya*), in addition to Sufi terms like pole (*quṭb*), pillars (*awtād*), and substitutes (*abdāl*). His idea of spiritual hierarchy has enormously influenced later Islamic mysticism, as well as Shīʿī mystical philosophy,[5] in which Mullā Ṣadrā's work is counted.

It is clear that Mullā Ṣadrā is heavily indebted to his great predecessor Ibn ʿArabī, especially in his formulation of the Primacy of Existence, which has a cardinal significance in his philosophy. Although the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil* or *walāya* may not occupy such an important position as *wujūd* in his system of thought, Mullā Ṣadrā discusses the issue in some of his works.

4 On Ibn ʿArabī's concept of the Perfect Man, see M. Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabî* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1986) and M. Takeshita, *Ibn ʿArabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1987).

5 Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1680–1681), one of Mullā Ṣadrā's students, formulates a spiritual hierarchy based on Ibn ʿArabī's worldview in a unique Akhbārī way. See S. Kamada, "Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's *Walāya*: The Confluence of Shiʿi Imamology and Mysticism," *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. Todd Lawson (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005), 455–468.

In his *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya* [Divine witnesses],[6] one of the smaller compendia of his philosophical system, Mullā Ṣadrā deals with various topics on prophethood and, in its last part, with sainthood. In the present study, I take the idea of prophethood, or sainthood, and show Mullā Ṣadrā's indebtedness to Ibn ʿArabī in a more concrete way.

Mullā Ṣadrā's Idea of Sainthood[7]

The human being who attains a degree of perfection combines in himself the three worlds that correspond to the different principles of cognition of sensation, imagination, and intellection.[8] He who reaches the stage of comprehensiveness (*jamʿiyya*) of the perfection at these three levels is one of the very few men who has the status of the divine vicegerency (*al-khilāfa al-ilāhiyya*) and is entitled to the leadership (*riyāsa*) of human beings (*khalq*). He is called a messenger (*rasūl*) of God. Thus, the person who combines three levels of perfection in himself can be called a prophet in a general way.[9]

According to his emanative cosmic view, all knowledge is eternally recorded (predetermination, *qaḍāʾ*) in the Preserved Tablet, which is never altered. From the Tablet located at the intellective level, the noble tablets at the psychic level receive emanation in the form of imaginal forms. When human souls establish a connection with the noble tablets, they receive the imaginal forms, which are knowledge of the particulars. The knowledge that the messengers of God transmit to people can be explained as emanation of realities from the One with the intermediary of the Preserved Tablet and the psychic tablets.[10]

Mullā Ṣadrā enumerates three channels of the soul's reception of knowledge. They are [1] acquisition (*iktisāb*), [2] inspiration [or intuition] (*ilhām*, *ḥads*), and [3] revelation (*waḥy*). These three

6 *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya fī l-manāhij al-sulūkiyya*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1346Sh/1967). This work is referred to in the following notes as *Shawāhid*.

7 Discussion in this section is based on a part of my previous study, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Notion of Prophecy (*nubūwah*) in the Context of Spiritual Perfection of Soul," which I presented for International Colloquium "Cordoba and Isfahan" in April 2002 in Isfahan, Iran.

8 *Shawāhid*, 344.

9 Ibid., 341.

10 Ibid., 346.

channels are specific to the ordinary speculative thinkers (*nuẓẓār*), saints (*awliyāʾ*), and prophets (*anbiyāʾ*), respectively. The common characteristic that acquisition and inspiration share is the knowledge acquired through either channel; a knowledge that is based on the emanation of forms of knowledge (*fayaḍān al-ṣuwar al-ʿilmiyya*). The only difference is the ways the veils disappear and its direction. In a similar way, the difference between inspiration and revelation is a matter of degree; namely, difference of intensity of clarity (*wuḍūḥ*) and of luminosity (*nūriyya*). They are common in receiving knowledge through angels, that is, the productive intellects (*al-ʿuqūl al-faʿʿāla*), and the difference between them is that one (i.e., revelation) is accompanied with the vision of an angel, while the other is not. In this way, the substance of the revelatory knowledge consists of emanated forms, just as that of speculative thinkers, but it completely differs in its intensity from knowledge of inspiration or acquisition.[11]

Of all creatures, human beings unite in themselves angelic and animal aspects, and are higher in degree than either angels or beasts because of their comprehensiveness. Among the various groups of human beings are those who sit on the common border between the world of the intelligible and that of the sensible. They are sometimes with the Absolute (*al-Ḥaqq*) in His love, and sometimes with creatures (*khalq*) in mercy (*raḥma*, *shafaqa*) to them. They are messengers (*mursalīn*) and saints (*ṣiddīqīn*).[12] They comprehend in themselves the two aspects, namely, the intelligible realm and the sensible. They can receive divine messages and give proper guidance to their fellow men. They can communicate either with God or with creatures. Thus, they are men who have the most comprehensive ability, and, therefore, occupy the highest position among creatures. The prophets or the messengers of God come under this category of human beings. In Mullā Ṣadrā's understanding, prophets in general have two kinds of specific abilities; one is the ability to receive knowledge from the Preserved Tablet, and the other is a keen sense perception that affects matter and causes miracles.[13]

Mullā Ṣadrā elucidates the necessity of prophets in the following way. Human beings cannot live as isolated individuals,

11 Ibid., 348–349.

12 Ibid., 355.

13 Ibid., 356.

and civilization, society, and cooperation are necessary for them when they live in this world (*dunyā*). They are essentially social beings. Without the regulation of the social life, they would violently compete with each other; all of them would perish and their progeny would cease to exist. The divine law (*sharʿ*) is absolutely necessary for the existence of human beings. From the necessity of *sharʿ*, a lawgiver (*shāriʿ*) is naturally indispensable. A lawgiver must be human, because angels cannot properly work on the earth to teach human beings and animals cannot lead them because of their lower status.[14]

In sum, the prophet is a comprehensive existent who comprises in himself perfection at the intellective, psychic, and sensual levels. He receives knowledge as emanation from the Absolute One with the intermediary of the cosmologic psychic tablets. At the same time, as a human being, he communicates his knowledge, or *sharīʿa* to his fellow people with miracles if necessary.

Mullā Ṣadrā's Adaptation of Ibn ʿArabī's Text

As discussed, divine law and its transmitter, namely the prophet, are indispensable for human existence. The question arises, how do human beings order their lives once the prophet passed away? Divine law that the Prophet left is enough. This is one possible answer. But there are those who are not satisfied with this answer and search for an extension of the idea of a prophet. In addition to Ibn ʿArabī, Mullā Ṣadrā in particular and Shīʿa in general are among them.

In the last section of the *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*,[15] Mullā Ṣadrā discusses the problem of the continuation of prophethood. This section is an almost complete quotation from Ibn ʿArabī's magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (*Meccan Revelations*), though the name of the original writer is not mentioned.[16]

14 Ibid., 359–360.

15 Ibid., 376–379.

16 Ibid., 377. On this reference and others, A. K. Moussavi comments: "The words [*mujtahid* and *faqīh*] seem to be used in a much broader sense than their technical meaning" in his *Religious Authority in Shiʿite Islam—From the Office of Mufti to the Institution of Marjaʿ* (Kuala Lumpur, 1996), 122 with reference to the usage in Mullā Ṣadrā's *ʿArshiyya*. The word *ijtihād* (*maṣdar* of *mujtahid*) is used in the sense of the spiritual efforts toward the perfection of the soul as found in Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliyya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa* (Qum: Maktabat al-Muṣṭafawī, n.d.), 5:197 and 347, not

With regard to the continuation of prophethood, Mullā Ṣadrā

in the sense of Islamic jurisprudence. However, from one of Mullā Ṣadrā's minor works, the *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya* (Arabic edition and Persian translation by Ghulām Ḥusayn Āhanī [Isfahan: Intishārāt-i Mahdawī, n.d.]), 64; English translation by J. W. Morris in *The Wisdom of the Throne—An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 233–234), we know that *ʿulamāʾ* (*fuqahāʾ* in another reading in the footnote) and *mujtahids* are the followers of the Prophet (*nabī*) and his Trustee (*waṣī*), both in the rational sciences (*ʿulūm ʿaqliyya*) and in the legal understanding (*furūʿ fiqhiyya*) until the Resurrection. About the *ʿulamāʾ*'s authority, another of his works, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, ed. S. J.-D. Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Shāhanshāhī-yi Falsafa-yi Īrān, 1354S/1976), 489 mentions that the *ʿulamāʾ* are mediators (*wasāʾiṭ*) between the Imams and the general believers (*ʿawāmm*).

In the same paragraph (377) of the *Shawāhid* where appears the word *mujtahid* to which the present note refers, Mullā Ṣadrā, based on Ibn ʿArabī, states that they (*ahl al-dhikr*, taken from Q 16:43, i.e., *mubashshir*, *imām* and *mujtahid* in his context) give him (who lacks knowledge) formal legal opinions (*yuftūna-hu*) through that to which their independent judgment (*ijtihād*) leads, and again, that to everyone a *mujtahid* provides law (*shirʿa*) out of his proof (*dalīl*). He also writes on the following page (378) that after the *awliyāʾ* take it (*al-warātha*; divine inheritance) as the Prophet's inheritance, the scholars of formalities (*ʿulamāʾ al-rusūm*) take it (*al-warātha*) in place of forefathers (I read *khalafan ʿan salafin*, based on Ibn ʿArabī's text, instead of *salafan ʿan khalafin* in Mullā Ṣadrā's) until the Day of Resurrection.

In the *Shawāhid* and some of his other works, Mullā Ṣadrā presents his discussion on the *mujtahid* in a framework of Islamic legal thinking, namely, that a *mujtahid* is qualified as a scholar of the formal aspect of religion, with a function of giving a *fatwā*. From his several references above to *mujtahid*, we may infer that in Mullā Ṣadrā's understanding, the *ʿulamāʾ*, or *mujtahids*, serve as intermediaries between the Imams and the general believers until the Day of Resurrection and that their important function is that of the Islamic jurists as the heirs of the Prophetic authority.

Mullā Ṣadrā does not discuss law a great deal and, therefore, gives us no clear view of his understanding of it. However, his sporadic references to legal matters, in which he seems to use the word *ijtihād* in a legal sense, may lead us to understand that he is sympathetic to a rational type of jurisprudence in which *ijtihād* has a significant role. Since the passages that refer to *mujtahid* in the *Shawāhid* are based on Ibn ʿArabī's text, the opinion expressed there may not exactly reflect Ṣadrā's own idea. However, he quotes them from Ibn ʿArabī without alteration while he changed the texts in other quotations where he thought changes necessary. It seems to me, therefore, that Mullā Ṣadrā accepts the authority of *mujtahids* as heirs of the Prophet and Imams. His position might be close to that of the Shīʿī Uṣūlī school, though he has no clear reference to Uṣūlī or Akhbārī legal positions. Sajjad H. Rizvi's judgment of Mullā Ṣadrā's legal position may be what we can say in the present state of research. Cf. Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

(based on Ibn ʿArabī) states that, though prophets or messengers of God disappear from the earth and their message of God's revelation is interrupted with their death, "Prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and messengership (*risāla*), insofar as their quiddities and essential mode (*ḥukm*) are concerned, neither cease to be nor perish."[17] He thinks that a certain essential part of prophethood is enduring and continues in different forms. Even after the disappearance of the prophets or the messengers, the prophetic authority remains in the form of bringers of good news (*mubashshirāt*), the infallible Imams (*al-aʾimma al-maʿṣūmīn*), and expert jurists (*mujtahidīn*), though the titles of prophet or messenger are not applicable to them.

As he mentions, "Saints (*awliyāʾ*) have an especially large fountain in this messengership (*risāla*),"[18] the saints of God have very close common characteristics with the prophets and messengers. The term "prophethood" (*nubuwwa*) in this context of his thought is used either as that of the prophets in a specific sense, namely, as those who receive the revelation from God through the angel of revelation, or as that of the prophets in a general sense, which is usually expressed by the word "sainthood" (*walāya*). The prophethood in this general sense continues in the form of the infallible Imams and expert jurists.

From Mullā Ṣadrā's discussion, we understand that prophethood of such messengers or prophets as Muḥammad and Mūsā stops at the time of their death, while the essential aspect of prophethood does not cease; it continues in such different forms as imams or expert jurists (*mujtahids*). This idea may lead to the conclusion that Shīʿī Imams and Shīʿī expert jurists embody the prophetic authority.

Mullā Ṣadrā conducts the above discussion by quoting approximately one-third of the entire text of chapter 155 of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*.[19] The quoted text correctly reflects Ibn ʿArabī's original text, though there are some minor but important additions and omissions in Mullā Ṣadrā's text. By examining the alterations made by Mullā Ṣadrā, I would like to clarify his understanding of prophethood and *imāma*. He changed four places in Ibn ʿArabī's text, as follows.

17 *Shawāhid*, 377.

18 Ibid.

19 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, n.d.), 2:252–254. Ibn ʿArabī's text occupies some 33 lines of the total 38 lines of the last section of the *Shawāhid*.

1. INSERTION OF "AUTHORITY OF THE INFALLIBLE IMAMS" (*SHAWĀHID*, 377, L. 2)

Ibn ʿArabī's text[20] mentions only the authority of *mubashshirāt*[21] and *mujtahidīn* as the enduring aspect of prophethood. Mullā Ṣadrā inserts between the *mubashshirāt* and the *mujtahidīn* a phrase "the authority of the infallible Imams" (حكم الأئمة المعصومين عن الخطأ عليهم السلام).

Mullā Ṣadrā retains the two words *mubashshirāt* and *mujtahidīn* in his text without further elucidations. In comparison to imams and *mujtahid*s, which have definite significance in Shīʿī thought, the term "*mubashshirāt*" has no specific Shīʿī equivalent. We may understand it, based on its usage in the Qurʾān, as persons qualified to convey divine knowledge. Since his insertion of the Imams after *mubashshirāt* gives an appositional context to *mubashshirāt*, we can understand them here as those similar to the Imams. While *mujtahid* in the Sunnī usage is restricted to a small number of great scholars of law, such as the founders of the authorized schools of law, in the Shīʿī usage, it refers to an expert jurist qualified to make independent legal judgments, who has the authority in everyday legal rulings in the life of Shīʿī Muslims. In modern times, especially, the increase of the authority of *mujtahid* is remarkable. In Shīʿī legal theory, *mujtahid*s derive their authority from the idea of their vicegerency of the Imams, who are, in turn, successors of the Prophet Muḥammad. From Mullā Ṣadrā's text, we thus draw the impression that he views both Shīʿī Imams and Shīʿī expert jurists (*mujtahid*s) as heirs of the prophethood.

How can we understand this passage in Ibn ʿArabī's original context? Mullā Ṣadrā gives no elucidations of these terms, i.e., *mubashshirāt* and *mujtahidīn*, though Ibn ʿArabī explains them in detail.

---

20 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:252, l. 3 from the bottom.

21 The word *mubashshirāt* is found in the Qurʾān 30:46 in the sense "bearing good tidings." The word *mubashshir/bashīr* (or *mubashshirūn*) is, in most cases, paired with *mundhir/nadhīr* (*mundhirūn*) in the Qurʾān (e.g., 34:28, 17:105, 2:213, etc.) and refers to a prophet (*nabī* or *rasūl Allāh*). Ibn ʿArabī's usage of *mubashshirāt* certainly has a wider connotation than that which we find in the Qurʾān. According to Ibn ʿArabī's text (2:252, l. 3 from the bottom), an aspect of prophethood (messengership), namely, the concrete presence of a prophet, ceases to be, while another aspect, namely, *mubashshirāt* and *ḥukm al-mujtahidīn* continues to be.

With regard to the *mubashshirāt*, Ibn ʿArabī presents some examples[22] that Mullā Ṣadrā omits. They are told as his own experience; in a dream Ibn ʿArabī meets the Prophet Muḥammad and finds that the Prophet does not like for the bier of the funeral procession to enter the mosque, or for the male corpse to be covered with an additional piece of cloth on the shroud. Further, the Prophet ordered Ibn ʿArabī himself, in his dream, to prepare hot water to conduct ablution for the major ritual impurity, since it was a cold day. In the dream Ibn ʿArabī receives knowledge directly from the Prophet. Thus it is the *mubashshirāt* who acquire knowledge through such a supra-sensory function as a dream. Ibn ʿArabī himself is one of the *mubashshirāt*. The quality of *mubashshirāt* is, essentially, sainthood, in the context of Islamic mysticism. It has no connotation of Shīʿī *imāma* that strictly limits its qualification to the Prophet's direct descendants.

Ibn ʿArabī also refers to *mujtahid* and *ijtihād* as related to the essential aspect of prophethood. A *mujtahid* is a man who is entitled to independent judgment in legal questions. Ibn ʿArabī counts as *mujtahid*s the most respected scholars of law established in Sunnī Islam, namely, Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal[23]—all founders of Sunnī legal schools. Their opinions may differ from each other, but their position is high because they are concerned with the divine law (*sharʿ*), on which everything in this community (*umma*) is based, though their position (as *mujtahid*s) is inferior to that of messenger of God. A *mujtahid* leads people to the right way, and in this way his work is similar to that of prophets or messengers of God; but the name/title (of *nabī* or *rasūl*) cannot be applied to him. A *mujtahid* is neither a prophet nor a messenger of God, but is an heir of the Prophet in his enduring aspect and shares a prophetic authority. Mullā Ṣadrā's insertion of the word "Imams" transforms Ibn ʿArabī's original idea that mystic saints and authoritative jurists are the heirs of the prophet into a Shīʿī imamology, in which imams and (Shīʿī) expert jurists are his heirs.

22 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:253.

23 Ibid.

2. INSERTION OF THE WORD *IMĀM* AFTER *MUJTAHID* (*SHAWĀHID*, 377, L. 10)

The essential aspect of prophethood and messengership does not cease to be, "but either *mujtahid* or *imām* cannot be called prophet or messenger of God." Mullā Ṣadrā's text runs in this way. But Ibn ʿArabī's original refers only to *mujtahid* with no mention *of imām*. I suggest that the addition of *imām* in this passage is done in order to harmonize the insertion of *imām* between *mubashshirāt* and *mujtahidūn* in the previous passage, which suggests that both Imams and *mujtahid*s are heirs of the Prophet.

3. ADDITION OF *ḤADĪTH*S: (*SHAWĀHID*, 377, LL. 11–14)

In order to support the thesis that saints (*awliyāʾ*) have a large share in the (enduring aspect of) prophethood, Ibn ʿArabī quotes only one *ḥadīth*, namely, "He who retains the Qurʾān in his memory has a prophethood in his soul (*janbay-hi*)."[24] In addition to this, Mullā Ṣadrā quotes two more *ḥadīth*s. They are: "God has servants who are not prophets, but who are envied by prophets"[25] and "In our community are those who are talked to and spoken to (by God)."[26] These two *ḥadīth*s may have nothing specific to Shīʿī thought, but can be interpreted as referring to the Shīʿī Imams. The addition of *ḥadīth* quotations gives much support to the enduring aspect of prophethood in those who are neither prophets nor messengers of God [i.e., Imams].

---

24 The text runs: "ان من حفظ القرآن قد ادرجت النبوة بين جنبيه." A similar *ḥadīth*: "من ختم القرآن فكأنما ادرجت النبوة بين جنبيه" is found in al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1388AH), 2:604.

25 This *ḥadīth* in a longer version "لله عز وجل عباد ليسوا بانبياء ولا شهداء يغبطهم النبيون والشهداء لمقعدهم وقربهم من الله يوم القيامة" is found in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.[repr. of Cairo 1313AH edition]), 5:341. See its Shīʿī versions in Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1403/1983), 7:180 and 7:185. The servants (*ʿibād*) in the Shīʿī *ḥadīth*s refer to the Party of ʿAlī (*shīʿat-hu*).

