

*Mulla Sadra's Transcendent  
Philosophy*



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# Preface

**A**ccording to religious traditions and history of religions, man has never lived without a prophet and, at all times, religions or cultures left by prophets have provided a model or program for people's lives. One of the most important lessons given by prophets has been the lesson of 'thinking': thinking about the world, and the relation between man and the world and its amazing phenomena. The prophets not only formed human thought, but also taught them the lessons of ethics and law in social relationships.

Philosophy or, in more exact terms, *Sophia*, was the result of prophets' teachings. It was developed and grew to a great extent in Pars (ancient Iran or Persia) under the supervision of early religious men who were called magi, as well as in some regions in the east and Middle East over the centuries. Nowadays, this kind of philosophy is called Oriental or Illuminationist philosophy (*Sagesse Oriental*).

About five centuries before Christ, because of Kurosh's (Cyrus's) conquests and those of other Iranian kings, Illuminationist philosophy was greatly disseminated. Then it penetrated into Ionia, Athens, and other places through Turkey and Syria (as we call them today), and some thinkers such as Tales and Pythagoras, who had traveled to Iran, took it to the western parts of the world of that time. Later, in spite of Aristotle's founding another school of thought, called Peripatetic philosophy, and his trying to eradicate Oriental philosophy, this school of thought became quite prevalent in Rome, Egypt, Syria, and other regions for centuries until it came to Muslims in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.H (8<sup>th</sup> century A.D).

With Muslims' familiarity with Illuminationist and Greek Peripatetic schools of philosophy, and translating their books into Arabic, the field of philosophy made a significant forward movement and, in less than one century, reached its peak through the endeavors of some prominent Iranian philosophers such as Farabi and Ibn-Sina in less than one century. This unprecedented growth continued in later centuries as well, and the Illuminationist philosopher, Suhrawardi

(548-586 A.H/1153-1191 A.D), and the Peripatetic philosopher, Nasir al-Din Tusi (579-672 A.H/1201-1273-4 A.D), were among the well-known figures of these periods of evolution of philosophy in Iran and the Islamic world.

The reason for such an amazing growth was the existence of a series of teachings and a particular and rational culture which Islam, the Holy Qur'an, and the Prophet's *hadith* had introduced to Muslims. In those teachings and in this culture, philosophical thought, including the part related to knowing God, had reached such an extreme subtlety that, even before the translation of philosophical books, and before Muslims' familiarity with philosophy, they, themselves, had formulated a series of philosophical issues, developed some philosophical schools (subcategorized under the title of theology) and began to pose and discuss a number of intricate philosophical problems.

The impacts of the Qur'an and *hadith* were later revealed again at the time of Muslim sophist gnostics and our philosopher, Mulla Sadra, and his teachers planted the seeds of two important schools in the history of philosophy and thought; namely, Sufism and Transcendent philosophy, which was later introduced by Mulla Sadra.

According to some historians, the philosophy which had traveled to the west from Iran, returned to this country again through Muslim's translations, and was developed by Iranian philosophers.

Another historical, political, and religious movement, called esoterism, too, continued in Muslim countries and lands from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century (A.H), that is, till Mongol's time. The followers of this movement were Shi'ite Muslims by religion, and philosophers or sages in scientific fields, and used philosophy (and sometimes gnosis or Illuminationist philosophy) in their political and cultural confrontations with Baqdad's caliphs. An example of their works is a scientific-philosophical encyclopedia called *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa*. The prominent Shi'ite philosophers were associated with this movement and, naturally, contributed to the development of philosophy.

This scientific-political movement found its way into Spain (Andalusia), which had a Muslim government independent of Baqdad in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.H (10<sup>th</sup> century A.D). In fact, it took refuge in there, and managed to grow with absolute freedom; as a result, a lot of prominent philosophers and gnostics emerged in Spain; several

famous books were written; a big library was established; and a number of schools and seminaries opened there.

A part of this immense scientific and philosophical treasure fell into Europeans' hands after Christians' conquest of Spain, and most of the books were transferred to the libraries at courts or schools of that time, as well as to the Pope's library, and were translated into Latin. Accordingly, a widespread scientific movement started in law, philosophy, logic, mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, medicine, and even in literature, music, architecture, and art, and provided the foundations for Renaissance.

Now we will return to the development of philosophy in Iran. Philosophy had found a safe place in this country; however, it was usually attacked by non-Shi'ite jurists in all Islamic countries, even in Iran. The most famous of all opponents of philosophy was Gazzali; nevertheless, his attacks were very soon counteracted by Muslims. He was mainly against esoteric thinkers and philosophers, particularly the Shi'ites, since, on the basis of their correct interpretation of the Qur'an and Islamic texts, they believed that philosophy and rationalization were the off springs of the Qur'an and *hadith*, and stood in complete agreement with their basic convictions and principles, as well as with Qur'anic verses.