26 *Muḥaddath* in this *ḥadīth* refers to the second caliph, ʿUmar, in the Sunnī version, for example, Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 4:211; and Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-lumaʿ fī l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1963), 125. In the Shīʿī interpretation, on the other hand, it refers to imams. Cf. al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 1: 270ff. William A. Graham gives some other references in *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 37 and 46n99.

4. OMISSION OF THE WORD "COMPANIONS" (*ṢAḤĀBA*) AND INSERTION OF "PEOPLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD" (*AHL AL-BAYT*) (*SHAWĀHID*, 378, L. 2)

Mullā Ṣadrā writes: "Some of the saints take prophethood as a legacy of the Prophet, and they are those who witnessed him (Muḥammad) like People of the Household." In this sentence, he regards People of the Household, namely, the direct descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, as the saints sharing the (essential aspect of) prophethood. However, Ibn ʿArabī's original text runs as follows: "Some of the saints take prophethood as a legacy of the Prophet, and they are either Companions who witnessed him, or those who saw him in a dream."[27]

The Companions are the first generation Muslims who met the Prophet Muḥammad, and they are the most respected Muslims in Sunnī Islam. Most of them did not accept ʿAlī's leadership as imam immediately after Muḥammad's death. Therefore, Shīʿī Islam considers most of them unreliable in religious matters. It is natural that Mullā Ṣadrā, a Shīʿī thinker, erased the word "Companions" (*ṣaḥāba*) in the original text and inserted "People of the Household" in its place.

Mullā Ṣadrā basically accepts Ibn ʿArabī's mystical framework of sainthood, though Ibn ʿArabī's idea, in its original form, does not relate to the Shīʿī concept of *imām*. Mullā Ṣadrā adapted Ibn ʿArabī's text to his own Shīʿī way of thinking when he incorporated it into his work. Specifically, he changed Ibn ʿArabī's reference to saints (in mysticism) to Shīʿī imams; he omitted the connotation of *mujtahid* as Sunnī legal authority, and indirectly subscribed to the Shīʿī concept of *mujtahid*; and he inserted a Shīʿī concept "People of the Household" in place of the Sunnī "Companions." In this way Mullā Ṣadrā transformed Ibn ʿArabī's mysticism into Shīʿī mystical thought.

27 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 2:253.

Conclusion

It is well known that Mullā Ṣadrā's thought is much indebted to the mystical intuition of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) of Ibn ʿArabī, with whom Ibn Sīnā and the Shaykh al-Ishrāq al-Suhrawardī should also be mentioned. As an aspect of his indebtedness to his preceding thinkers, Mullā Ṣadrā incorporates or quotes in his works various texts of the forerunners of Islamic thought, with or without mentioning names.[28] The present study, which takes a short section of his *Shawāhid* as an example to show how Mullā Ṣadrā modified Ibn ʿArabī's text to his own understanding, can help us better understand Mullā Ṣadrā's text with Ibn ʿArabī's original in the background. When we study Mullā Ṣadrā's thought, we should pay more attention to the texts which Mullā Ṣadrā incorporates in his works often without mentioning the names of their original authors, in order to understand his thought better and more correctly.

28 For example, Mullā Ṣadrā's treatise, *Iksīr al-ʿārifīn*, relies heavily on Bābā Afḍal Kāshānī's *Jāwidānnāma*. See William C. Chittick's introduction xvii–xix in Mullā Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003).

"Substantial Motion" and "New Creation" in Comparative Context

Yanis Eshots

One of the earliest definitions of motion in Islamic philosophy belongs to al-Kindī: "Motion is a change of the state of the essence" (*al-ḥaraka tabaddul ḥāl al-dhāt*).[1] This definition, however, provokes more questions than it answers. What exactly is 'state'? Does the change of state necessitate the change of essence? If yes, in which way?

The problem of motion received a more substantial treatment in the works of Ibn Sīnā, who wrote in the *Najāt*: "[The word] 'motion' is employed to describe (1) a gradual change of a stable state in the body, in such a manner that through this change the body directs itself towards something and (2) the arrival through this change at this thing."[2]

He adds that motion must manifest itself as leaving the previous state and that this state must be capable of decreasing and increasing, because that from which the body gradually emerges, as it directs itself toward something [different], remains, in such a way that its remaining does not contradict [the body's] emergence from it—otherwise, this emergence would be an instantaneous affair, not a gradual one. Then, Ibn Sīnā continues, the state of such a body is either similar in every moment of this emergence, or not. But it cannot be similar, because, if it had been similar, then its emergence would not have occurred, since everything, the emergence of which occurs gradually, remains, without being similar in itself in respect of its state, during its emergence from this state. Such a thing, inevitably, allows increase and decrease.

Among the states that experience motion Ibn Sīnā names whiteness and blackness, heat and cold, length and shortness, nearness and

1 al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, part 1, 196, quoted from Roger Arnaldez, "Ḥaraka wa sukūn," *EI²*, 3:169b.

2 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Najāt min al-gharq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, ed. M. T. Dāneshpazhūh (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1379Sh), 203.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 79–92.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

distance, greatness and smallness in volume.[3] Following Aristotle, he describes motion as act (*fiʿl*) and the first perfection of the thing in potentiality, in that aspect in which it is in potentiality: "Motion is what is conceived from the state of the body, due to its gradual coming out of stable form (*hayʾa*), and it is coming out of potentiality into actuality in a continuous manner, not instantaneously."[4]

As is well known, Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā limited motion to four of ten categories—namely to place (or "where") (*πού/ ʿayn*), position (*κείσθαι/ waḍʿ*), quality (*ποιόν/ kayf*), and quantity (*ποσον/ kamm*).[5] Regarding substance (*ούσία/ jawhar*), Ibn Sīnā's view was that it does not experience motion. Although engendering (*kawn*) and corruption (*fasād*) of substance outwardly resemble motion, in fact they cannot be regarded as such, because, according to Ibn Sīnā, they occur instantaneously, not gradually.[6]

In the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā, the (existence of) substantial motion is an undeniable and self-evident truth (the veracity of which Ṣadrā demonstrates in many ways). Perhaps only the principle of the analogical gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) can be regarded as more significant and entailing more important consequences than the principle of substantial motion (but, in fact, both are intertwined and inseparable from each other). In order to understand what Ṣadrā meant by "substantial motion" and why he was so firmly convinced of its existence, we need to examine his concept of motion first, finding out how it differs from that of Ibn Sīnā.

Ṣadrā describes motion as "a flowing state, whose existence is between pure potentiality and pure act and whose concomitant is a finite gradual continuous affair which has no existence that is described with presence and all-comprehensiveness (*jamʿiyya*) elsewhere except in the estimative faculty (*wahm*)."[7] This definition, in fact, represents a combination of two Avicennan definitions of motion, each of which deals with the latter in a different aspect. In the first definition, Ibn Sīnā describes motion as "a continuous intelligible

3 Ibid., 203–204.

4 Ibid., 208.

5 See Ibid., 204–208.

6 See Ibid., 205.

7 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliyya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, 9 vols., ed. R. Luṭfī, I. Amīnī, and F. Ummīd (Beirūt: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1981), part 3, 59.

affair of the object, moving from the place of the beginning [of the movement] to the place of its end."[8] This definition deals with the continuous (*qaṭʿiyya*) movement, which exists only in our mind (*dhihn*) or estimative faculty (*wahm*), but is not found in the outside, "among the entities" (*fī l-aʿyān*). Notice that Ṣadrā treats it as the concomitant of the real motion that exists in the outer world.

The second definition describes motion as

> an existential affair [that exists] in the outside and which consists in the body's being in an intermediate position between the place of the beginning [of its movement] and the place of its end, so that, whichever point between these two is taken, its [the body's] "before" and "after" is not in it [the supposed point]. This state lasts as long as the thing continues to be moving.[9]

This is the definition of the "instantaneous movement" (*al-ḥaraka al-tawassuṭiyya*), i.e., the movement as it is perceived by our sense faculties. Ṣadrā describes it as a "flowing state" (*ḥāla sayyāla*) between potentiality and actuality. Despite his criticisms of the above quoted Avicennan definitions[10] (which result from Ṣadrā's extreme existentialist position and his denying any reality to quiddity), one cannot fail to notice that he develops his teaching on movement on the basis of Ibn Sīnā's doctrine. In other words, Ṣadrā treats an instantaneous movement, understood as a flowing affair, as a reality that exists in the outside, while he views the continuous one as a concomitant of the former, which exists only in the estimative faculty—i.e., he sees the continuous movement as a shadow of the instantaneous one.

However, if we consider movement as the mobility of a thing (*mutaḥarrikkiyyat al-shayʾ*), it is nothing but self-renewal (*tajaddud*) and passing (*inqiḍāʾ*). Its proximate cause (*al-ʿilla al-qarība*), by necessity, must also be an affair which is not stable in its essence—otherwise, the parts of movement would not become non-existent. Or perhaps it is more appropriate to say that motion is an essential concomitant of the existence of this affair, which is fixed in its

8 Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā: Jadal*, ed. F. El-Ahwānī (Cairo: GEBO, 1965), quoted from Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 31.

9 Ibid., 32.

10 Ibid., 32–37.

quiddity and self-renewing in its existence—and, if it is so, it is more suitable to focus our attention on the accompanied (*malzūm*), not on the accompanying (*lāzim*). The accompanied affair, whose concomitant is motion, is, of course, nature (*ṭabīʿa*).

The proximate cause of every species of motion is nature, and it is the substance which constitutes the body and through which the body is actualized as a species, and it [and not motion] is the first perfection of the natural body in the aspect of its actual existence. Hence, it is established and verified that every body is an affair which is self-renewing in its existence and flowing in its ipseity (*huwiyya*), although it is fixed in its quiddity, and through this, it differs from motion, because the meaning of the latter is self-renewal and passing.[11]

In other words, there is no such a thing as a stable body, as far as existence is considered. On the contrary, every body should be considered as a particular aspect of the flow of existence—an aspect whose apparent stability results from an error of our sense perception. Motion is not external to such a body and is not predicated to it from outside. Rather, this is a certain quiddity which is predicated on this or that aspect or level of existence.

The principles of Peripatetic philosophy require an unchanging substratum for every change. In Ṣadrian philosophy, in which the body is viewed as an existentially self-renewing and perpetually flowing affair, it apparently cannot serve as such substratum. Ṣadrā solves the arising difficulty by stating that the requirement for the stability of the substratum applies only to those motions which are not existential concomitants of nature (for example, passage from one place to another, transmutation, and growth). As Ṭabāṭabāʾī remarks in his gloss, this assertion, in fact, testifies that Ṣadrā believes that all categories move through the movement of the substance which is their substratum. Ṭabāṭabāʾī also notes that non-concomitant movements, which occur in the categories of place, position, quality, and quantity, do not rely on the nature of the moving substance as such, but, nevertheless, the furthest limits of these non-concomitant movements are the concomitant ones that directly depend on the nature of their substratum.[12]

11 Ibid., 62.

12 See Ibid., 62n2.

Another difficulty concerning the substratum of movement lies in the fact that, according to Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, it consists of something potential and something actual. Ṣadrā's answer to them is that the postulate of the existence of two different affairs, one of which is potential and another actual, is a product of mental analysis (*taḥlīl ʿaqlī*), while in reality the potential and the actual is one and the same thing and belongs to one existential direction. The fixity (*thubūt*) of movement manifests itself as its self-renewal, and, likewise, the fixity of that through which movement occurs, that is, nature which is engendered in the bodies, manifests itself as its essential self-renewal. But what is the mechanism of this fixity and self-renewal? According to Ṣadrā, it is based on the possibility of preparedness (*imkān istiʿdādī*), and the self-renewal of nature manifests itself as "dressing after dressing" (*al-labs baʿd al-labs*). As Fazlur Rahman justly remarks, the self-renewal is perceived by Ṣadrā as an "essentially evolutionary and unidirectional individual process-entity."[13]

To understand this properly, we must keep in mind that the reality of prime matter is nothing other than potentiality and preparedness, while the reality of form is nature with its self-renewing temporal origination. Through its evolving preparedness, the prime matter receives a new form in every instant, each form having a different matter, which accompanies it by necessity. In turn, this matter is prepared to receive another form, different from that which necessitated it (matter) through preparedness. Thus we find that form is prior to matter in essence, but its (the form's) individual ipseity is posterior to matter in time. Hence, both form and matter possess self-renewal and perpetuity through the other. The popular belief that the form of a non-compound body remains forever the same and does not undergo any change arises from the similarity of the changing forms. In actual fact, however, these forms are one by their philosophical definition (*ḥadd*) and meaning, but they are not one in number, because they are renewed and replaced with each other in every instant, in a continuous manner.[14] This made Ṭabāṭabāʾī conclude that Ṣadrā saw existence as a single continuous flowing affair, from which hypothetical limitations (i.e., the

13 Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 100.

14 See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 63–64.

intelligible quiddities—e.g., those of man, animal, plant, etc.) are abstracted by the mind.[15]

There is a single continuous (or: uninterrupted) individual existence, which has infinite limitations in potential in respect to instants, hypothesized in its time, and [therefore,] in it exist an infinite number of species—*in potentia* and in meaning, not *in actu* and in [actual] existence.[16]

The difficulty with the apparent lack of an unchanging and persisting substraturn (*mawḍūʿ*) in substantial motion to which Ibn Sīnā pointed, is easily resolved if we agree to treat substance not as a static affair, but as a dynamic one and as an individual process.[17]

Although it is necessary that the substratum of every movement subsist through its existence and individuation, in the individuation of a corporeal substratum, it is sufficient that there is matter which is individuated through the existence of some [sort of] form, quality, and quantity, and it [matter] can change in respect to the particularities of each of them [i.e., form, quiddity, and quantity].[18]

In other words, the subsistence of the substratum is achieved through the existence of matter and some indeterminate form, quality, and quantity. As Fazlur Rahman observes, this indeterminate form, quality, and quantity behave vis-à-vis the progressively emerging infinity of determinate forms, qualities, and quantities "as a genus does vis-à-vis concrete species."[19] Hence, the persisting substratum is an unbound/non-delimited body (*jism muṭlaq*), i.e., a body-in-general, not a particular body, while the unity of the moving substance is one of the process-entity or the event-structure.[20]

On the other hand, as Ṭabāṭabāʾī remarks, if the movement lacks the unity of continuity, the subsistence of substratum alone does not provide the unity of movement. Moreover, according to Ṭabāṭabāʾī, while the subsistence of substratum is a necessary precondition of the accidental movements (such as the movements in quality, quantity, position, and place), because they are accidents, whose existence is only possible in substratum and whose individuation takes place

15 See Ibid., 64n2.

16 Ibid., 86.

17 See Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100.

18 Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 87–88.

19 Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100.

20 See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 92–93 and Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100–101.

through it, this is not the case with the material substance, which exists through itself and, in its individual unity, does not require anything else apart from its own existence, which is simultaneously its individuation.

The material substance, says Ṭabāṭābā'ī, insofar as it is considered the possessor of substantial motion, is both the movement and the moving one, because its selfhood, which is movement, is attributed to its selfhood which is substance. In sum, accidental movements in respect of their unity and individuality require a substantial substratum, a possessor of unity and individuality, as a root and basis of their flowing unity and individuality.[21] While accidents need substance as their substratum and cannot exist without it, the substance in a substratum has no need for other than itself. Since Ṣadrā views every corporeal and psychic substance as an evolutionary and unidirectional process, its actual substratum is nothing other than the continuity of this process.[22]

Does Ṣadrā's theory of substantial motion, as gradual and evolutionary unidirectional movement toward perfection, constitute a revolutionary new teaching in the context of Islamic philosophy? By no means—the idea, probably stemming from the Neoplatonic concepts of *processio* and *reditus*, found its expression in the well-known teaching of *scala naturae*, which was equally popular in medieval Europe and the medieval Muslim East.[23] The uninterrupted chain of being, which ascends from the lowest and simplest to the highest and most complex creatures, was viewed as the product of gradual emanation and natural growth of things in perfection. Among the first Muslim philosophers to discuss the issue in their treatises in detail were the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (Brethren of Purity). Thus, they wrote:

> Know, O brother, that the sublunary beings begin from the most imperfect and lowest states and then ascend towards the most perfect and eminent state. This occurs with the passage of time and with every instant, since their nature does not receive the emanation from the

21 See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, part 3, 87n1.

22 See Rahman, *Philosophy*, 100.

23 On *scala naturae*, see A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1936).

> spherical forms at one single time, but gradually, one thing after another.[24]

Ṣadrā's merit lies in discussing this Neoplatonic theory in terms of Peripatetic philosophy and in overcoming the resistance of the latter by interpreting material substance as a continuous flow and evolutionary process, instead of viewing it as a static and unchangeable entity. While the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' focused their attention on the universal chain of being, Ṣadrā's main concern was with a particular corporeal or psychic substance. It was not mineral becoming plant and plant developing into animal that concerned Ṣadrā, but body becoming soul and soul becoming intellect, this world growing into the other (the hereafter) and the transformation of the first (corporeal) configuration (*al-nash'a al-ūlā*) into the other (spiritual) one (*al-nash'a al-ukhra*). This is primarily an eschatological concern: this-worldly life, events, phenomena are regarded by Ṣadrā as (a) preparatory stage(s) and shadow(s) of the other-worldly one(s).

In the world of nature all substances are subject to substantial motion, because the existence of a material substance, regardless of the corruptibility (in the case of elemental bodies) or the incorruptibility (in the case of celestial bodies) of its matter, can only be envisaged as an unidirectional evolutionary process—or, more precisely, in respect to its existence, every material substance is an individualized unidirectional evolutionary process. During its development, this substance becomes subject to an infinite number of changes and alterations—"dressing after dressing," which means that, in order to assume a new and higher form, it does not need to take off the previous lower one (e.g., in order to assume the form of the animal soul, the substance does not need to abandon and take off the form of the vegetative soul). Quite the opposite, in order to be able to receive a higher form, the substance must first receive the lower one (thus, in order to be able to receive the form of the animal soul, the respective substance must first receive that of the vegetative soul). Ṣadrā calls this rule (the principle of) "the lower

24 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, 4 vols. (Beirūt: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1957), 2:183, quoted from D. De Smet, "The Sacredness of Nature in Shi'i Isma'ili Islam," in *The Book of Nature in Antiquity and Middle Ages*, ed. K. van Berkel and A. Vanderjagt (Louvain: Peeters, 2005), 87n8. Cf. also Y. Marquet's French translation, "La determination astrale de l' evolution selon les Freres de la Purete," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 44 (1992), 129.

possibility" (*al-imkān al-akhaṣṣ*) (which is to be understood as the necessity to previously actualize the lower possibility in order to allow the actualization of the higher one) and, in the ascending arc of being, places it opposite the well-known Peripatetic rule of "the higher possibility" (*al-imkān al-ashraf*), according to which the actualization of the lower possibility is only possible through and after the actualization of the higher one in the descending arc. More importantly, the existence of the natural body is only possible and can only be conceived of as substantial motion and stability in flow. The particular evolutionary path taken by a certain aspect of the flow of material existence (thought of in terms of substantial motion) is determined by its particular principle, referred to as its "nature" (*ṭabīʿa*). This particular principle or nature of the body is, in fact, nothing but tenuity (*raqīqa*) that links the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or immaterial archetype of the thing with its material idols. Although nature is the proximate cause of substantial motion, the ultimate goal of the latter is to bring the substance out of the world of nature, and place it among the inhabitants of the world of command, that is, increase the intensity of its existence to a level sufficient to make it possible for it to exist as pure disengaged dominating light (*nūr mujarrad qāhir*), or Intellect.

Ṣadrā's theory of substantial motion can now be compared with Ibn ʿArabī's teaching on new creation (*khalq jadīd*). During the twentieth century it became almost commonplace for experts in Islamic philosophy to believe that Ṣadrā's theory represents nothing other than a philosophical demonstration of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching on new creation. (Ṣadrā himself was partially responsible for the spread and strengthening of the belief, since in his discourses on substantial motion he employed the expression *khalq jadīd* a number of times).[25] Here, I ask, is it really so? Or is Ṣadrā's usage of the aforementioned Qurʾānic and Sufi term merely a rhetorical technique, designed to capture the attention of the audience and to intrigue them? Before I try to answer these questions, I first briefly examine the concept of new creation and its history.

As Ibn ʿArabī himself acknowledges, his idea of the perpetual renewal of creation was, at least partially, inspired by the Ashʿarī teaching on substances and accidents. As is well known, the Ashʿarī

25 See, for example, Ṣadrā, *Asrār*, 63, 86.

believed that the world consists of immutable substances and ever changing accidents. Their famous axiom was "accidents do not remain for two moments" (*al-aʿrāḍ lā tabqā zamānayn*). While the Ashʿarī viewed substance as the underlying substratum of accidents, they held that the substances of which the world consists have no independent existence in themselves, but wholly depend on God's power, which continually recreates the world in every instant (needless to say, such an understanding of substance (*jawhar*) makes it practically synonymous with atoms (*al-jawhar al-fard*, literally—"an indivisible particle").[26] In the twelfth chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, which contains one of the most important discussions on *khalq jadīd*, Ibn ʿArabī admits that two groups—the Ashʿarī and the Relativists (*ḥisbāniyya*)—in their reasoning approach an understanding of the mystery of perpetual creation, but, he states, both fail to penetrate its heart and core. As for the Ashʿarī, they have grasped the perpetual renewal of some of the existents, namely the accidents, but they have not realized that the world in its entirety represents nothing other than the totality (*majmūʿ*) of accidents, for which reason it entirely changes in every moment. In turn, the Relativists apprehend that the world perpetually changes in its entirety, but fail to notice the oneness of the entity of the substance which receives the form of the world and which only exists through it (whereas the form also cannot be conceived other than through this substance).[27]

Importantly, in this discussion Ibn ʿArabī defines the new creation as the "self-renewal of the affair with every breath" (*tajdīd al-amr maʿa al-anfās*),[28] which (self-renewal) is necessitated by the fact that "God manifests Himself [anew] in every breath"[29] and "a [particular] self-disclosure is never repeated."[30] (However, Ibn ʿArabī's commentator Muʾayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī remarks that God's essential self-disclosure is one and eternal, and, if considered without any relation, never changes in any way. The perpetual change and alteration of the self-disclosures of the Real witnessed by (certain

26 See S. van den Bergh, "Dhawhar," *EI*², 2:493a.

27 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 125.

28 Ibid., 125.

29 Ibid., 126.

30 Ibid.

strata of) mystics are occasioned by the change of the preparedness of the receptacles).[31]

One notices that each a new creation is necessitated by and depends on a new breath. These breaths represent fragments or instances of the all-encompassing Breath of the Merciful (*nafas al-Raḥmān*). It seems not unreasonable to assume that perpetual origination, in a way, results from the fragmentation of the Breath of the Merciful in respect to its particular receptacles, which, due to their limitations and difference in preparedness, cannot receive this all-encompassing breath in its entirety at one time, but are only able to do this gradually, dividing it in different directions and aspects according to the division that exists between God's names. Hence, in the same way as no human being, due to the narrowness of his breast, can partake of the Breath of the Merciful, except through a series of subsequent breaths, our mystical intuition cannot conceive of creation other than as an (infinite) chain of self-disclosures, every link of which simultaneously marks the appearance of a new form and the disappearance of the previous one. Thus, the teaching of new creation in Ibn ʿArabī's thought deals mainly with the relationship between the limited existence and the unlimited one.

Due to its confinement in time and space, the material universe is also confined in meaning—or probably the actual case is vice versa: its limitation in meaning manifests itself as spatial and temporal limitation(s). The narrowness of the receptacle, thus, makes the act of the Real actualized gradually, step by step, instant after instant (breath after breath), creation after creation. (Ṣadrā would certainly say that this narrowness and confinement results from the weakness / lowness of the intensity of the natural existence—or that at its lower degrees of intensity existence manifests itself as natural, i.e., as an existence that is confined in time and space and cannot simultaneously assume more than one particular form.)

A number of passages found in the *Futūḥāt* testify that the perpetual new creation of the world is necessitated by the narrowness of the receptacle. However, to Ibn ʿArabī, this receptacle is existence (=finding) itself:

31 See Muʾayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. S. J. Āshtiyānī (Qum: Būstān-i Kitāb 1381Sh), 494–495.

> Within the Treasuries are found the individuals of genera. These individuals are infinite, and that which is infinite does not enter into existence, since everything confined by existence is finite.[32]
>
> The possible things are infinite, and there cannot be more than the infinite. But the infinite does not enter into existence at once (*dafʿatan*); rather it enters little by little, without an end.[33]

But, upon a more careful examination of the above quotations, one realizes that what the Greatest Shaykh understands here by existence is the external and natural existence.

Furthermore, one notices that, to Ibn ʿArabī, new creation is not a unidirectional and evolutionary process—i.e., the subsequent form is not necessarily more perfect in any aspect than the previous one. Also, in new creation, through assuming a new form, the (material) existence unclothes itself of the earlier one, whereby the process must be described as "dressing after undressing" (*al-labs baʿd al-khalʿ*), not as "dressing after dressing" (*al-labs baʿd al-labs*), as is the case with substantial motion. Ibn ʿArabī is overwhelmed by the vision of the perpetual renewal of the world, which can probably be characterized as the attempt of the finite to grasp the infinite and the attempt of the limited to grip the unlimited—a task that can never be completed. Ṣadrā, in turn, envisages the material world as a flowing substance which, in every part and every instant, moves one—albeit an immeasurably small—step closer toward spirituality and perfection.

The new creation, as it is understood by Ibn ʿArabī, i.e., the limited's attempt to express and manifest the unlimited, takes place in keeping with a certain regular pattern (likeness is normally replaced with likeness, not opposite with opposite) that is cyclically repeated and recreated. For this reason, it can be described as a cyclical event and presented graphically as circular motion.

In turn, substantial motion as envisaged by Ṣadrā, i.e., as a unidirectional evolutionary process and gradual spiritualization of

32 Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Beirūt: Dār al-Ṣādir, n.d.), part 3, 361, quoted from William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 96.

33 Ibid.

material existence, occurs due to the increase of the latter's intensity, can be graphically presented as a half of the circle, i.e., as its ascending arc. What happens to the moving substance once it has reached the summit of the arc? According to Ṣadrā, it remains with the Godhead, becoming existentially one with its noetic archetype (the respective dominating light).

This difference in approaches results from a more principal difference between the visions of the two thinkers. For Ibn ʿArabī, existence is an accident of the entity, eternally fixed in the knowledge of the Real, the presence or absence of which does not in any way change the quiddity/whatness of the respective entity and its status in God's mind; to Ṣadrā, there is no such thing as an externally non-existent entity, eternally present in God's mind. Rather, the existence is the only thing which is/exists, whereas quiddities are nothing other than its potential limitations, which do not really exist, but are abstracted by the mind from the perpetual flow of (one and the same) existence and its different aspects.

The substantial motion, in brief, comes down to the increase of the intensity of the thing's (i.e., the essence's) existence. That is to say, an affair (e.g., the human soul), which begins to exist as an entirely corporeal thing, gradually comes to experience, first, imaginalization (*takhayyul*) and, subsequently, intellectualization (*taʿaqqul*). Although Ibn ʿArabī's teaching on the "new creation" (as numerous references to the latter, found in Ṣadrā's works, seem to suggest) is likely to have been one of the principal sources of Ṣadrā's inspiration for proposing the theory of substantial motion, he appears to have missed the focal point of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine. Ibn ʿArabī defines the "new creation" (or: "new measuring out") (*khalq jadīd*) as "the renewal of the affair with every breath" (*tajdīd al-amr maʿa l-anfās*)[34] or "the change of the world with every breath [occurring] in one entity."[35] This renewal or change results from the difference of the relations of *wujūd* in respect to each possible thing in every instant[36] and is based on the mystical intuition that perceives the world (cosmos, *ʿālam*) as the Real's imagination (*khayāl*). Though Ibn ʿArabī sometimes refers to the process of new

34 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, part 1, 125.

35 Ibid.

36 See ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥat al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. M. Hādīzāde (Tehrān: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat 1381Sh), 133.

creation (as perceived by a particular mystic) as *taraqqī* ('advancing, developing'),[37] this advancing is not to be interpreted as advancing toward and achieving a certain final and ultimate perfection, e.g., a child becoming adult or a minor clerk's becoming the director of a company. Rather, this is an imaginal advancing—the kind of advancing that we experience in dreams (and, therefore, it is called by Ibn ʿArabī *taraqqī baʿd al-mawt*, 'advancing after the death'),[38] and is not unlike the Real's advancing from task to task.[39]

Ṣadrā's "substantial motion," in turn, is a finite unidirectional evolutionary affair. Upon attaining the desired perfection (be it physical or psychic—as we know, according to Ṣadrā, there is no *ḥaraka jawhariyya* in the world of intellect, because intellect is a fully perfected soul), it ceases. Therefore, substantial motion (also referred to by Ṣadrā as the increase of the intensity ("strengthening") of the thing's existence (*tashdīd al-wujūd*) must be understood as the gradual return of the instance to its archetype (lord of species). The expressions *ḥaraka jawhariyya*, *tashdīd al-wujūd*, and *tajawhur* ('substantialization'), thus, are all used by Ṣadrā to describe the process of the thing's gradual return to its root and principle (*aṣl*).

Both concepts—"new creation" and "substantial motion"—are employed by their creators to describe certain journeys toward perfection. However, in each case, this journey appears to be of an entirely different character. While Ibn ʿArabī has in mind an infinite journey in the realm of (the cosmic) imagination, Ṣadrā is concerned with the finite journey of a physical and psychic instance to its intelligible archetype.

37 e.g., Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, part 1, 124.

38 Ibid.

39 According to the Qurʾān, *every day He (i.e., God) is upon a [different] task* (55:29).

MULLĀ ṢADRĀ ON ESCHATOLOGY IN *AL-ḤIKMA AL-ʿARSHĪYYA*

ZAILAN MORIS

The *Asfār* or *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliyya fī al-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa* [The transcendent wisdom concerning the four intellectual journeys of the soul] which extends over a thousand pages in Arabic, is Mullā Ṣadrā's magisterial work. The *Asfār* is a compendium of nine hundred years of Islamic learning;[1] it discusses in great detail and depth the intellectual journey of the human soul in quest of true and certain knowledge to transform it from an ignorant and carnal soul "inciting to evil" and dwelling in darkness to an enlightened and perfected soul "at peace."[2] The *Asfār* is Mullā Ṣadrā's definitive philosophical work that demonstrates his particular perspective, style, and unique manner of approaching philosophy. Mullā Ṣadrā also wrote several comprehensive philosophical texts which can be regarded as abridgements and summaries of the *Asfār*. Although these comprehensive texts have different emphases depending on their individual foci, they each provide the reader with an overview of Mullā Ṣadrā's transcendent philosophy or *al-ḥikma al-mutaʿāliyya*.[3] Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy deals essentially with knowledge of the origin (*al-mabdaʿ*) and of the return (*al-maʿād*), or the knowledge of being and becoming and knowledge of the soul and its ultimate destiny. These comprehensive philosophical texts that condense the materials in the *Asfār* all share

1 For a detailed treatment on the *Asfār*, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978).

2 "The carnal soul that incites to evil" (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi-sūʾ*) and "the soul at peace" (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*) are Qurʾānic terms for the different stages of realization or consciousness of the human soul.

3 The term "*al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliyya*," which means "an exalted or transcendent form of wisdom" is used by the disciples and students of Mullā Ṣadrā to refer to their master's philosophy and distinguish it as a new philosophical perspective and school. Mullā Ṣadrā himself did not refer to his philosophy directly and specifically by this term but he used it in the title of two of his works: the *Asfār* and *al-Masāʾil al-qudsīyya*.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 93–108.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

the same intention: to guide the reader to the highest understanding of metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*) and eschatology (*al-maʿād*).

Al-Ḥikma al-ʿArshīyya[4] is one such philosophical text. Extending to approximately eighty pages in Arabic, it has been ably translated into English by James W. Morris as *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. In the Prologue to the *ʿArshīyya*, Mullā Ṣadrā states that this text, dealing with two of the "noblest of the true forms of knowledge through which man can become part of the host of 'angels drawn near to God,'" is written as a guide for "discerning travelers" (*al-sullāk al-naẓirin*) on the spiritual path.[5] The *ʿArshīyya* is divided into two major parts, termed "places of illumination" (*mashriq*). The first part, or "place of illumination," deals with "knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) of God, His attributes (*al-ṣifat*), His names (*al-asmāʾ*) and His signs (*al-āyāt*)," and it contains sixteen principles (*qawāʿid*). The second "place of illumination" is subdivided into three sections or "illuminations". The first "illumination" deals with "the true inner meaning of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*)," the second with "the true reality of the return (*ḥaqīqat al-maʿād*) and the manner of resurrection of the body (*ḥashr al-jasad*)," and the third with "the states (*aḥwāl*) that occur in the other world (*al-ākhira*)." The first "illumination" contains eleven principles, the second has five principles, and the third has seventeen principles.

Eschatology (*al-Maʿād*)

Mullā Ṣadrā begins his discussion on eschatology, which constitutes the second part of the *ʿArshīyya* or the "second place of illumination," with a discussion of the knowledge of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*). Here it is important to note that Mullā Ṣadrā uses the term *maʿrifa*—which signifies inner experiential knowledge obtained by means

4 *Al-Ḥikma al-ʿarshīyya* means 'wisdom from the divine throne'. The term *ʿarsh* is used in the Qurʾān to refer to the divine Throne. In Islamic cosmology *al-ʿarsh* is used as a symbol to delineate the boundary between the created order and the divine order. For a study of *al-ḥikma al-ʿarshīyya*, see Zailan Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra: An Analysis of the al-Hikmah al-ʿArshiyyah* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

5 Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikmah al-ʿArshīyya* (Isfahan: Shahriyar Books, 1342/1962), 219. James W. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 92. Translations throughout are based on Morris' translation, with slight modifications by the author, citations are to both texts.

of intellectual illumination and intuition—rather than the term *ʿilm*, which means knowledge in general and when juxtaposed to *maʿrifa* denotes a form of knowledge acquired through formal learning and discursive thought. The early Islamic philosophers, such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, employed the term *ʿilm al-nafs* to indicate the knowledge or science of the soul and treated it as a part of natural philosophy or physics (*ṭabīʿiyyāt*).[6] The term *maʿrifat al-nafs* came to be used in the later history of Islamic philosophy to distinguish a presential knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) of the soul, from acquired knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḥuṣūlī*) of it. Unlike earlier philosophers, Mullā Ṣadrā treats the science of the soul as a part of eschatology (*al-maʿād*), since it is the soul that will experience the return and the various eschatological events described in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. Therefore, the differences in the terms employed for the science of the soul relate to the different sources of knowledge of the soul and their treatments reflecting their differing philosophic and experiential perspectives.

Knowledge of the Soul

In the first principle of the "first illumination" (*ishrāq al-awwal*) on "the inner knowledge of the soul," Mullā Ṣadrā explains the necessity for illumination to attain esoteric knowledge of the soul. He considers esoteric knowledge of the soul as "one of the extremely difficult fields of knowledge" that cannot be attained merely by discursive thought and philosophical investigation alone. In *the ʿArshīyya* Mullā Ṣadrā states:

> Know that the inner knowledge of the soul is one of those extremely difficult (fields of) knowledge in which the philosophers were exceedingly neglectful, despite the length of their investigations, the power of their thought and the frequency of their endeavors in this field. For this knowledge can only be acquired from illuminations drawn from (*iqtibas*) the lamp-niche of prophecy (*mishkāt al-nubuwwa*) and by following the lights of revelation and the divine message (*anwār al-wahī wa-l-risāla*) and the lanterns of the sacred book (*maṣābīḥ al-kitāb*) and the tradition (*sunna*) that has

6 For example, in his *Kitāb al-najāt*, Ibn Sīnā's discussion of the soul forms the sixth section of the second book devoted to natural philosophy (*ṭabīʿiyyāt*).

> come down to us in the path of our Imams, masters of guidance and infallibility, from their ancestor the Seal of the Prophets. . .[7]

By using the terms *mishkāt* (lamp-niche) and *maṣābīḥ* (lanterns), Mullā Ṣadrā makes explicit references to the famous 'Light Verse' in the Qur'an (Q. 24:35).[8] For Mullā Ṣadrā, the Prophet or prophecy is the "lamp-niche" (*mishkāt*) illuminated by the "lantern" or "lamp" (*miṣbāḥ*) which is the Qurʾān. By receiving revelation, the Prophet was illuminated with knowledge. Similarly, those who assent and have faith in the veracity and guidance of the Qurʾān, Muḥammad's prophethood, and the infallibility of the Imams on religious matters,[9] may also attain true and certain knowledge such as that concerning the nature of the soul, and thereby receive illumination.

Nature of the Soul

Having asserted the necessity of accepting revelation and prophecy for attaining esoteric knowledge of the soul, Mullā Ṣadrā then gives a philosophical exposition of the nature of the soul. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the soul, from its origination to the end of its goal, has many levels (*darajāt*) and stations (*maqāmāt*). In the beginning, the soul is connected with the body and is a corporeal substance (*jawhar*

7 *ʿArshīyya*, 234; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 131.

8 *Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His Light is as a niche* (mishkāt), *wherein is a lamp* (miṣbāḥ). *The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light, Allah guides to His light whom He will. And Allah speaks to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things* (Q. 24:35).

9 In Shīʿī theology, the "cycle of prophecy" (*daʾirat al-nubuwwa*), which comes to an end with the Prophet Muḥammad who is the "Seal of the Prophets" (*khatm al-anbiyāʾ*), is succeeded by the "cycle of initiation" (*daʾirat al-walāya*). *Walāya*, which means "dominion," "friendship," and "protection" refers to the esoteric aspect of prophecy, which is an eternal prophecy, unlike the legislative aspect of prophecy, which comes to an end with the Prophet Muḥammad. In Shīʿī Islam, prophecy (*nubuwwa*) is succeeded by the Imamate (*walāya*); both the prophets and the Imams are the Friends or Beloved of Allah (*awliyāʾ Allāh*) who are guided by God and protected from error (*maʿṣūm*) on religious and spiritual matters. For a detailed treatment on this subject, see Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. L. Sherrard (London: Kegan Paul, 1993), 25–30.

jismānī). However, through the process known as 'transubstantial motion' (*al-ḥarakat al-jawharīyya*) the soul becomes gradually crystallized or intensified (*ishtidād*) and its mode (*tawr*) of existence, or being, is likewise transformed until it is abstracted from the body or attains its independence (*tajrīd*), finally subsisting as spirit, at which point, it "returns to its Lord" (Q. 89:27). As summarized by Mullā Ṣadrā, the soul originates as body but subsists as spirit: "*jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth rūhaniyyat al-baqā'*."[10]

Mullā Ṣadrā delineates the various stages of the development of the human soul from the vegetative soul (*al-nafs al-nabatiyya*) to the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawāniyya*) and then the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) with its practical intellect (*al-ʿaql al-ʿamalī*) and theoretical intellect (*al-ʿaql al-naẓarī*); the subsequent stages of development of the theoretical intellect from the intellect-in-potentiality (*al-ʿaql bi-l-quwwa*) to the intellect-in-actuality (*al-ʿaql bi-l-fiʿl*), finally attaining union with the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*).[11] Mullā Ṣadrā's delineation of the various developmental stages and faculties of the human soul is similar to teachings by Ibn Sīnā. Mullā Ṣadrā identifies the Active Intellect with the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*), or the Archangel Gabriel, who is the angel of revelation in Islamic tradition. In contrast to the Mashshā'ī (Peripatetic) philosophers, but in agreement with the Sufis, Mullā Ṣadrā considers human effort and labor alone insufficient to attain this highest station of unity with the Active Intellect. There is a need for divine aid and grace for the attainment of intellectual and spiritual perfection, as testified by a prophetic *ḥadīth* cited by Mullā Ṣadrā: "A single attraction (*jadhb*) from the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) outweighs all the effort of men and jinn."[12]

In the *ʿArshīyya* Mullā Ṣadrā states that human souls that have become fully actualized are very few in number. The vast majority of individual human souls are imperfect and have not attained the rank of 'intellect-in-actuality' when they become united with the Active Intellect. Nevertheless, the fact that these human souls have not attained the highest state of intellectual perfection does not mean that they will perish or are annihilated after death, as taught by

10 *ʿArshīyya*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 132.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

Aristotle and his Neoplatonic commentator Alexander Aphrodisias, whose works were well-known among the Muslims.[13]

Unlike Ibn Rushd, who agreed with Aristotle and Alexander Aphrodisias and considered only the intellect in man to be immortal and therefore the only part of the human soul that becomes actualized in the intelligible world and survives death, Mullā Ṣadrā viewed the individual human soul as immortal, as did Ibn Sīnā. In Mullā Ṣadrā's perspective, denial of the immortality of the individual human soul is contrary to the Islamic eschatological belief that explicitly states that every soul will be justly requited with what it has earned in this world.