Therefore, well-known cities and provinces in Iran, such as Khorasan, Rey, Isfahan, Shiraz, and others, became centers for the growth and evolution of philosophy, each in its own turn. For example, 200 years before Mulla Sadra's time, Shiraz was the center of philosophy and the gathering place for important philosophers. In his time, this center was transferred to Isfahan and, after him, to Tehran (Rey), Qum, and Mashad (Tus in Khorasan).



# *Introduction*

**S**hiraz is a historical city in Fars province in Iran. The ruins of Takht-e Jamshid or Persepolis (a monumental palace which was destroyed and burnt by Macedonian Alexander) are in the vicinity of this city. In Mulla Sadra's time, the Safavid dynasty ruled Iran. Safavid kings granted independence to Fars province, which was ruled by the king's brother. It is said that Mulla Sadra's father served as the minister of the ruler of Fars.

Mulla Sadra's father, Khwajah Ibrahim Qawami, was a knowledgeable and extremely faithful politician. He was a rich man and held a high position, but had no children. However, after a lot of prayers and supplications to the Divine Portal, God gave him a son whom they named Muhammed (Sadr al-Din, 979 A.H/1571 A.D), but called Sadra. Later he was nicknamed as 'Mulla', that is, great scientist. In the years to come, the title of 'Mulla Sadra' became more famous than his real name and replaced it on people's tongues.

Sadr al-Din Muhammed (or Sadra) was the only child of the minister of the ruler of the vast region of Fars and enjoyed the highest standards of a noble life. It was a common tradition at that time for aristocrats' children to be educated by private teachers in their own palace. Sadra was a very intelligent, strict, energetic, studious, and curious boy and mastered all the lessons related to Persian and Arabic literature, as well as the art of calligraphy, during a very short time. Following the old traditions of his time, he might have also learnt horse riding, hunting, and fighting techniques. Mathematics, astronomy, medicine (to some extent), jurisprudence, Islamic law, logic, and philosophy were also among the courses that youngsters were supposed to pass at that time. The young Sadra, who had not yet reached the age of puberty, had acquired some of all those fields of knowledge; however, he was mainly interested in philosophy and, particularly, in gnosis.

The notes left from his youth clearly reveal his interest in gnostic literature in general, and the Persian poems of Farid al-Din Attar (1119-1193 A.D), Jalal al-Din Rumi, known as Mevlana (1207-

1273 A.D), Iraqi (d.c. 1288 A.D), and Ibn-Arabi's (1165-1240 A.D) sophism, in particular.

He was certainly educated in Shiraz for some time, but the main part of his education was most probably completed in the capital of that time, Qazwin. This is because the ruler of Fars came to the throne after the death of Shah (king), who was his brother, and, inevitably, moved to Qazwin (985 A.H/1577 A.D), thus it seems highly improbable for his minister and counselor not to have accompanied him, or to have done so, but left his only son and family behind.

At this time, Mulla Sadra became familiar with two prominent geniuses and scientists, that is, Shaykh Baha al-Din Ameli and Mir Damad, who were not only unique in their own time, but also unparalleled by any scientist appearing even 4 centuries thereafter. Mulla Sadra started studying under them and, through his outstanding talents, became the best of all their students in a very short time.

Shaykh Baha was not only an expert in Islamic sciences (particularly in jurisprudence, *hadith*, interpretation, theology, and gnosis), but also a master of astronomy, theoretical mathematics, engineering, architecture, medicine, and some secret supernatural fields of knowledge; however, it seems that, due to his sophis ideas, he did not teach philosophy and theology.

The other genius, Mir Damad, knew all the sciences of his time, but his domain of teaching was limited to jurisprudence, *hadith*, and, mainly, philosophy. He was a master of both Peripatetic and Illuminationist branches of Islamic philosophy and considered himself as an equal to Ibn-Sina and Farabi, and the master of all philosophers following them. Mulla Sadra obtained most of his knowledge of philosophy and gnosis from Mir Damad, and always introduced him as his true teacher and spiritual guide.

When the Safavid capital moved to Isfahan (1006 A.H/1598 A.D)<sup>1</sup>, Shaykh Baha al-Din and Mir Damad, accompanied by their students, moved there, too, and started their task of spreading knowledge. Mulla Sadra, who was about 26 or 27 years old at that time, had become needless of learning and a master himself, and was thinking about establishing new philosophical principles and founding his famous school of thought. Mullah Sadra's life story is quite

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<sup>1</sup>. Two years after Descartes' birth in 1596 A.D.

ambiguous. It is not quite clear how long he stayed in Isfahan and where he went after that. Apparently, he had moved from Isfahan before 1010 A.H. and returned to his own town, Shiraz. His father's estates and properties were in Shiraz, and although he gave a lot of them to the poor, a part of them still exists in Shiraz and Fars in the form of properties consecrated to pious uses.