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the view of Alexander Aphrodisias is based on the supposition that there exist only two kinds of worlds: the sensible world of material bodies and the immaterial world of intellects. In this cosmological scheme, there is no place for imperfect souls that have not become fully actualized during their association with the physical body. In the *ʿArshīyya* Mullā Ṣadrā asserts that there is an imaginal world intermediate between the spiritual and sensible worlds. All souls that have not attained perfection or unity with the Active Intellect, which is also the station of the Universal Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), will be placed in the intermediate world. It is in this intermediate realm of existence that souls will experience certain eschatological events of the Hereafter, as described in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. In the *ʿArshīyya* Mullā Ṣadrā explains this reality:

> But it is not like that [referring to Alexander Aphrodisias's view]. Rather, there is another world of being, alive and sensible (*maḥsūsa*) by essence, unlike this (physical) world—a world that is perceived by these true (inner) senses (*al-ḥawās al-ḥaqīqa*), not by these transient external ones (*al-ḥawās al-ẓāhira al-dathara*). That world is divided into a sensible Paradise (*al-janna al-maḥsūsa*) containing the felicities of the blessed (*naʿīm al-suʿadāʾ*), including food, drink, marriage, sensual desire and

13 Several works by Alexander Aphrodisias, or al-Iskandar al-Afrudisi (second century CE) as he was known among Muslim scholars, were translated into Arabic in the third/ninth century and made a definite impact on Islamic philosophy, notably his commentary on Aristotle's *de Anima* (*Kitāb al-nafs*); see Richard Walzer, "On the Legacy of the Classics in the Islamic World," *Greek into Arabic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

> all that could delight the soul and give pleasure to the eyes; and a sensible Hell (*nār maḥsūsa*) containing the punishments of the wretched (*ʿadhāb al-ashqiyāʾ*), including hellfire, torments, serpents and scorpions. If this imaginal world did not exist, what Alexander mentioned would be undeniably true and that would mean that the revealed laws (*sharāʾiʿ*) and divine books (*al-kutub al-ilāhiyya*) were lying when they maintained the resurrection (*baʿath*) for everyone.[14]

It is significant to note that Mullā Ṣadrā refers to the sacred law (*sharīʿa*) and the divine book (*al-kitāb al-ilāhī*) in the plural, thus indicating that the rejection of the immortality of the individual human soul is contrary not only to Islamic teachings, but also to the other revealed religions. He was obviously aware of similar debates over this issue among Christian and Jewish thinkers.

Elsewhere in *the ʿArshīyya*, Mullā Ṣadrā describes the remarkable nature of the human soul and its amazing potentiality:

> . . . the human soul is "the conclusion of the world of sensible things (*nihāyat al-ʿālam al-maḥsūsat*) and the beginning of the spiritual world (*bidāyat al-ʿālam al-rūḥāniyya*). It is God's great gateway (*bāb Allāh al-ʿaẓīm*), through which one can be brought to the highest kingdom (*al-malakūt al-aʿlā*); but it also has "a certain portion of all the gates of Hell" (Q. 25:44). It is the dike standing between this world and the other world because it is the form (*ṣūra*) of every potency (*quwwa*) in this world and the matter (*mādda*) for every form in another world.[15]

Thus Mullā Ṣadrā views the human soul as the conjunction of the terminal point of the sensible world and the initial point of the spiritual world, or, using a Qurʾānic description: "the junction of the two seas" (Q. 18:59).[16] It has the capability of having dominion over the physical world and the possibility of entering into all of the higher levels of reality.

---

14 *ʿArshīyya*, 243–244; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 150.

15 *ʿArshīyya*, 242; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 148.

16 Ibid.

The Immortality of the Imaginative Faculty

One of the most important doctrines discussed by Mullā Ṣadrā concerning the human soul is the immortality of the imaginative faculty (*quwwa khayāliyya*). In the *ʿArshīyya* Mullā Ṣadrā states:

> In man, the imaginal power is a substance that is independent of this world (*jawhar mujarrad*), that is, the world of physical beings (*al-akwān al-ṭabīʿiyya*) and of the motions (*ḥaraka*) and transformations of material things... But this power is not (totally) independent of the two realms of generated being (*al-kawnayn*), since in that case it would have to be (pure) Intellect (*ʿaql*) and an object of intellection (*maʿqūl*).[17]

By stating that the imaginal power in humans is a substance independent of the sensible world (*jawhar mujarrad*), Mullā Ṣadrā asserts that the imaginative faculty is immaterial and immortal and does not die when the body dies. Although the imaginative faculty is composed of a substance that is independent of the material world, it is not without connection or relation to this world. In the view of Mullā Ṣadrā, this imaginative faculty belonging to the inner senses of humans is not totally independent of the two worlds of generated being (*al-kawnayn*), namely, this world and the Hereafter. If the imaginative faculty were totally independent of both worlds, then it would be deemed pure immaterial intellect (*ʿaql*) or spirit.

For Mullā Ṣadrā, therefore, the imaginative faculty belongs to, or is a part of, the imaginal realm (*al-ṣuwar al-khayāliyya*). This imaginal realm of existence is a world that corresponds to, or is similar to, the material world we live in, but it is very much richer than the material world. As Mullā Ṣadrā explains:

> ... The being [of the imaginative faculty] is in another world, one that corresponds to this [physical] world in that it comprises heavens, elements, different species of plants, animals, and so on—only many times over [the things of] this world. Everything that man perceives and sees directly by means of his imaginative faculty (*quwwa khayāliyya*) and his interior sense (*ḥiss al-baṭin*) does not at all inhere in the "stuff" (*jirim*) of the brain or in some

17 *ʿArshīyya*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 137.

> faculty inhering in that locus [as Ibn Sīnā had maintained]; nor is it located in the bodies of the heavenly spheres or in a world separate from the soul, as some followers of the Illuminationists [*ishrāqī* philosophers] have maintained. Instead, it subsists in the soul—not as something inhering in something else, but rather like an act subsisting through its agent.[18]

In other words, Mullā Ṣadrā does not consider our imaginative faculty to be located either in the material stuff of the brain, or in some area of the brain associated with its function—as Ibn Sīnā conceived; nor is it located in a separate world independent of the human soul—as held by Suhrawardī.[19] The imaginative faculty indeed has its locus in the human soul. Yet the relation between the imaginative faculty and the soul is not in the manner of something physically inhabiting or inhering in another thing, but in the manner that an act exists due to the existence of its agent. As he states in the *ʿArshīyya*:

> These "forms" (*ṣuwar*) present in the world of the soul may differ in manifestness (*ẓuhur*) and hiddeness (*khifāʾ*), in intensification (*shadda*) and weakness (*daʿīf*). The stronger and more substantial is the power of this imaginal soul—[namely] the more [the imaginal soul] returns to its own essence and the less it is preoccupied with the distractions of the body and employing the bodily powers of motion—then the more manifestly these forms will appear within the soul and the stronger will be their being. For when these forms have become strengthened and intensified, there is no proportion between them and the things in this world insofar as the intensity of their being, actualization, and their certainty of effect. It is not true, as is popularly supposed, that these forms

18 *ʿArshīyya*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 138.

19 Although Suhrawardī is the first Islamic thinker to expound, in an explicit manner, the existence of the imaginal realm intermediate between the material and spiritual worlds, he does not assert that there is a corresponding level of being in man; see Fazlur Rahman, "Dream, Imagination and *ʿĀlam al-mithāl*," *Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (June 1964), 169, 175.

> are mere phantom images without regular effects of real being as is the case with most dreams.[20]

In the view of Mullā Ṣadrā, the degree of manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) or hiddenness (*khifā'*) and of intensification (*shadda*) or weakness (*da'īf*) of the imaginal "forms" being perceived by the imaginative faculty is dependent on the strength of the imaginative faculty itself. The greater the functional strength of the imaginative faculty, then the more manifest and intense the imaginal forms perceived by it. The soul's preoccupation with the body directly impinges upon the functional strength of the imaginative faculty by weakening and dissipating it. This explains why, for most individuals, imaginal forms are only perceived in the dream state, when the body is asleep and the soul is less preoccupied with body functions. These imaginal forms are not mere phantom images without objective existence or reality. The imaginal forms are objectively existent and they belong to a level of being that is higher and more intense than that of the sensible world. Yet for the majority of people, their imaginal forms are hidden from them and if manifested in the dream state are often weak; this is due to their souls' overwhelming attachment with the body. The complete manifestation of imaginal forms and the power of our imaginative faculty will only be fully experienced after death when the soul is separated from the body. In the posthumous state, the individual will perceive the full manifestation and intensity of the imaginal forms, and at that time come to realize that the sensible forms of the material world are indeed weaker and less real—relative to the imaginal forms. This is the reverse of the situation in this present world, where the imaginal forms that are perceived for the most part in the dream state appear less real than the vivid sensible forms of the world. Mullā Ṣadrā expresses this point in the *'Arshīyya*:

> The complete manifestation of these [imaginal] "forms" and the perfection of these forms and the perfection of the power of their being occurs only after death. [This is true] to such a degree that, compared to the forms man will see after death, the forms he sees in this world are like dreams. This is why the Commander of the Faithful ['Alī b. Abī Ṭālib] said: "Humans are asleep—when they

20 *'Arshīyya*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 138.

> die, they awaken." Then the unseen becomes immediate vision. In this lies the secret of the return (*al-maʿād*). . . .[21]

In the understanding of Mullā Ṣadrā, the human imaginative faculty is the end of this material world's sensory modality of being (*ākhir hādhihi l-nashʾati l-ʿūla*) and the beginning of the otherworldly spiritual modality of being (*awwal al-nashʾati l-ākhira*).[22] When the soul is separated from the body it carries within itself the perceiving form (*al-ṣūrat al-mudrika*) that enables it to perceive sensory things by means of its inner sense (*ḥissī al-bāṭin*).[23] Thus, although at death the soul is separated from the body and the external senses, the soul continues to perceive forms through its inner senses. In addition, when it is separated from the body the imaginative faculty can directly generate or originate (*ibdāʿ*) imaginal forms by its own volition (*irāda*). In the *ʿArshīyya* Mullā Ṣadrā explains the creative power of the soul to originate imaginal forms in the following manner:

> Extended forms and shapes and structures can occur through the activity of the maker because of the preparedness of certain materials and in association with specific receptive conditions. But those forms may likewise occur by immediate creation (*ibdāʿ*) purely by means of the conceptions and formative directions of the maker, without any association with a [material] receptacle and its location and preparedness. The being of the planets and the heavenly spheres is like that, through God's immediate conception of their principles and formative directions and through His knowledge. . . Those forms do not subsist in the corporeal substance (*jirm*) of the brain nor in the heavenly bodies, as some people have maintained, nor in a world of phantasmal images subsisting apart from the soul. Rather, they subsist by means of the soul and exist within the domain of the soul.[24]

Forms that have extension and shape can be generated by an individual when the appropriate or correct materials and conditions are present at his disposal. In addition, forms may also be originated

21 Ibid.

22 *ʿArshīyya*, 258; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 178.

23 Ibid.

24 *ʿArshīyya*, 247; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 157.

(*ibdāʿ*) simply by means of the conception and formative directions of an effective agent, without the presence of the necessary materials and conditions. Here Mullā Ṣadrā gives the example of God's creation of planets and heavenly bodies as an illustration of such a creation. In Mullā Ṣadrā's understanding, God created the heavenly bodies from nothing or without any preceding matter. God's act of creating or originating the heavens from nothing is denoted by the term *ibdāʿ*.[25] This is one of the terms used in the Qurʾān, along with others, such as *khalaqa* and *takwīn*, to describe God's creative activity; *ibdāʿ* signifies creating or directly originating something out of nothing. Thus, one of God's most beautiful names in Islamic tradition is *al-Mubdiʿ*, "He who creates from nothing."

Mullā Ṣadrā, like Ibn ʿArabī, believes that the human soul is endowed by God with a similar power to originate forms out of nothing. In the *ʿArshīyya* he quotes Ibn ʿArabī on this point:

> One of the "people of realization" (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*) [that is, Ibn al-ʿArabī] stated: "Every man creates by his imagination things which have no existence outside the place of his intention... Yet his intention continues to preserve them without this act of preservation at all tiring him; whenever neglect overtakes him, though, that which he created disappears."[26]

The imaginal forms that originated out of nothing by the human soul exist within the soul. For Mullā Ṣadrā, such imaginal forms that originated by the soul, which exist within it, are "more substantial, more firmly established and permanent in their reality than material forms that are constantly changing and being regenerated."[27] Invoking a Qurʾānic analogy, Mullā Ṣadrā states that the material forms, when compared to the imaginal forms, are "like a mirage in the desert which the thirsty man mistakes for water" (Q. 24:39).[28]

In the posthumous state, everything that an individual conceives of, desires, or longs for, becomes immediately present to

25 The term *ibdāʿ* was used by Islamic philosophers before Mullā Ṣadrā to denote God's timeless and unmediated creation of the separate intelligences and heavenly spheres; see James Morris' notation of this in *Wisdom of the Throne*, 157.

26 *ʿArshīyya*, 247–248; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 158.

27 *ʿArshīyya*, 250; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 157.

28 *ʿArshīyya*, 256; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 173.

him. Through the power of the imaginative faculty, the process of conceiving of a thing within our soul is the very same as its presence. Mullā Ṣadrā asserts in the *ʿArshīyya* that all that a man attains and is requited with in the Hereafter, whether it be the blessings (*naʿīm*) of Paradise, such as houris (*ḥūr*), palaces (*quṣūr*), gardens (*jannāt*), trees (*shajarāt*), and streams (*anhār*),[29] or the sorts of torments (*ʿadhāb*) experienced in Hell, including burning in fire (*nār*), being bound by chains (*salāsil*), and bitten by scorpions (*ʿaqārib*), and serpents (*thaʿābin*)[30] are "in the essence of his soul (*dhat al-nafs*): in his intentions (*niyyāt*), meditations (*taʾammulāt*), beliefs (*iʿtiqādāt*), and character (*akhlāq*)."[31] Thus, in the afterlife, the ambience of the soul is nothing other than the projections of its inner being. An individual's intentions, meditations, beliefs, and character will determine whether he will experience the felicity of Paradise or the suffering of Hell. Every human individual, whether he is among the blessed (*suʿadāʾ*) in Paradise or the wretched (*ashqiyāʾ*) in Hellfire, will experience his own particular complete and independent world specific to himself and his own unique conditions and faculties, in a realm more immense than this material world. Such is the power and potential of the imaginative faculty within the human soul.

In his account of Paradise and Hell, Mullā Ṣadrā makes use of Qurʾānic vocabulary and its portrayal of the Hereafter. Following the Qurʾān, Mullā Ṣadrā uses the term *janna* for Paradise, *jahannam* for Hell, *suʿadāʾ* for the blessed of Paradise and *ashqiyāʾ* for the wretched in Hell. The specific items mentioned by Mullā Ṣadrā in relation to Paradise and Hell respectively, such as *jannāt*, *anhār*, *ḥūr*, *nār*, *thaʿābin*, and *aqārib* are also from the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān describes Paradise and Hell in vivid and sensuous imageries drawn from the things of this world. In the "third illumination" concerning the states that occur in the other world, Mullā Ṣadrā discusses in a detailed manner the symbolic meanings and significance of these sensual images in the descriptions of Paradise, Hell, and the various eschatological events that human souls will experience in the Hereafter. Mullā Ṣadrā's interpretation of the Qurʾān's symbolic descriptions of the afterlife may be regarded as a philosophical exegesis of the revealed verses. It is by positing the existence of an imaginal world

29 *ʿArshīyya*, 250; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 162.

30 *ʿArshīyya*, 252; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 166.

31 *ʿArshīyya*, 251; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 164.

intermediate between the spiritual and sensory worlds, and the immortality of the individual soul with its creative power of the imaginative faculty to originate forms without requiring material instruments and receptacles, that Mullā Ṣadrā is able to assert and establish the traditional Islamic view of eschatology as contained in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth.

A most important principle expounded by Mullā Ṣadrā that is the key to understanding his eschatological views is the independence and catharsis (*tajrīd*) of the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhāyyila*) from the body. Mullā Ṣadrā's treatment of the soul or psychology takes into account all the various faculties and stages of the development of the soul, from its origination with the body to its final perfection as a spiritual reality, wherein it becomes a perfect theophany of all the divine names and qualities.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be observed that in his delineation of the various types of souls and their faculties, Mullā Ṣadrā accepts and makes use of the Mashshāʾī views, primarily of Ibn Sīnā's analysis of the powers and functions of the soul. Mullā Ṣadrā, however, does not limit himself to the Mashshāʾī view alone. A significant point of departure of Mullā Ṣadrā's psychology from the Mashshāʾī doctrine of the soul relates to the relationship between the soul and body. If the Mashshāʾī philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā consider the soul as the organizing principle and entelechy of the natural body, Mullā Ṣadrā, consistent with his metaphysical and eschatological views, regards the human soul as the organizing principle and entelechy of all subsequent "bodies" that the soul will create for itself, or project from within its own essence *via* its imaginative faculty, appropriate to the level of being wherein it belongs.

In his exposition of the developmental stages of the soul in the posthumous state, Mullā Ṣadrā relies heavily on Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, particularly his doctrine of the independence of the imaginative faculty and its creative power to originate forms out of nothing. Mullā Ṣadrā synthesizes Ibn ʿArabī's teaching about the imaginative faculty of the soul with Suhrawardī's conception of the existence of the imaginal world by correlating the microcosmic imaginal reality with the macrocosmic world of images. With this synthesis, Mullā Ṣadrā establishes a clear and definite relation between the

microcosmic and macrocosmic world of images, which, in turn, provides a metaphysical basis for an intellectually and experientially satisfactory explanation of the Qur'ānic eschatological doctrine.

Although Mullā Ṣadrā's psychological doctrine involves a synthesis or integration of the Mashshā'ī faculty of psychology, Ibn ʿArabī's view of the imaginative faculty, Suhrawardī's intermediate world of images, and Qur'ānic eschatology, it remains an original and coherent doctrine with its own distinctive perspective and principles. The various views and ideas on the soul and its destiny are synthesized by Mullā Ṣadrā in order to substantiate and demonstrate his own conceptions; hence the major points of difference between his doctrine and the variety of intellectual perspectives he has synthesized.

The Nature and Significance of Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic Writings[1]

Mohammed Rustom

It is fairly well-known among scholars of later Islamic philosophy that Mullā Ṣadrā wrote a number of works on the Qur'ān. These consist of some sixteen texts, thirteen of which are independent *tafsīr*s on select *sūra*s and *āya*s, and three of which are compositions that deal with various theoretical aspects of the Qur'ān. Although attempts have been made in modern scholarship to describe each of Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic works, we still lack a comprehensive overview of their nature and significance.[2] The absence of a thorough presentation of Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic writings has, in turn, proven to be a serious stumbling-block in discerning his function as an exegete.[3] Given this lacuna in Ṣadrian scholarship, this article offers a detailed outline of the content, structure, and scope of each of Ṣadrā's compositions on the Qur'ān. The material presented here not only broadens our understanding of the importance of Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic works, but also sets the stage for a more nuanced approach to the theoretical dimensions of his scriptural hermeneutics.[4]

1 Thanks go to Todd Lawson, Maria Subtelny, Sebastian Günther, Shafique Virani, John Walbridge, Sajjad Rizvi, and Caner Dagli.

2 The first such attempt in modern scholarship is to be found in the monumental *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa* (Najaf, 1939–87) by Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī (d. 1391/1970). These entries can be categorized as follows: (1) "basic *tafsīr* entries," that is, individual entries which simply list the *tafsīr*s attributed to Ṣadrā (*Dharīʿa*, 4:278–9, 20:76); (2) "isolated *tafsīr* entries," which treat each *tafsīr* work individually (*Dharīʿa*, 4:331, 334, 336–8, 340, 343–4; 15:252); and (3) "isolated non-*tafsīr* entries," which treat Ṣadrā's other writings on the Qur'ān individually (*Dharīʿa*, 2:39; 16:400; 19:62; 21:305, 337). The most recent description of Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic works is in Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 77–87.

3 For a critical appraisal of the scholarly literature devoted to Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān, see Mohammed Rustom, "Approaching Mullā Ṣadrā as Scriptural Exegete: A Survey of Scholarship on His Quranic Works," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2008): 75–96.

4 For one such attempt, see Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming),

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 109–130.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

In the annotated list below, I have divided Ṣadrā's Qurʾānic writings into four general categories: commentaries on individual *sūra*s, commentaries on individual *āya*s, theoretical works on the Qurʾān, and Qurʾānic works of doubtful authenticity. The list is followed by an appendix that presents a tentative chronology of those works belonging to the first three catagories. These titles are considered in relation to themselves and with respect to Ṣadrā's other datable, non-Qurʾānic writings.

Commentaries on Individual *Sūra*s

1. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-FĀTIḤA[5]

This book is Ṣadrā's last complete commentary on a Qurʾānic *sūra*. Appended to the 180-page published edition of the *tafsīr* are the philosophical glosses of Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830),[6] a major follower of Ṣadrā's teachings during the Qajar period, and someone whose writings have served as important philosophical and gnostic texts within the Ṣadrian tradition.[7]

In both its philosophical and mystical content, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is arguably the most profound of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qurʾān, as he brings to bear, in his function as commentator on this *sūra*, the entire range of his learning, synthetic abilities, and original insights. This work demonstrates in remarkably lucid fashion the manner in which Ṣadrā addresses issues in ontology, cosmology, psychology, and eschatology in the language of myth and religious symbolism, closely following the work of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).[8]

Among the salient aspects of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* are Ṣadrā's discussion of the cosmos and its contents as so many instantiations

---

ch. 1.

5 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Qum: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1987–90), 1:1–183; *Majmūʿat al-tafāsīr*, ed. Aḥmad Shīrāzī (Tehran, lithograph, 1322 AH/1904), 2–41. On first mention of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*s, where applicable, I provide the page numbers to both the printed and lithographed editions; subsequent references to the *tafsīr* work in question are to the printed edition only.

6 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:451–496.

7 For Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Metaphysics of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran," in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Change*, 1800–1925, ed. Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 190.

8 Cf. the pertinent remarks in Christian Jambet, *L'acte d'être: la philosophie de la révélation chez Mollâ Sadrâ* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 402.

or modes of God's self-praise or *ḥamd* (signaled by Q 1:2), and his extended treatment of the question of the nature of idol-worship and the Akbarian doctrine of the "God created in faiths" (*al-ilāh al-makhlūq fī l-ʿaqāʾid*). But the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*'s most important feature is undoubtedly Ṣadrā's in-depth inquiry into the nature of God's all-pervading mercy in the afterlife and the resultant salvation of all human beings; an evaluation that is intimately related to the different paths taken by people during their earthly lives. Although Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* and non-*tafsīr* writings broach this and cognate topics, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* presents a unique soteriological argument, and one that is equally rooted in both Ṣadrā's ontology and the structure of the *Fātiḥa* itself.[9]

2. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-BAQARA[10]

This *tafsīr* work is likely Ṣadrā's last commentary proper.[11] Although incomplete (it stops at the end of the *sūra*'s sixty-fifth *āya*), it is his longest work dedicated to the Qurʾān, taking up over 1100 pages. Like the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, this commentary is accompanied by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's glosses.[12]

More than any of his other *tafsīr*s, Ṣadrā is, in a sense, the most "polemical" in this commentary: in a manner not unfamiliar to his method in several sections of the *Asfār*, he dedicates a good deal of time to refuting a number of the theological positions held by the Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī schools, particularly with respect to questions related to God's foreordainment and the role of human free will, the "eternal" nature of suffering in Hell,[13] and the temporal origination of God's Speech (*kalām*).

Ṣadrā's concern with theology is evident in this *tafsīr* as well. He tackles, albeit briefly, topics such as the "faith" of Pharaoh[14] and

9 For an in-depth analysis of the sources, structure, and content of this work, see Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*, chs. 2–5, 7.

10 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:187 to the end of vol. 3; *Majmūʿat*, 41–289. Selections are translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam: L'au-delà selon Mullâ Sadrâ* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008), 209–218.

11 At *Tafsīr*, 1:349, Ṣadrā explicitly makes mention of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.

12 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:496–513; 2:377–413; 3:475–528.

13 Ṣadrā's view on the question of Hell's eternality finds its most complete expression in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, for which, see Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*, ch. 7.

14 For a helpful discussion of this problem in Islamic thought, see Eric Ormsby, "The Faith of Pharaoh: A Disputed Question in Islamic Theology," in *Reason and*

whether or not people will be able to see God in the next life. The most important discussion in terms of theology is the detailed section devoted to *īmān*, or "faith," which forms part of his commentary on Q 2:4. After explaining the inadequacy of several of the definitions of *īmān*, he divides its contents into fairly standard and broad categories: sayings (*aqwāl*), states (*aḥwāl*), and actions (*aʿmāl*). What is interesting in his discussion here is how he relates these three categories to what he calls "the levels and ranks of faith" (*darājāt al-īmān wa-marātibuhu*). Here, he makes it clear that everyone is a person of faith (*muʾmin*). What distinguishes one from another is the level of his understanding (*fiqh*). It is to the degree of one's understanding of his faith that he will be characterized as more or less faithful.

Important for Ṣadrā's understanding of the Qurʾān is the section devoted to its inimitability (*iʿjāz al-qurʾān*), which he is prompted to discuss based on the challenge made in Q 2:23 to produce "a *sūra* like it" (*sūra min mithlihi*). Also, there is one particular section in this commentary in which Ṣadrā discusses the "detached letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*) of the Qurʾān, closely following Ibn Sīnā's (d. 428/1037) *al-Risāla al-nayrūziyya*.

3. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-SAJDA[15]

In the introduction to this commentary, Ṣadrā lists eight *tafsīr*s that he had previously written. Based on Sajjad Rizvi and Muḥsin Bīdārfar's observations, we can date four of them.[16] These dates, along with some internal evidence in one of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*s (see the entry on the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-zilzāl* below), allow us to safely conclude that the earliest this *tafsīr* could have been written is 1037/1628. The latest it could have been written is 1042/1632, when Ṣadrā wrote his most important theoretical work on scripture, the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*.

The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda* is 135 pages long. It offers a commentary on each verse, and contains an introduction and conclusion, but lacks chapter divisions. More than anything else, it is structured as a running commentary on Q 32. Although there are subheadings

Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy, and Mysticism in Muslim Thought, ed. Todd Lawson (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 471–489.

15 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:1–135/*Majmūʿat*, 375–457. Selections are translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 232–244.

16 Muḥsin Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," in Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:110–11; Rizvī, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 77–87. For Ṣadrā's list, see *Tafsīr*, 6:6.

throughout the work, as is the case with a number of Ṣadrā's other *tafsīr*s, they do not seem to play a significant role or have any discernable linguistic/stylistic unity. Rather, they appear to simply divide Ṣadrā's arguments as he proceeds with his points.

Although Ṣadrā is concerned with questions of eschatology and soteriology in this work (and some of the discussions here may be the direct source of related sections in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*), his meditations on the nature of the Qurʾān and its mysterious letters are among its unique features. Several verses of the *Sūrat al-sajda* also prompt him to elaborate on his cosmology, especially as it relates to God's attributes and the temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) of the world—which leads to some interesting discussions on psychology, such as the nature of the heart and its relation to the divine Throne, the levels of the "Folk of God" (*darajāt ahl allāh*), and the function of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). It can also be noted that when Ṣadrā discusses the Muḥammadan Light (*nūr Muḥammadī*) here, he seems to rely on his earlier *tafsīr* works, such as the *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī* and the *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr* (for which, see below).

4. TAFSĪR SŪRAT YĀSĪN[17]

This commentary was written in 1030/1621. It is essential for dating Ṣadrā's other writings and for its incorporation of earlier materials, both by himself and the great Persian philosopher, Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. 610/1213–1214), commonly known as Bābā Afḍal.[18] Over 450 pages in length and accompanied by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's glosses,[19] there are no real divisions in this book, although it does have a number of generic subheadings. Unlike any of his other works on scripture, this text contains an interesting discussion on the value and merit of poetry; this occurs in the context of Ṣadrā's refutation of the view that the Qurʾān is merely a form of poetry.

By virtue of the eschatological content of the *sūra*, the most significant aspect of this *tafsīr* is its treatment of bodily resurrection and the states of the afterlife. Interestingly, the *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn* is

17 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 5:10–480/*Majmūʿat*, 457–493.

18 See the entry on the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* below. For an introduction to Kāshānī's life and thought, as well as a translation of more than half of his published works, see William Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Writings of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

19 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 5:482–514.

more concerned with issues of eschatology than any of Ṣadrā's other books on the Qurʾān. He presents here his fully mature views on the modality of the afterlife with particular reference to the becoming of the soul and the forms it will experience in its posthumous states. Ṣadrā's psychology and eschatology as detailed here parallel some of his discussions in his *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād* and his treatment of the states of the afterlife in the *Asfār*.

One of this *tafsīr*'s unique features is its heavy reliance upon the work of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers. Although this is clearly the case in Ṣadrā's other works, this particular text demonstrates the effectiveness of the formulations of the school of Ibn ʿArabī in discussing some of the most vexing and age-old philosophical problems. In particular, Ṣadrā attempts to address the Neoplatonic belief, discussed by Ibn Sīnā and defended by Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), concerning the attachment of souls to celestial bodies in the afterlife in order to undergo physical punishment for sins committed on earth. A close reading of Ṣadrā's response to his predecessors reveals that, through the lens of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, Mullā Ṣadrā offers a remarkable solution which is entirely consistent with his philosophical perspective.[20] Indeed, Ṣadrā's position here sheds a great deal of light on his understanding of the creative aspect of imagination in the next life.

5. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-ḤADĪD[21]

This book was written around 1022/1613, and is Ṣadrā's first *tafsīr* work.[22] It is over 280 pages, and contains an introduction and a conclusion. Like the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*, it does not consist of chapters as such. Unlike the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*, however, it makes consistent use of subheadings throughout the work, each of which is referred to as an "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*). In its printed edition, Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's glosses are also appended to the text.[23]

---

20 The discussion is prompted by the famous *ḥadīth* of awakening. See Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination in Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī's Commentary on the *Ḥadīth* of Awakening," *Islam and Science* 5, no. 1 (2007): 9–22.

21 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:140–327; *Majmūʿat*, 518–565.

22 See Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Muṭālaʿāt wa-Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1366Sh/1987), 3:116. The text in question makes it clear that Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī* (a very early work) was written some time after his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḥadīd*.

23 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:331–89.

This commentary contains a fine example of how Ṣadrā's transcendent philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya*) relates to the Qurʾānic message. His doctrine of substantial motion is briefly discussed here, and is linked to his treatment of the increased levels of perception human beings experience in this world and in the next. Consequently, a good deal of this commentary is devoted to matters of psychology and eschatology.

Significantly, Ṣadrā draws on several well-known Qurʾānic symbols, such as the "preserved tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) and the "inscribed book" (*al-kitāb al-masṭūr*), to explain how the soul's descent into the world, its subsequent development and return to God, and God's foreordainment of its destiny tie into one another. Here, again, we clearly notice the influence of the school of Ibn ʿArabī upon Ṣadrā's formulations, especially with respect to his identification of the heart as the locus of the name Allāh, and his understanding of the function of the divine names in the *telos* of the cosmos.

6. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-WĀQIʿA[24]

The date of the composition of this work is not known, but we can certainly place it between 1030/1621 and some time before Ṣadrā penned his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*.[25] This *tafsīr* is over 120 pages and comes with an introduction, subheadings (but no chapter headings), and a conclusion. It is a straightforward running commentary on the *sūra*'s principle themes: the final day and the afterlife.

Ṣadrā makes it clear in his introduction that one cannot understand these eschatological realities without "tasting" (*dhawq*) and a heightened state of consciousness (*wijdān*). Consequently, this commentary contains fairly detailed discussions concerning the states of the grave, the resurrection, and the ranks of souls in the afterlife. As in a number of his other books, Ṣadrā states that the forms of knowledge souls will have in the next life will be commensurate with their levels of knowledge in this life. In his treatment of the function of imagination and its relation to the levels of being, Ṣadrā bases himself on Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[26]

24 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:8–134; *Majmūʿat*, 495–518. Selections are translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 245–263.

25 At *Tafsīr* 7:93, Ṣadrā alludes to his *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*, which was written in 1022/1621.

26 Ibid., 7:36–7.

Perhaps the most interesting features of this commentary are Ṣadrā's interpretations of the many eschatological symbols mentioned in the *sūra*. In this sense, this work resembles sections of Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḥadīd* and the later parts of his *Asrār al-āyāt*, another of his theoretical works on the Qurʾān.

7. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-JUMUʿA[27]

The exact date of this work's composition is not certain. Bīdārfar considers it to have been written between 1041/1631 and 1050/1640 (Ṣadrā's commonly acknowledged death date),[28] while Rizvi dates its composition between 1041/1631 and 1043–4/1634 (a year before Ṣadrā's newly proposed death date).[29] In the introduction to his translation of Ṣadrā's *Iksīr al-ʿārifīn*, William Chittick argues that the *Iksīr*, itself a significant reworking of Bābā Afḍal's *Jāwidān-nāma*, was written in 1030/1621 or perhaps earlier, since the *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*, definitively composed in 1030/1621, contains an expanded version of material already contained in the *Iksīr*. This leads Chittick to conclude that the *Iksīr* must have been written some time before the *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*. This is significant, Chittick argues, because the *Iksīr* itself contains an expanded version of material from Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa*.[30] If Chittick's observations are correct, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* would have to be placed before the *Iksīr* and thus in an earlier phase of Ṣadrā's career as opposed to a later phase. Bīdārfar and Rizvi, on the other hand, do not consider this particular *tafsīr* to be early, most likely because Ṣadrā does not mention it in the introduction to his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. But there seems to be another good reason not to consider the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* as an early work, namely Ṣadrā's explicit mention of his *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn* in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* itself.[31]

Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* is a complete commentary on this *sūra*, and is close to 200 pages in length. The commentary contains

27 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:136–305; *Majmūʿat*, 565–589.

28 Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," 1:110.

29 Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 84. For Rizvi's argument in favor of Ṣadrā's earlier death date, see 28–30.

30 See Chittick, "Translator's Introduction," in Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, ed. and trans. William Chittick (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), xix–xx.

31 See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:218. Moreover, some other internal evidence seems to suggest that this book was written after the *Asfār* (see Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:256), which was completed in 1037/1628 (Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 54).

an introduction, twelve chapters called "dawning places" (*maṭlaʿ*),[32] and a conclusion. Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's glosses are appended to the work.[33] Each of the *maṭlaʿ*s of *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* are centered around one verse of the *sūra*, the exception being the sixth *maṭlaʿ*, which contains comments on verses six and seven, and ninth and tenth *maṭlaʿ*, which, combined, do the same for verse ten. The chapters are composed of the generic subheadings characteristic of a number of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*s. Each *maṭlaʿ* generally contains several *ishrāqāt* (illuminations) and any one of a number of subheadings, with names such as "moonlight" (*nūr qamarī*), "earthly shadow" (*ẓill farshī*), "moon-shadow" (*ẓill qamarī*), and "throne-light" (*nūr ʿarshī*).

The opening lines of *Sūrat al-jumuʿa* say that *Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies* (yusabbiḥu) *God.* This verse allows Ṣadrā to introduce the well-known distinction between necessary and contingent being, since the fact that all things glorify God is itself an indication that they are contingent. Yet not all existents are the same, as some are less dense than others by virtue of their detachment from matter. Thus, the more an existent is characterized by materiality the less intense its glorification of God, and the less it is characterized by materiality the more intense its glorification.

Although it may seem that this commentary deals with questions of ontology more than anything else,[34] this is only true with respect to the first *maṭlaʿ*. The remaining *maṭlaʿ*s discuss in some detail the divine wisdom behind God's sending prophets to humankind, the nature of knowledge and wisdom, and the meaning of death and eschatology. As a corollary of the latter, some attention is paid to questions of psychology. Characteristic of some of his

32 Those familiar with the Sufi commentary tradition will immediately recognize the (Qurʾānic) term *maṭlaʿ* (97:5), since it functions as one of the "senses" of Sufi Qurʾānic exegesis. It can be translated in several ways: anagogic sense, lookout point, or transcendent perspective. The way Ṣadrā employs the term here indicates that we should understand it within the context of his treatment of hierarchies (both cosmological and psychological), which are developed throughout the *tafsīr* work. Thus, in this context, I have translated the term as "dawning place." For a discussion of this term within the context of the Sufi Qurʾānic exegetical tradition, see Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8–12.

33 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:446–67.

34 Cf. Ibrahim Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Ṣadrā with a Brief Account of his Life," *Islamic Studies* 42, no.1 (2003): 39; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 84.

other writings, such as the *Sih aṣl*, Ṣadrā also spends a good deal of time contrasting people who love this world (especially worldly scholars) with those who love the next world.

This commentary's main area of focus is the "levels of faith" (*marātib al-īmān*), this is in keeping with Ṣadrā's pronouncements in his introduction to the text, where he states that the work contains "the mothers of the objectives of faith" (*ummahāt al-maqāṣid al-īmāniyya*).[35] Perhaps more than his other *tafsīr*s, in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumuʿa* Ṣadrā expands on that aspect of the religious life that complements faith, namely practice. Ṣadrā's concern with religious practice comes out best toward the end of the tenth *maṭlaʿ*, where he dedicates a profound discussion to the "levels of invocation" or "remembrance" (*marātib al-dhikr*).

8. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-ṬĀRIQ[36]

This is the second shortest of Ṣadrā's Qurʾān commentaries. It was composed in 1030/1621. Just over fifty pages in length, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭāriq* comes with an important introduction, several subheadings with various titles, and a brief concluding paragraph. In his introduction, Ṣadrā's language betrays its indebtedness to the Sufi Qurʾānic exegetical tradition, as he speaks of his unveiling the "beauty of the brides" (*jamāl al-ʿarāʾis*) and "virgins" (*abkār*) of the Qurʾān's *sūra*s and *āya*s.[37] He also alludes to the function of the bestowal of divine mercy in comprehending the Qurʾān.[38]

Thematically, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭāriq* is similar to parts of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-wāqiʿa*. The most interesting section of the commentary is its discussion of cosmology and how the existence of the heavens (*samāʾ*) mentioned in the opening verse of *Sūrat al-ṭāriq* point to the existence of God. Here Ṣadrā attempts to establish the contingency of the heavens, and, in doing so, goes on to show how that which is contingent necessarily points to that which is beyond itself, namely the Necessary (*al-wājib*). One aspect of this commentary not to be found in Ṣadrā's other *tafsīr*s is his treatment of the stages of man's development (prompted by verses six and seven of the *sūra*). This point is a perfect complement to Ṣadrā's doctrine

35 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:139.

36 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:308–59; *Majmūʿat*, 589–598.

37 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:308.

38 Ibid., 7:309.

of substantial motion (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*), although he does not explicitly draw the connection here.

9. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-AʿLĀ[39]

Like several of the other *tafsīr*s described above, this work was most likely written after 1022/1613, and certainly before the composition of Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. A relatively short treatise (less than fifty pages), the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-aʿlā* is the most structured of all of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qurʾān. It contains an introduction, seven chapters,[40] and a very short concluding paragraph. Each chapter is entitled *tasbīḥ* ("declaration of transcendence" or "glorification"), and each *tasbīḥ* is devoted to one or more of the *sūra*'s verses.

The *sūra* begins in the imperative, commanding readers to glorify the name of God (*sabbiḥ ism rabbika l-aʿlā*), and this is the reason Ṣadrā calls the chapters of his commentary *tasbīḥ*s. He begins his commentary by explaining that the primary denotation (*al-maqṣūd al-aṣlī*) of the root *s.b.ḥ.* is God's transcendence and exaltedness. Although the root denotes "glorification," it does so as a result of stating how other and far removed God is. Thus, each chapter begins with God's transcendence and then addresses a variety of issues, such as God's providence and solicitude for His creatures, His attributes, and the types of damnation and felicity people will experience in the afterlife.

10. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-ZILZĀL[41]

By far the most modest of Ṣadrā's commentaries on a Qurʾānic *sūra*—both in size and scope—this thirty-four page work contains a short introduction, generic subheadings, and a brief conclusion. We know that this *tafsīr* was written some time before 1042/1632, since Ṣadrā refers to it by name in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. And, more significantly, he explicitly mentions his famous *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* in this *tafsīr*.[42] As Rizvi observes, the *Shawāhid* must have been completed before 1041/1631, since in this text Ṣadrā speaks of his esteemed teacher, Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041/1631), as still alive.[43] The *Shawāhid* is a mature work and was the subject of a number of

39 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:362–407; *Majmūʿat*, 598–607.

40 Cf. Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography," 38; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 85.

41 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:410–44; *Majmūʿat*, 607–613.

42 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:435.

43 Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 59.

important commentaries, the most significant of which is by the Qajar philosopher and follower of Ṣadrā, Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī (d. 1289/1873). According to Rizvi, the *Shawāhid* was completed between 1030/1621 and 1040/1630, but certainly before 1041/1631. Since the *Asfār* was completed in 1037/1628 and the *Shawāhid* was in all likelihood written after the *Asfār*'s completion, it would be safe to date the completion of the *Shawāhid* somewhere between 1037/1628 and 1041/1631. Since the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-zilzāl* mentions the *Shawāhid*, the earliest it could have been written is 1628. We can, therefore, locate the date of this *tafsīr*'s composition somewhere between 1037/1628 and 1041/1632.

There are a few instances in this *tafsīr* where Ṣadrā directly links the notion of "scripture" to his ontology and cosmology.[44] Some interesting points also emerge in his exposition of the nature of the scrolls (*ṣuḥuf*) of peoples' deeds which will be brought forth on the final day. Although this particular *sūra* does not mention these scrolls, its last two verses speak about people "seeing" their good and evil actions. The notion of "seeing" in the afterlife is therefore one of the major themes that runs through this commentary.

Commentaries on Individual *Āyas*

11. TAFSĪR ĀYAT AL-KURSĪ[45]

This work, which is over 300 pages long, was written around 1022/1613 and is thus one of Ṣadrā's earliest works devoted to the Qur'ān. Contrary to what the work's title indicates, it is not only a commentary on the Throne verse (Q 2:255). Half of the text is actually a commentary on the two verses that follow it. The book is divided into an introduction, twenty discussions (*maqāla*) with different generic titles, and a conclusion. The first eleven discussions are devoted to commenting on the Throne verse, discussions twelve to fifteen to Q 2:256, and discussions sixteen to twenty to Q 2:257. Like his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, Ṣadrā's comments on the other two

44 For a helpful discussion of this phenomenon, see Shigeru Kamada, "Mullā Ṣadrā Between Mystical Philosophy and Qur'ān Interpretation through His Commentary on the 'Chapter of the Earthquake,'" *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005): 275–289.

45 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:8–342/*Majmūʿat*, 290–357. Selections are translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 264–285.

verses of this *sūra* also allow him to address issues related to the meaning of faith and unbelief.

The mention of "intercession" in Q 2:255, "the firm handle" (*al-ʿurwat al-wuthqā*) in Q 2:256, and God's *walāya* in Q 2:257 prompts Ṣadrā to discuss the institution of the Imamate and its legitimacy, as well as the reality of "intercession" on the day of judgment, concerns that he does not display in any of his other *tafsīrs*.[46] It is difficult to determine why the distinctly "Shīʿī" character of this book almost disappears by the time we reach Ṣadrā's final *tafsīr*. At the same time, his last work on "scripture," the incomplete *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī* (completed in 1043–4/1634), is just as Shīʿī in nature as the *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*.

Ṣadrā also deals here with the nature of being, God's mercy, and the divine names and attributes. Significantly, several key features of this work in matters concerning eschatology and soteriology, the significance of the *tahlīl* formula, and the nature of God's essence and attributes, parallel or even correspond to sections of Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, and thus partly serve as one of this text's main sources.

12. TAFSĪR ĀYAT AL-NŪR[47]

Completed in 1030/1621, Ṣadrā's extensive commentary on the light verse (slightly over eighty pages) contains an introduction, six sections (*fuṣūl*, often divided into subsections with various generic subtitles), and a concluding statement (*khātima wa-waṣiyya*). Of all of his works on the Qurʾān, this *tafsīr* has received the most attention in modern scholarship. There seems to be a good justification for this, since this particular *tafsīr* represents many of Ṣadrā's central concerns as a philosopher/mystic commenting upon scripture.

---

46 One of the alternative titles of this work is *Tafsīr al-ʿurwat al-wuthqā*. This term may be linked with the intercession granted by the Imams and the well-known *ḥadīth* of the "ship of Noah" (*safīnat Nūḥ*). See Muḥammad Khwājawī's introduction in Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:5. This title (i.e., *Tafsīr al-ʿurwat al-wuthqā*) has at times been mistakenly attributed to Ṣadrā's son. See Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*, ed. Muḥammad Jaʿfar Maḥjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanāʾī, 1960), 1:182. ʿAbd al-Nabī Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh Marʿashī, 1987), 51, seems to attribute this work to Ṣadrā's son as well, but refers to it as *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*.

47 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:345–427/*Majmūʿat*, 358–375. Translated as *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qurʾān*, trans. Latimah Peerwani (London: ICAS Press, 2004).

Since there is a fairly long commentary tradition on the light verse, Ṣadrā draws on the commentaries by Ibn Sīnā, Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274). Apart from his citations from the Imams, he also demonstrates his familiarity with the sayings of the Sufis, citing figures such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Kharrāz (d. 286/899), Dhū l-Nūn (d. 245/860), Abū Yazīd Biṣṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875), Shiblī (d. 334/946), and, indirectly, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 526/1131).[48]

As would be expected in this commentary, Ṣadrā clearly identifies light with being and brings it to bear upon the verse's pregnant symbology. This then allows him to relate the fundamentality of light and the verse's symbols to his psychology, cosmology, and anthropology. The nature and cosmic function of the Perfect Man is brought out particularly well here. Unlike Ṣadrā's other *tafsīr*s, there seems to be more emphasis in this text upon the question of self-knowledge, once again evincing the influence of the work of Bābā Afḍal.

13. TAFSĪR QUR'ĀN 27:88[49]

This three-page, incomplete commentary on Q 27:88, *And you look at the mountains, deeming them to be still . . .*, seems to have first been attributed to Ṣadrā by Āqā Buzurg.[50] It might be best to place this work at a very early period in Ṣadrā's career because of its distinctly Shīʿī undertones.[51] Assuming that this treatise is an early work, it might be a good example of what Ṣadrā had in mind when he spoke of his "miscellaneous writings" (*mutafarraqāt*) on the Qur'ān, and

48 For discussions of Ṣadrā's relationship to Sufism, see Carl Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā," in *Mullā Ṣadrā and Transcendent Philosophy (Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue: The Papers Presented at the World Congress on Mullā Ṣadrā, May*, 1999, Tehran) (Tehran: SIPRIn, 2001), 1:173–92; Janis Ešots, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Teaching on *Wujūd*: A Synthesis of Philosophy and Mysticism" (PhD diss., Tallinn University, 2007).

49 Ṣadrā, *Majmūʿat*, 614–616.

50 See Āqā Buzurg, *Dharīʿa*, 4:278.

51 In two places, the text mentions the *tafsīr* of a certain "ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm," which is most likely a reference to the important early Shīʿī Qur'ān commentator, al-Qummī (d. 307/919). Ṣadrā also makes a somewhat opaque reference to the "*shiqshiqiyya*," which he appears to link to the "people of intelligence" (*ahl al-faṭāna*), from whom the reality of the final hour is not hidden. See Ṣadrā, *Majmūʿat*, 615. To readers familiar with the *Nahj al-balāgha*, the term *shiqshiqiyya* evokes the book's famous third sermon.

which he distinguished from his more complete *tafsīr*s.[52] Indeed, the work is "scattered" in that it reads like a set of stray reflections on Q 27:88. In terms of both style and content, this text resembles Ṣadrā's other *tafsīr*s, and so there is no good reason to assume that he is not its author, especially since the treatise clearly alludes to (but does not develop) Ṣadrā's doctrine of substantial motion.

Theoretical Works on the Qurʾān

14. MAFĀTĪḤ AL-GHAYB[53]

In the final phase of Ṣadrā's career, his writings on the Qurʾān took on a slightly different focus. Whereas before 1041/1631 he had written a number of independent commentaries on *sūra*s and *āya*s, from 1041/1631 to the end of his life he began to write books that deal with a variety of hermeneutical questions and themes related to the Qurʾān. This shift in focus is best evidenced in the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (cf. Q 6:59) written in 1042/1632.

It is not quite clear why Ṣadrā did not devote a treatise to independent questions concerning the Qurʾān until a much later date in his intellectual life. It would be incorrect to say that the *Mafātīḥ* was written after Ṣadrā's intellectual perspective had crystallized, since his first *tafsīr* work is quite mature, and was completed a considerable time after the commencement of the *Asfār*. It would also be incorrect to say that Ṣadrā wrote the *Mafātīḥ* as an "introduction" to his Qurʾān commentaries, since there is little evidence in the *Mafātīḥ* itself that suggests this. All that we can say with certainty is that, after having already written over ten *tafsīr*s, Ṣadrā's perspective deepened by the time he penned the *Mafātīḥ*, and he was thus in a better position to address the general hermeneutical questions and important themes related to the Qurʾān. Thus, the *Mafātīḥ* can be said to present the epitome of Ṣadrā's hermeneutical approach to the Qurʾān.[54]

The published version of the *Mafātīḥ* is over 700 pages and is accompanied by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's extensive glosses.[55] The book contains an important introduction and twenty chapters or "keys"

52 See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:6 and above.

53 Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2002), 75–782.

54 See Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*, ch. 1.

55 Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 787–881.

(*mafātīḥ*), the first ten of which comprise part one, and the last ten of which comprise part two. Each chapter consists of various subtitles, all of which have specific titles.

Technically speaking, the *Mafātīḥ* is not a work on the Qurʾān or on Qurʾānic hermeneutics, since only the first two *miftāḥ*s are concerned with the Qurʾān as such. *Miftāḥ* 1 (which is a significantly expanded discussion of several sections of Ṣadrā's *Asfār* and, to a lesser extent, parts of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*) and *miftāḥ* 2 inform the remaining eighteen *miftāḥ*s in such a way that, without them, understanding how the *Mafātīḥ* in its entirety is meant to outline Ṣadrā's hermeneutics is impossible. Thus, *miftāḥ* 4, which concerns the different types of "inspiration" (*ilhām*) a person may receive, cannot, in and of itself, function as an outline of Ṣadrā's hermeneutics, but it does inform what Ṣadrā says in *miftāḥ* 1, where he discusses "revelation" (*waḥy*). This means that the book's chapters beyond *miftāḥ* 2—dealing as they do with such topics as the nature of knowledge, angelology, eschatology, the creation of the world, and wayfaring on the path to God—do not allow one to abstract Ṣadrā's hermeneutical theory proper. They function as practical applications of the theoretical considerations laid out in *miftāḥ* 1 and *miftāḥ* 2, or, in rare cases, elaborate upon some of the ideas discussed in them. From this perspective, those sections in *miftāḥ*s 3–20, where Ṣadrā deals with the Qurʾān, resemble his reflections on its verses to be found in his *tafsīr* and non-*tafsīr* works.

15. ASRĀR AL-ĀYĀT WA-ANWĀR AL-BAYYINĀT[56]

The *Asrār al-āyāt* was written during the final phase of Ṣadrā's career. It is over 200 pages in length, while Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's glosses are longer than the book itself.[57] The *Asrār* consists of an introduction and three sections (*ṭaraf*). Each section is subdivided into several subsections known as "places of witnessing" (*mashhad*), each of which contains several principles (*qāʿida*). The scope of this work is vast, for in it Ṣadrā discusses a wide range of theological and philosophical topics, often drawing upon verses of the Qurʾān in his discussions.

56 Ṣadrā, *Asrār al-āyāt wa-anwār al-bayyināt*, ed. S. M. Mūsawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, 1385Sh/2006).

57 Ibid., 223–522.

The *Asrār* deals with various philosophical and mystical issues: the path of the wayfarers to God and the method of those who are "firmly rooted in knowledge" (an allusion to Q 3:7), proofs for God's existence, the nature of the Supreme Name (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*) and its locus of manifestation (*maẓhar*, i.e., the Perfect Man), the Muḥammadan Reality, the temporal origination of the world, meditations on the transience of this worldly life, and eschatology. In the *Asrār*, Ṣadrā also discusses the names and qualities of the Qurʾān, the difference between God's speech and His book, the modality of revelation to the prophets, the nature of the divine book, God's address (*khiṭāb*) to His creatures, and the "Perfect Words" (*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*) referred to in a famous *ḥadīth*.

16. MUTASHĀBIHĀT AL-QURʾĀN[58]

Although we do not have a date of composition for this short treatise on the "ambiguous" verses of the Qurʾān, it may have been written after the *Mafātīḥ*, since parts of the treatise seem to expand on shorter discussions in corresponding sections of the *Mafātīḥ*.[59] The treatise itself consists of an introduction and five chapters (*fuṣūl*), and is no more than thirty pages long.

Ṣadrā begins this text by summarizing the problem of the ambiguous verses and briefly highlighting the views of his predecessors. Here, he charges a number of Qurʾān commentators' interpretations of these verses as being nothing more than sophistry. Ṣadrā then launches an attack on the interpretations of scripture carried out by "the deniers of the divine attributes" (*ahl al-taʿṭīl*). After clearing the ground, so to speak, he moves on to his own treatment of the ambiguous verses, discussing the nature of metaphor and explaining how unveiling (*kashf*) functions in the interpretation of these verses. Ṣadrā is careful to tell his readers that not all verses that cannot be understood rationally are to be interpreted metaphorically. It is

58 Ṣadrā, *Sih risāla-yi falsafī*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Markazī-yi Intishārāt-i Daftar-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī, 1379 Sh/2000), 257–284. A translation of this work can be found in David Dakake, "Defining Ambiguity: Early and Classical Commentary on the *Mutashābih* Verses of the Qurʾān" (PhD diss., Temple University, in progress).

59 Cf. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, "*Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ*," 77. Āshtiyānī's glosses to this text, which are to be found in Ṣadrā, *Sih risāla*, 285–310, mainly consist of those excerpts from the *Mafātīḥ* that discuss the Qurʾān's *mutashābih* verses.

precisely through "unveiling" that one can come to know the reality of those Qurʾānic passages that seem to defy reason.

Qurʾānic Works of Doubtful Authenticity

17–19. TAFSĪRS SŪRAT YŪSŪF, ṬALĀQ, AND QADR

Carl Brockelmann ascribes the *Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsūf* to Ṣadrā. But no reference to this work is found in Ṣadrā's writings; and there does appear to be one rather late reference to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭalāq*.[60] There do not appear to be any extant manuscripts of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭalāq* or the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-qadr*.

20. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-ḌUḤĀ

Several authors, the first of whom appears to have been Āqā Buzurg, have ascribed this title to Ṣadrā. The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḍuḥā* is listed in the "individual *tafsīr* entries" of the *Dharīʿa*,[61] but does not appear among the titles listed in its "basic *tafsīr* entries." It is difficult to determine whether or not the first of the two "basic *tafsīr* entries" was written before the entry on the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḍuḥā* found its way into the list of "individual *tafsīr* entries." Although the former's entry number is 1283, and the latter is numbered 1466, its precedence relates to alphabetical order. Thus, it is not possible to judge whether or not Āqā Buzurg wished to amend his first list of "basic *tafsīr* entries" but did not have the opportunity to do so. In fact, the volume in which both of these entries appear was edited and printed after Āqā Buzurg's death under the care of his sons.[62] The problem is further complicated by the fact that the first list of "basic *tafsīr* entries" says the source for its listing of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*s is a collection of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* printed in 1333/1914. But the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḍuḥā* is reported by Āqā Buzurg to have been found in a printed collection of his *tafsīr*s dating to 1332/1913.[63] All subsequent entries in the *Dharīʿa* that make reference to this printed collection date it to 1332/1913, so the 1333/1914 date is likely to have been a slip of the

60 Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1938), Suppl. 2:589.

61 Āqā Buzurg, *Dharīʿa*, 4:338. For my tripartite division of the *Dharīʿa*'s entries on Ṣadrā's Qurʾānic works, see n. 1 above.

62 See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v.v. "*al-Ḏarīʿa elā taṣānīf al-šīʿa*" (by Etan Kohlberg).

63 Āqā Buzurg, *Dharīʿa*, 4:338. The collection of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* used by Āqā Buzurg seems to be different from the lithographed edition in my possession, because the latter was printed some ten years earlier and, more importantly, because it does not contain the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḍuḥā*.

pen on the part of the author. The fact that Āqā Buzurg does not have an entry on this work in his listing of "individual *tafsīr* entries" may also call its attribution to Ṣadrā into question. According to Nahīd Bāqirī Khurramdashtī and Fāṭima Aṣgharī, this title is extant in manuscript form.[64]

21. TAFSĪR SŪRAT AL-IKHLĀṢ[65]

This title is not commonly ascribed to Ṣadrā, but is included in some of the more recent bibliographies of his works.[66] Because the text cannot be dated to any particular period, if Ṣadrā is its author, he could have written it at any point in his career. Compared to his other *tafsīr*s, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ* is structured differently, and its discussions are not as detailed as those in texts of a similar size (i.e., less than forty pages). The *tafsīr* is strangely divided into two parts, which seem to be two separate treatises. Part 1 consists of an introduction composed of six sections or "merits" (*fā'ida*), comments on the *sūra*'s verses, and a conclusion that is composed of two "merits." The first part of the commentary is mostly concerned with proving God's oneness. There is nothing specifically Ṣadrian about this part of the commentary. The language is fairly straightforward, and a reliance upon the terminology of the school of Ibn ʿArabī is evidenced throughout.

The second part of the *tafsīr* is also a running commentary on each of the verses of Q 112. In the introduction to the second part, which is the most important section of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ*, the author briefly discusses the symbolism of the letters of the *basmala*.

22–24. MAʿĀNĪ AL-ALFĀẒ AL-MUFRADA MIN AL-QUR'ĀN, RISĀLA FĪ RUMŪZ AL-QUR'ĀN, AND TAʿLĪQA ʿALĀ ANWĀR AL-TANZĪL

The *Maʿānī* was first listed by Khurramdashtī and Aṣgharī.[67] They say that it is a short treatise that discusses some of the individual terms and/or phrases found in the Qur'ān. Ṣadrā does not appear to refer to this work in his writings. In all likelihood, it too is an excerpt from a larger work. This hypothesis may be correct, since in Āqā

64 Nahīd Bāqirī Khurramdashtī (with the assistance of Fāṭima Aṣgharī), *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmiʿ-i Mullā Ṣadrā* (Tehran: SIPRIn, 1999), 72.

65 Ṣadrā, *Majmūʿat al-rasā'il al-falsafiyya*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d., repr. ed.), 429–472.

66 See Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography," 40; Khurramdashtī and Aṣgharī, *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmiʿ-i Mullā Ṣadrā*, 73; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 109.

67 Khurramdashtī and Aṣghārī, *Kitābshināsī-yi jamiʿ-i Mullā Ṣadrā*, 74.

Buzurg's content description of Ṣadrā's *Mafātīḥ*, he states that one of the sections in *miftāḥ* 1 is about the "*maʿānī al-alfāẓ al-mufrada*" of the Qurʾān.[68] Going on this description alone, it appears to correspond to *miftāḥ* 1:1–3. The *Risāla fī rumūz al-qurʾān*, which is only listed by Brockelmann,[69] is likely to be the same as the *Maʿānī*, or at least a part of it, since its title indicates that it corresponds to *miftāḥ* 1:1, which is about the symbols (*rumūz*) of the Qurʾān.

Thanks to Ṣadrā's inventory of books in his personal library,[70] we know that he was familiar with the *tafsīr* of the famous Sunnī theologian and exegete, ʿAbd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī (d. 716/1316), parts of whose *Anwār al-tanzīl* were in his possession.[71] However, the common attribution of a set of glosses on this text to Ṣadrā under the title *Taʿlīqa ʿalā Anwār al-tanzīl*[72] is, in all likelihood, mistaken.[73]

68 Āqā Buzurg, *Dharīʿa*, 21:305.

69 Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Suppl. 2:589.

70 See Ṣadrā, *Yāddāsht-hā-yi Mullā Ṣadrā hamrāh bā fihrist-i kitābkhāna-yi shakhṣī-yi Mullā Ṣadrā*, ed. Muḥammad Barakat (Qum: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1377Sh/1998). It is reproduced in English in Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 117–135. For the entry on Bayḍāwī, see ibid., 118–119. This inventory of works, although very useful, certainly does not present us with a complete listing of all of the texts in Ṣadrā's possession over the course of his career. According to the editor of the catalog of Ṣadrā's personal library, the latest Ṣadrā could have drawn up this list would have been around two decades before his death (see Ṣadrā, *Yāddāsht-hā*, 8–9).

71 For this work, see Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1911).

72 See, for example, Dihqan Mangabadi, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Method of Qurʾān Commentary," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith (Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue: The Papers Presented at the World Congress on Mullā* Ṣadrā, May, 1999) (Tehran: SIPRIn, 2005), 441, where the author has "*Hahiyyah* (sic.) *bar* (*marginal gloss on*) *Tafsīr Bayḍari* (sic)"; Muḥammad ʿAlī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Khayyām, 1369Sh/1990), 4:419.

73 See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 116.

Appendix

Toward a Chronology of Mullā Ṣadrā's Qurʾānic Works

Below is a tentative chronology of Ṣadrā's Qurʾān-related compositions which are of unquestionable authenticity.[74] The first table considers these works alone, and the second with respect to his datable, non-Qurʾānic writings. In order to avoid confusion, I have only employed Gregorian dates.

A Tentative Chronology of Ṣadrā's Qurʾānic Works

Year	Title	Notes
ca. 1613	*T. S. Ḥadīd*	First *tafsīr* work; before *T. Ā. Kursī*
ca. 1613	*T. Ā. Kursī*	Shortly after *T. S. Ḥadīd*
ca. 1613	*T. Q* 27:88	Incomplete; likely a very early work
1621	*T. Ā. Nūr*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1621	*T. S. Ṭāriq*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1621	*T. S. Yāsīn*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1621–32	*T. S. Wāqiʿa*	Before *T. S. Sajda*; after *T. S. Yāsīn*
1621–32	*T. S. Aʿlā*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1628–32	*T. S. Jumuʿa*	Before *T. S. Sajda*?; after *T. S. Yāsīn*
1628–32	*T. S. Zilzāl*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1628–32	*T. S. Sajda*	After all of the above (but not *T. S. Jumuʿa*?); before *Mafātīḥ*
1631	*Asrār*	Possibly after *Mafātīḥ*
1632	*Mafātīḥ*	
1632–34	*Mutashāb*	Most likely after *Mafātīḥ*
1632–34	*T. S. Fātiḥa*	After *Mafātīḥ*
1632–34	*T. S. Baqara*	After *T. S. Fātiḥa*

74 The dates given in this tentative chronology are based on the following (in their order of usefulness): Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 51–135; references within Ṣadrā's writings; Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," 110–1; Chittick, "Translators' Introduction," xix–xx.

A Chronology of Ṣadrā's Qurʾānic Works vis-à-vis His Datable, non-Qurʾānic Writings

Year	Title	Notes
1606	*Mabdaʾ*	
* ca. 1613	*T. S. Ḥadīd*	First *tafsīr* work; before *T. Ā. Kursī*
* ca. 1613	*T. Ā. Kursī*	Shortly after *T. S. Ḥadīd*
* ca. 1613	*T. Q* 27:88	Incomplete; likely a very early work
1614	*Wāridāt*	1621?
1618	*Kasr*	
1606–20	*Sh. al-Hidāya*	Completed around 1606, reworked in 1620
* 1621	*T. Ā. Nūr*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
* 1621	*T. S. Ṭāriq*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1621?	*Iksīr*	Possibly before *T. S. Yāsīn*
* 1621	*T. S. Yāsīn*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
* 1621–32	*T. S. Wāqiʿa*	Before *T. S. Sajda*; after *T. S. Yāsīn*
* 1621–32	*T. S. Aʿlā*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
1623	*Risālat al-ḥashr*	
1624	*Masāʾil*	Incomplete
1624–25	*Ḥudūth*	
* 1628–32	*T. S. Jumuʿa*	Before *T. S. Sajda*?; after *T. S. Yāsīn*
1628	*Asfār*	Commenced in 1606
1628	*Mashāʿir*	Likely after *Asfār*
1628–31	*Shawāhid*	
* 1628–32	*T. S. Zilzāl*	Before *T. S. Sajda*
* 1628–32	*T. S. Sajda*	After all of the above (but not *T. S. Jumuʿa*?); before *Mafātīḥ*
* 1631	*Asrār*	Possibly after *Mafātīḥ*
* 1632	*Mafātīḥ*	
* 1632–34	*Mutashāb*	Most likely after *Mafātīḥ*
* 1632–34	*T. S. Fātiḥa*	After *Mafātīḥ*
* 1632–34	*T. S. Baqara*	After *T. S. Fātiḥa*
1634	*Sh. al-Kāfī*	Incomplete
1628–34	*Taʿlīq Ilāhiyyāt al-shifāʾ*	After *Shawāhid*
1632–34	*Taʿlīq Sh. Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*	After *T. S. Fātiḥa*
1632–34	*ʿArshiyya*	After *Taʿlīq Sh. Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*

Book Reviews

CHRISTIAN JAMBET

THE ACT OF BEING: THE PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION IN MULLĀ SADRĀ

Translated by Jeff Fort. New York: Zone Books, 2006. 497 pp.

REVIEWED BY: ROBERT J. DOBIE

While the ostensible purpose of this book is to study the metaphysical thought of the seventeenth-century Iranian sage, Mullā Ṣadrā (1571–1640), Christian Jambet's book is more a metaphysical exploration of the very nature of things, using Ṣadrā's work as a sort of launching pad. In three parts, Jambet traces the existential revolution that Mullā Ṣadrā initiates with particular reference to his great Iranian predecessor, Avicenna; the implications of this revolution for our understanding first, of being itself, and then for our understanding of divine revelation and human salvation.

We can separate three strands in Jambet's argument that cross and weave and ultimately come together. The first strand is, properly speaking, not metaphysical but historical: that is, it shows that Islamic philosophy did not come to an end with Averroes but, to the contrary, flourished, particularly farther east, in Shīʿī Iran, where a long tradition of esoteric Qurʾānic exegesis encouraged it. This is what David Burrell calls the "second phase" in the history of Islamic thought, in which al-Ghazālī's *destructio* of the "philosophers" was not an end but merely a dialectical turn in the development of Islamic thought. Thinkers such as Ibn ʿArabī, Naṣr al-Dīn al-Ṭusī, and, of course, Mullā Ṣadrā pursued complex and extensive metaphysical projects, though under the rubric of theosophy (*ʿilm ilahiyya*), "wisdom" (*ḥikma*), or Qurʾānic exegesis rather than that of "philosophy" (*falsafa*).

This brings us, then, to the second strand of the argument: that philosophical thought is itself exegetical. For Mullā Ṣadrā it is naïve to suppose that theology deals with the exegesis of authoritative texts while philosophy proceeds, with the aid of natural reason

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 131–135.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

alone, from reality itself. In fact, all thinking is interpretive, as Jambet makes clear:

> Philosophy is not a discipline separate from exegesis; rather, it is a style of exegesis, although it uses its own means: judgment and demonstration. Metaphysics remains closely connected to other hermeneutic procedures, since its object—being—can be conceived only as the *real* and as coinciding with the nature of God, and since God gives Himself over to being known in scriptural revelation. Thus, we can speak of an *exegetic philosophy*, a philosophical exegesis of God, an exegesis of the book and its interpreters, an exegesis of the self. (46)

No discourse about the nature of reality can be separated from an examination of the self that comes to know it, nor can there be a discourse about the self apart from one about the reality of which the self is a constituent part. This is why philosophy is inherently exegetical, unlike the natural sciences. The latter presupposes a purely objective world, devoid of subjectivity, while philosophy, if it is to grasp reality as such, must grasp reality as an interplay between objective and subjective, between being and knowledge.

This is so because—and this is the third strand of the argument—being is in itself luminous and dynamic. Indeed, for Jambet, what most distinguishes the metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā is its dynamic character: being or existence as such is, for the Iranian philosopher, always pulsating with life and intelligence:

> The act of existing is the immediate luminous presence of the thing itself, its pure immanence. Quiddity had no other being than that which is conferred by the act of existence. Sadra thus explains that it is the *shadow* of the act of being. The quiddity of an existent is the share of darkness and shadow that marks the limit of its act of being. (77)

More fundamental than the static essence of the quiddity of being is the dynamic *flow* of existence: existence is a "flow" precisely because it emanates from the pure act of existing, which is God, and flows back to that source. Here, Mullā Ṣadrā is clearly indebted to the Neoplatonic scheme of emanation and return. But, like Aquinas

before him, Mullā Ṣadrā marries Neoplatonic existential dynamism to the rigor and precision of Aristotle's metaphysical thought:

> The ontology of the act of being reverses the Aristotelian perspective, in that it does not exhaust the metaphysical quest by grasping *ousia* as quiddity but realizes it by grasping *ousia* as the effectivity of an *einai*, of a being. *To on*, the being, is brought back to its beingness, that is, to its *einai*; everything *mawjud*, everything "that is found" in the being, exits through its *wujud*, its "finding itself," its being there. (110)

Mullā Ṣadrā, again, much like Aquinas, thinks past the question of what things are and what sustains them in being to their very act of existence, to their very "presencing," an insight that Avicenna hinted at but never, according to Ṣadrā, brought out clearly. This "act of being" is also a self-luminous "finding itself" (*wujūd* or "finding," "existing") that *reveals* what things are. In that sense, "to be" is always "to be revealed," which, in turn, is always to be present to intellect.

Mullā Ṣadrā's concept of "substantial motion" is consistent with his exposition of a dynamic, Neoplatonic metaphysics. Motion is not, as Aristotle would have it, an accidental feature of substance but belongs, by virtue of its act of being, to the very essence of substantiality itself. The act of being is a pure action or actuality that develops in intensity according to the essential forms that limit it, moving from substantial conditions of more limitation to those of less, at least in the case of intellectual substances. Thus, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, the human soul is a substance that moves in a certain direction by virtue of its intellectual nature: from almost pure materiality in its "first birth" to pure intellectual substantiality after its death or "second birth."

Metaphysical knowledge, then, is not just a static and abstract knowledge of the "furniture" of the universe, but also a knowledge of the soul's trajectory within the universe, which is why, again, metaphysics is essentially hermeneutical: we cannot understand the structure of being apart from the motion of the soul itself. The actualization of the soul's intellectual nature is part of the emanation and return of the act of being to the First Actuality of all being, who is God. It is also a part and parcel of its knowledge of being. Thus, as Jambet notes toward the end of his book, "Revelation is existence;

existence is revelation" (404). To exist is to reveal the dynamic act of being "behind" and, in a sense, "beyond" all existent things or essences. To reveal is to make present the creature or essence to intelligence, which, in the case of the human soul, is to make the creature present to himself. Thus, the ontology of Islam is bound up with being, insofar as Islam is revealed religion—a revelation of being:

> Islamic philosophy can no more be considered an epiphenomenon of Islam than Islam itself can be considered a cultural epiphenomenon. This philosophy is the ontology of Islam; it is the discourse that says, at each of its stages and according to prophetic revelation, what being is. As a discourse on being, it is also a discourse on revelation. As an exegesis of revelation, it accedes to being as being. It thus states the relation of Islam to the truth of being, that is, a constitutive moment of our own relation to being, of our own practice of truth. (21)

All knowledge of being as such, all genuine metaphysics, is a communication or revelation of being itself to the being who can receive that communication. As such, to the degree that a thought is aware of being as revelation and revelation as an "unveiling" of the truth of being, to that degree that awareness is a disclosure of being to itself or, better, God's disclosure of Himself to Himself in and through the intelligent believer. The revealed text, then, is that which "crystallizes" this awareness of the true nature of being as revelation.

Jambet's book is a profound meditation on a profound and powerful metaphysical thinker who deserves to be better known in the West. And yet, his meditative approach has its disadvantages. He pulls texts from the vast corpus of Mullā Ṣadrā's works, but rarely alerts the reader as to the context of the passage under discussion. Also, Jambet does not take into account the development of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought as much as some readers might want: as any scholar knows who has worked extensively on a philosopher, his or her thought is rarely complete but usually undergoes considerable development. Finally, the parallels between Mullā Ṣadrā's doctrine of the act of being and Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of the *actus essendi* are too obvious not to raise questions and ideas in many readers' minds. While the focus of Jambet's book does not, strictly speaking,

obligate him to discuss these parallels, even a brief discussion of them would have left at least this reviewer more satisfied. It would have also, I believe, drawn the educated western reader even more deeply into Mullā Ṣadrā's thought. Nevertheless, the virtues of this book far outweigh any shortcomings and it contributes much to our understanding of a neglected (at least, in the West) but important metaphysical tradition.

Sajjad H. Rizvi

Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being

London: Routledge, 2009. xiii + 222 pp.

Reviewed by: Omar W. Nasim

In this book, the learned author successfully presents a wide-ranging and detailed look at one of Mullā Ṣadrā's central metaphysical tenets, namely, the "modulation" (*tashkīk*) of being (*wujūd*). The work before us, however, is one that is not easily accessible to the non-philosopher, and assumes on the part of the reader a good knowledge of not only Neoplatonism, Peripatetic philosophy, and the vast tradition of Islamic philosophy, but familiarity with contemporary analytic philosophy as well. As a result, the presentation is dense, at times terse and fragmented, but worth an engaged study, nevertheless.

Rizvi is at pains to show that Mullā Ṣadrā's solution to the classic problem of the One and the many, which is described as "the primitive ontological struggle to reconcile one's phenomenal experience of multiplicity, of many existents, with the notion of unity, of One Being" (39), is also fundamental to Ṣadrā's metaphysics as a whole. At the very heart of Ṣadrā's solution is the Aristotelian notion of *pros hen* homonymy of the term "being," i.e., the term is not a universal or a genus, and that it is connected to "primary being," or a static category of substance. Unlike Aristotle and Avicenna, however, Ṣadrā's notion of being is dynamic, "processual," and "modulated" by intensities (the analogy to music is operative for Rizvi), which is also reflected in Ṣadrā's notion of a substance in motion. Like Ṣadrā, Avicenna too acknowledges four modes of being in his pluralism—extra-mental, mental, in linguistic expression, and in writing—but Ṣadrā is able to connect these otherwise different and independent modes into a hierarchical unity, thanks essentially to the scales of intensities in "the pyramid of being" (clearly a Neoplatonic influence, as Rizvi stresses). It is due to this identity-in-difference permitted by Ṣadrian ontology that we find a systematic and graded approach to the semantics of being (chapter 3, where being in linguistic expression

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 136–140.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

and in written form are collapsed into one category by Rizvi), mental being (chapter 4), and real being (chapter 5) in Rizvi's account of Ṣadrā's philosophy. Despite the disjointed nature of Ṣadrā's *Asfār* as a text, it is surprising, therefore, that Rizvi would label Ṣadrā's philosophy as being "anti-systematic" (30).

The author's helpful introduction is dedicated to critically detailing the myriad ways in which Ṣadrā has been treated in the burgeoning literature on him, which include "Esotericism," "Comparative philosophy," "Avicennianism," and "Iranian nativism." While critical of each individual approach, Rizvi duly helps himself to the achievements of each in order to tackle Ṣadrā's extensive philosophy. Chapter 1 lays down some preliminaries, such as his presuppositions concerning the role of pedagogy and oral transmission, and, of course, methodological and textual considerations.

After an essential chapter plotting out the history of being, chapter 3 begins with the semantics of being, which is supposed to be vital to Rizvi's interpretation of Ṣadrā, for it pays attention to an area largely ignored in the literature and permits Rizvi to engage analytic philosophy. Ṣadrā's theory of meaning, truth, and reference are explicated, and his "realism" is stressed. While Quine and Kant are used to motivate certain problems of predication of existence and being (and their privation), Ṣadrā's solutions are based on presuppositions and a vantage point so different from Quine and Kant that it is hard to understand why this would be a good strategy—unless, of course, more was dedicated to motivating the comparison to begin with, which is not the case (I return to this point again below). At any rate, the realm of semantic being is at the lowest rung of the pyramid of being, where dualisms remain, and where word, concept, and extra-mental reference are distinct yet semantically (and I would say, intentionally) connected.

Chapter 4 moves us up to the next level of being, the so-called "mental being" (*wujūd dhihnī*). This is probably Rizvi's most important chapter, but also his most difficult. Not in their original order, the crucial aspects here are: (a) the distinction between mental beings and the beings of the mind; (b) the fact that concepts may be (as they are in the semantic realm) mental beings, but they may be, at a meta-level, beings of the mind, and are, as such, "secondary intelligibles," meaning they are "indeterminate insofar as they neither exist purely mentally or extra-mentally" (95); and (c) an

introduction to the Suhrawardian notion (adapted by Ṣadrā) of "knowledge by presence," which is posited in contrast to a semantic correspondence theory of truth (as outlined in the previous chapter), thus presumably escaping any kind of "me-world" dualism (89).

"Knowledge by presence" is a type of non-propositional knowledge in which the very presence of being, as an intuitional experience, justifies belief—it in fact justifies itself. It is a direct knowledge made possible by the intellecting subject's unification with the intelligible object. This leads Ṣadrā to an epistemology of particulars and an interesting form of intuitive empiricism. Despite the unity achieved between subject and object, this kind of knowledge is not forever indiscriminate, and may be "forged [into] a linguistic discipline," or "metalanguage" which is not public (93).

It is in this context that Rizvi takes up the apparent challenge presented by Wittgenstein's "private-language argument," which is construed as being in opposition to a "mental language" and is necessary, in different ways, to (a-c). Apart from the fact that Wittgensteinians have identified three or four dissimilar private-language arguments (Rizvi only considers one of them), whichever of Wittgenstein's arguments one considers, they *all* assume the impossibility of intellection or intuition, which is essential to Ṣadrā's perspective. Unless one tackles head-on this implicit rejection not only in Wittgenstein but also in much of analytic philosophy, I do not see the relevance of bringing up the private-language argument in this context, as it merely begs the question.

In the final chapter, we come to the highest level of being, namely, real being. The challenge here is primarily to demonstrate the reality of being in its concrete, actual, and extra-mental mode. Such a demonstration is necessary for a variety of reasons, one of the most important being the challenges posed by the Illuminationists' arguments against the reality of being. Since much of the chapter has been covered by others in Ṣadrian literature, Rizvi navigates a well-trodden path, highlighting some fascinating aspects along the way, such as the fine balance achieved by Ṣadrā's "third way" between monism (Akbarians) and pluralism (Peripatetics) (here, one begins to fully appreciate the synthetic genius of Ṣadrā). From this perspective, namely at the highest level of being, one also comes to piece together loose aspects of the preceding chapters. In fact,

the reviewer would recommend reading the last chapter before beginning chapters 3 and 4.

It should also be noted that no mention of, or comparison with, analytic philosophy is attempted in chapter 5, perhaps due to the esoteric nature of Ṣadrā's metaphysics. Also note that in Rizvi's summary of Ṣadrā's argument for the existence of God, (126), there is a serious circularity—being and God are both already and explicitly in the premises. I am not sure if this circularity is a result of the author's summary or Ṣadrā's thinking. Rizvi, to be sure, points out some difficulties with Ṣadrā's argument (i.e., that it might be a tautology), but fails to notice the circularity embedded in his own presentation.

Finally, having arrived at the highest "intensity" of being, we still have not arrived, for as Rizvi aptly puts it, "Ultimately, modulation by intensity of being is a working theory, an explanation (*bayān*) of truth but not truth itself. The latter exists but is not so easily available to us through discourse or analysis" (135). However similar this may seem to the "mysticism" which Wittgenstein was accused of in his discarding the ladder of the sayable once he had arrived at what could only be shown, Rizvi emphasizes that in Ṣadrā's case it has more to do with his philosophy's openness. In order to "provide an important corrective to the Nasr/Corbin approach" to Ṣadrā studies (11), Rizvi proposes that we take analytic philosophy seriously in relation to Ṣadrā. Yet, for this reviewer, such an approach remains an open question, given the ultimate role played by ineffability in Ṣadrā's metaphysics.

In addition to being a kind of corrective, I do, however, see the significance of comparing Ṣadrā's thought to elements of analytic philosophy, and to this end, I would make a few brief and general proposals, mainly in light of Rizvi's treatment. First, there is a recent rise of interest in non-propositional knowledge among philosophers, some of which might be of direct relevance and interest to the issues raised in chapter 3.

Second, the problem of intuitive knowledge plays a significant role in the development of early analytic philosophy, most notably in issues related to the nature of geometry, Frege's "third realm," and in the prevalent discussions surrounding immediate and direct knowledge by acquaintance. It might be particularly fruitful, especially in the latter case, to seriously assess the arguments for and

against intuitive knowledge as presented, for example, in the disputes between Henri Bergson and Bertrand Russell. Doing this might provide the arguments that lie at the root of analytic philosophy's overall rejection of intuitive knowledge, which may be employed in a direct engagement with Ṣadrā's treatment of knowledge by presence and intellection.

Third, considering the amount of space Rizvi dedicates to the fascinating issues surrounding non-existent objects and predication, it might also be worthwhile to note another fertile area of comparison, namely, Meinongian ontology—a tradition in analytic philosophy still very active today. Of particular interest may be Meinong's introduction of the distinction between "Sein" and "So-Sein," which was meant to transcend the restrictions in the fundamental use of "the rule of presupposition" (*qāʿida farʿiyya*) (cf. 80) by Ṣadrā and others.

Ibrahim Kalin

KNOWLEDGE IN LATER ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: MULLĀ ṢADRĀ ON EXISTENCE, INTELLECT, AND INTUITION

New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. xxii + 315 pp.

Reviewed by: Ahab Bdaiwi

The present work is a revised edition of Kalin's doctoral dissertation at George Washington University (2002) carried out chiefly under the supervision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who, alongside the late Henry Corbin, inaugurated Sadrian studies in the West. This book attempts to accomplish two tasks, namely, examine Ṣadrā's acute knowledge of the history of philosophy in the Greco-Islamic context, and his analyze his audacious (successful?) attempt to recast knowledge in terms of existence and its various modalities against the backdrop of Avicennan philosophy and the *kalām* tradition. The work is appended with a translation of a short treatise on the unification of the intellect and the intelligible, *Risāla fī ittiḥād al-ʿāqil wa-l-maʿqūl,* that illustrates Ṣādrā's critiques of Avicenna's notions of knowledge as abstraction and representation, as well as the "theological corrections" Ṣadrā made to avoid the pernicious results of the representational theory of knowledge, in which God's detailed knowledge is posterior to His essence.

The work is thus comprised of three chapters and an appendix. Chapter 1 is divided into two parts. The first part considers the Greco-Alexandrian context and traces the history of the unification argument from Plato to *Plotinus Islamicus*. Starting with Plato, Kalin does well to highlight Plato's explanations of the relation between *eidos* and *nous* as primary agent of intellection, thus laying the foundations (at least according to Ṣadrā's readings of Plato) for a relation of sorts between forms and intellect and, consequently, depending on the credibility of Ṣadrā's 'hermeneutical appropriations,' making knowledge a mode of participation in the intelligible realm, viz., the Platonic Forms.

In reading the 'first teacher,' Mullā Ṣadrā, like his medieval predecessors, presents Aristotle as the author of the *Uthūlūjiyā* and a disciple of Plato, who blends in with Ṣadrā's reformulations

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 141–144.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

of philosophy as being illuminated by *mishkāt al-nubuwwa*. Ṣadrā makes no attempt to explain convincingly how he managed to overlook Aristotle's rejection of Platonic forms, temporal origination of the cosmos, and eternity of the soul; however, Ṣadrā highlights excerpts from the *De Anima* that appear to support the notion of unity between the intellect and the intelligible and thereby lends support to the unification argument. The reader, however, is left with at least one unanswered question: how does Ṣadrā manage this instance of hermeneutical appropriation by reconciling Aristotle's claim that knowledge is abstraction and Ṣadrā's claim that knowledge is presence?

The next section considers Alexander of Aphrodisias' influence on Ṣadrā's predilections for existence as the ontic ground for *sensibilia* and *intelligibilia*, which, like much of Ṣadrā's cosmology, is 'separated' by existential intensity or diminution. Alexander's deliberations on the unity of the intellect and the intelligible is discussed and quoted in Ṣadrā's treatise on the subject; though Ṣadrā makes no valid excuse for placing Alexander within a Neoplatonist tradition. Alexander was, in fact, committed to Aristotelian noetics and had no obvious inclination toward Neoplatonism. The section is concluded with a discussion Ṣadrā's relationship with Plotinus' corpus that features explicit endorsements of the unification argument upheld by Ṣadrā.

The second part of chapter 1 highlights Ṣadrā's struggle to make a case for the unification argument against the backdrop of its rejection (at least in instances other than the case of God) by Muslim Peripatetics. Ṣadrā was perhaps unaware of al-Kindī's treatise entitled 'On the Intellect'; a treatise that makes clear that his position on the unification argument was ambivalent. It is probable that al-Kindī deliberately avoided passing personal judgement on the problem of unification on religious grounds because of its far reaching implications. As for al-Fārābī, there are two possible readings into how he deals with the problem of unification. In one reading, al-Fārābī appears to reject the unification argument while accepting its vocabulary; in another reading, al-Fārābī appears to partially endorse unification based on his six-fold construction of the intellect. On this last, Ṣadrā appears to make another opportunistic attempt to construct a genealogy for his own goals by amplifying al-Fārābī's limited acceptance of unification. Kalin would have

done well to explore this hermeneutical appropriation technique favored by Ṣadrā.

Avicenna's erudition and philosophical acumen was held in high esteem by later philosophers, including Mullā Ṣadrā, who often referred to him as the 'chief master.' While there is valid evidence to suggest Avicenna's acceptance, albeit hesitant, of the unification argument in the case of God, he vehemently rejects it elsewhere and warns of its serious ramifications. In Avicenna's view, acceptance of the unification argument not only departs from traditional philosophy, but also amounts to metaphysical deception and sophistry, a mere poetical interplay of words to claim that something becomes identical with something else without either the former or the latter being destroyed. Interestingly, Avicenna later appears to contradict himself by endorsing unification in the case of self-knowledge and divine intellection, an eventuality that lends itself to Ṣadrā's argument.

Suhrawardī is the last figure taken up in chapter 1. From the outset he appears to echo the Peripatetic position by rejecting the unification argument because of the impossibility of substantial identification. The major problem for Ṣadrā in this case is Suhrawardī's development of a theory of knowledge that circumvents the unification argument; a theory that was later adopted by Ṣadrā with some slight modifications. In response to Suhrawardī's theory of knowledge, Ṣadrā has recourse to his theory of 'gradation-in-existence.' In an attempt to respond to Suhrawardī's imperviousness to unification, Ṣadrā argues that the difference between them stems from different ontologies.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive examination of Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge and its similitude to existence. In fact, Ṣadrā makes it clear that knowledge is an exercise in ontology based on a symmetrical relationship between ontological intensity and epistemic credibility; moreover, in relation to the soul's epistemic standing, disembodiment becomes a condition of intelligibility, and intelligibility is closely correlated to higher levels of existence, thus echoing mystical themes in which knowledge, existence, and axiology are synonyms for the same reality.

After discussing Ṣadrā's critiques of the four theories of knowledge found in the major works of the Peripatetics, the chapter is brought to a close with an excellent set of deliberations on self-knowledge and God's knowledge of things as paramount examples

of Ṣadrā's unification argument. Kalin notes one inconsistency and makes a strong case to point out the tension between the unification argument and the Peripatetic notion of the active intellect that is upheld by Ṣadrā. Kalin is correct to suggest Ṣadrā could have developed his theory of knowledge without requiring the active intellect of the Peripatetics.

Chapter 3 explores the implications of Ṣadrā's onto-epistemological model that highlights Ṣadrā 'rational mysticism' as a basis for knowledge. In Ṣadrā's thought, the meaning of things is revealed to the knower through his unification with the intelligible world on the one hand, and with the world of separate spiritual realities, on the other. All this hinges upon releasing oneself from material limitations. The chapter is concluded with a discussion on Ṣadrā's doctrine of 'ontological vitalism,' according to which beings interact with the world through various modalities of existence marked by intensity or diminution.

The appendix is a translation of Ṣadrā's treatise in defense of the unification argument and a point-by-point response to Avicenna's rejections of unification. While the *Risāla* echoes many points made in the *Asfār*, it remains, nonetheless, an important treatise in post-Avicennan philosophy. The translation of the text contained in the work is fluent and reads well; neologisms and ambiguous terms are discussed as necessary.

Kalin's work is a welcome contribution to Ṣadrā studies. Useful translations of texts and clarity in exposition makes this contribution invaluable to anyone working in the field of Islamic philosophy.

Reza Akbarian

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MULLA SADRA'S TRANSCENDENT PHILOSOPHY

London: London Academy of Islamic Studies, 2009. 238 pp.

Reviewed by: Sayeh Meisami

Reza Akbarian's *The Fundamental Principles of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, published by London Academy of Iranian Studies in 2009, is a defense of Islamic philosophy in the face of those who pronounced it dead after Averroes. At the same time, it is also an introduction to Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy. Akbarian, a long-time scholar and teacher of Ṣadrā, talks on behalf of a great number of contemporary Muslim thinkers who are proud of the Islamic roots of Ṣadrā's "transcendent philosophy," not apologetic about it. Next to an analysis of the components of Ṣadrā's system, made up of revelation, intellection, and illumination (34), the book also regards its synthetic systematization as a major step forward in the spiritualization of philosophy that began before Ṣadrā, courtesy of Ibn ʿArabī and Suhrawardī. Mullā Ṣadrā is proudly presented as "a mystic and religious philosopher who benefits from mystical and religious achievements and particularly the doctrines of Shiite Imams in building up his philosophical framework" (267).

The book follows Mullā Ṣadrā's methodology, elucidating almost all of his major ideas against the background of both Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophies. Thus, one of the greatest advantages of Akbarian's book is in placing the novelties of Ṣadrā's thought in the context of the Islamic tradition as a whole. In explaining Ṣadrā's ontology, epistemology, cosmology, psychology, theology, and eschatology, we therefore find that Akbarian brings to the fore not only Ṣadrā's philosophical and mystical sources, but also the Qurʾānic influences upon his thought, all of which, Ṣadrā insists, serve as the sources of inspiration for his findings.

With the latter point in mind, we see, for example, that Mullā Ṣadrā managed to harmonize the philosophic concept of "effect" with "manifestation" within the domain of mysticism on the one hand, and "the revealed verses" of the Qurʾān, on the other (138). Moreover, the book does not merely take Ṣadrā's holistic approach for granted,

Journal of Islamic Philosophy 6 (2010): 145–147.
 ISSN: 1536-4569

but expounds all of his teachings based on his essential principles, most importantly the primacy and unity of being. Akbarian brings to light Mullā Ṣadrā's success in revolutionizing Islamic philosophy based on this principle. Indeed, Ṣadrā was convinced that once the oneness and graded nature of existence was apprehended by the soul, a host of philosophical problems (such as the nature of knowledge, the origin and destiny of the cosmos, the relationship between the human body and soul, the nature of God's attributes), and a number of eschatological mysteries, can be solved.

Interestingly, though the book is offered as an introduction to Mullā Ṣadrā, it also seeks to compare him with some important western philosophers, chiefly Kant. In a chapter which is mainly devoted to the meaning of existence in Ṣadrā and Kant, we see that although their views of existence as a predicate may seem similar at first glance, their approaches to existence are as different as their worldviews. Both Kant and Ṣadrā believe that existence is not an analytic part of the concept of which it seems to be predicated, inasmuch as in saying "A exists" nothing is affirmed of A over and above what the concept already includes. However, while to Kant existence is merely "copulative," for Ṣadrā, not only is it "predicative" in the sense of having a real referent outside the conceptual sphere, but it is also the only reality out "there" (p. 91). According to Kant, existence as a predicate, in an existential proposition, does not add anything to its subject; this is because it is not a real predicate at all. Mullā Ṣadrā's rejection of the predicative role of existence in existential propositions is based on his belief in the primacy of existence in reality. In "A exists," what is real is an existence which is reflected in the mind as "A," and not otherwise.

Unfortunately, the attempts at comparison do not always go very well. Although the writer himself is aware of the differences of worldviews and conceptual systems between Ṣadrā and the giants of western philosophy (p. 85, 86, 231), he sometimes seems to ignore this and builds his comparative study on a misinterpretation of the western side. Moreover, in cases other than Kant, comparisons appear only in passing, which in some cases result in imprecise evaluations. For example, it is erroneous to consider the role of time in the trans-substantial motion of the human soul as "very close" to what Heidegger proposes, since, contrary to what Akbarian

suggests, there is no trans-substantial motion within the context of continental philosophy (cf. p. 231).

With respect to imprecise evaluations, for instance, we read that, "no other independent school of philosophy has been developed either in the East or the West to possess such universality, all-inclusiveness, and answerability to problems" (p. 47). And in the note on this statement, the writer denies such a perfect systematization even to Hegel, referring to his thought as "imperfect" (p. 78, note 24). I believe that if the book had devoted more space to comparing Mullā Ṣadrā with the likes of Hegel and Heidegger, it may have reached conclusions that would have shed more light on the deep differences between Islamic philosophy and late modern and contemporary western philosophy. In other words, although it is not necessary for an introductory book to engage in comparative categories, when it does so, it should be more precise.

All in all, Akbarian's book is certainly worth reading. It is hoped that future editions will correct the many linguistic errors, solecisms, and unnecessary repetitions found throughout the work. It would also be good to see, where possible, the presence of already-existent English philosophical terms employed for much of the cognate terminology of Islamic philosophy, thereby making the latter's thought-world seem less 'foreign' and, as a result, more accessible.

دراسات الفلسفة الإسلامية

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* is published annually; submission deadlines are January 15 and June 15. The journal is interested in papers on ancient and modern Islamic philosophical topics; it cannot consider more general works on modern Islamic affairs, rather its sole focus is philosophy. The paper should present a central argument and contain rebuttals to reasonable refutations of the argument. Studies of the classical philosophers of Islam in the context of modern Western philosophy are especially encouraged.

Guidelines

- Please include a 100- to 150-word abstract and a brief biographical statement.
- Papers should not exceed 15,000 words.
- Please include complete citations in the form of embedded footnotes.
- The *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* is published in English.
- The editors of the journal reserve the right to make necessary editorial and design changes prior to publication.
- Please see the website for details on formatting and use of diacritics.

Submission

Papers may be submitted via email to editor@muslimphilosophy.com in MS Word (.doc) or (.rtf) format only. For more information on the journal style guide, please contact the editor, or see http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/journal/cfp.html.

دراسات الفلسفة الإسلامية

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* is distributed by the Philosophy Documentation Center. All subscriptions, orders, and renewals are managed by:

Philosophy Documentation Center
P.O. Box 7147
Charlottesville, Virginia 22906-7147, USA
Telephone: 434-220-3300, Facimile: 434-220-3301

Online: http://secure.pdcnet.org/islamicphil
E-mail: order@pdcnet.org

Individuals
$25 – print only
$50 – online only (includes all issues)
$63 – print and online (includes all issues)

Institutions
$48 – print only
$100 – online only (all issues, campus-wide license)
$126 – print and online (all issues, campus-wide license)

ISSN: 1536-4569 – eISSN: 1536-4755

On Mullā Ṣadrā

Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Qawāmī Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā, was the leading Iranian Shīʿī philosopher of the Safavid period. He was born in Shīrāz in 979–80/1571–2 and died in Basra in 1050/1640 on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Mullā Ṣadrā synthesized existing systems of thought into a new philosophical system, usually referred to as "Transcendent Wisdom" (*al-ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya*). He was known to borrow from earlier schools of thought, including *kalām* theology, Ismāʿīlism, Avicennan metaphysics, Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Ishrāqī philosophy of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, and the school of Isfahan. To these he added several original doctrines, most notably (1) the basic reality of existence (*wujūd*) as against quiddity (*māhiyya*); (2) the unity of intellect and intelligibles; and (3) the movement of all beings in their substances, as well as in their qualities (*ḥaraka jawhariyya*).

Among his works, the most important are *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fi l-asrār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, *al-Ḥikma al-ʿarshiyya*, *Kitāb al-mashāʾir*, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfi*, and the *Sih aṣl* (an important Persian work). Mullā Ṣadrā's influence was relatively limited after his death in the eleventh/seventeenth century, but increased during the nineteenth century; in more recent times, his works have become widely popular in Iran, Europe, and America.

Colophon

This volume is typeset in Adobe Minion Pro, a typeface designed by Robert Slimbach. The OpenType version was released in 2000. Minion Pro is inspired by classical, old style typefaces of the late Renaissance, a period of elegant and highly readable type designs. It combines the aesthetic and functional qualities that make type highly readable for text publishing needs. The main text of this volume was typeset in 11/13 point. The titles were set in Brioso Pro also by Robert Slimbach. The typefaces were modified to create additional glyphs needed for the transliteration needs of the Journal.

Journal of Islamic Philosophy

Volume 6, 2010

Contents

ISSN: 1536-4569