Mulla Sadra's life in Shiraz and his later migrations comprise another period of his life which will be discussed in the next chapter.



*Mulla Sadra's life*



# *Mulla Sadra's Life*

## **From Chair of Mastership to Corner of Seclusion**

**M**ulla Sadra must have returned to Shiraz in about 1010 A.H (1602 A.D). He had inherited a great fortune and a lot of states from his father, which he had to take control of. This might have been one of the reasons for his going back to Shiraz.

He had an immense fortune, possessed an enormous ocean of knowledge, especially, of philosophy, and had presented a number of innovative ideas. Therefore, he started teaching in Shiraz, and a lot of students attended his classes from different parts of the country. However, his rivals, who, like many philosophers and theologians, blindly followed their preceding philosophers, and felt that their social status had been endangered, in order to defend their ideas, or perhaps out of jealousy, started ill-treating him, ridiculing his new ideas, and insulting him.

Such misbehaviors and pressures were not compatible with Mulla Sadra's delicate soul; on the other hand, his faith, religious beliefs, and piety did not allow him to react and deal with them in the same way. Thus he left Shiraz in resentment and went to Qum, which had not yet turned into an important scientific and philosophical center. This religious city is the burial place of the holy Ma'sumah, the daughter of the seventh leader of Shi'ites, Imam Musa Kazim (AS), one of the descendents and grand daughters of prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h), and the sister of Imam Reza (the eighth leader of Shi'ites). A number of great men and scholars have been buried in Qum. This city has a long history (more than 15 centuries), and is said to have been called Quriana<sup>1</sup> before the advent of Islam.

Mulla Sadra did not stay in Qum itself and, because of its warm and bad weather, or perhaps because of the similarity between the social conditions there and those in Shiraz, he stayed in a village

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<sup>1</sup>. Cavalier Tavernier's travel account (Persian version, p. 81)

called Kahak in the suburbs of Qum. The remains of his magnificent house can still be seen in this village.

Mulla Sadra's depression and spiritual break down made him put away with teaching and discussion for some time, and as he has written in the introduction of his great book, *al-Asfar*, he started spending his life in worship, fasting, and ascetic practice. This chance, which had been in fact forced upon him by fate, aided him in going through the spiritual and mystic stages of spirituality and even sanctity.

During this period, which is considered the golden time of his life from a spiritual point of view, in spite of being depressed and sorrow-stricken, he managed to reach the stage of the unveiling and intuition of the hidden or unseen and see philosophical realities with the eye of heart rather than with the eye of mind. It was this very accomplishment that contributed to the perfection of his school of philosophy. His seclusion and refusal to write and teach continued until, at the stations of unveiling and intuition of the unseen, he was ordered to return to the society and begin writing, teaching, disseminating and publicizing his school of thought and findings.

If we consider the length of his period of silence and seclusion about 5 years, he stopped it in about 1015 A.H (1607 A.D), took his pen in hand once again and started the composition of some books, including his monumental book, *al-Asfar*,<sup>1</sup> which is also considered a philosophical encyclopedia, and wrote its first part on the issues related to existence.

He did not return to Shiraz until almost 1040 A.H (1632 A.D). He stayed in Qum, founded a philosophical center there, trained several students, and, during all this time, was busy either writing his famous book or composing treatises in response to his contemporary philosophers. Two of his well-known students were called Fayyadh Lahiji and Faydh Kashani, who were both Mulla Sadra's son-in-laws and propagated his school of thought. We will give an account of his books in the part related to the works of this prominent philosopher.

Mulla Sadra returned to Shiraz in about 1039 or 1040 A.H (1632 A.D). Some believe that the reason for his return was the invitation he received from the ruler of Fars province, Allah Werdi

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<sup>1</sup>. It took him a long time to write this book, and he finished its final part in the last years of his life.

Khan. This was because he had finished the construction of the school which his father, Imam Quli Khan, had started, and prepared it for teaching philosophy, and due to his previous devotion towards Mulla Sadra, he invited this great man to Shiraz to take its scientific supervision in hand.

Mulla Sadra was also involved in teaching philosophy, interpretation, and *hadith* in Shiraz and trained some students there. We understand from his book of *Si Asl (Three Principles)*, which was apparently written at that time in Shiraz in Persian, and which harshly attacked the scholars of that time, including philosophers, theologians, jurists, and physicists, that in that period, like in his first period of residence in Shiraz, Mulla Sadra was under the pressure of the slanders and vicious conducts of the scientists of his town. This time, however, he had become stronger and decided to stand against their pressures and establish, introduce, and publicize his own school of philosophy.

One of the dimensions of Mulla Sadra's eventful life was his frequent visitations to Ka'ba in Mecca. This worship and religious pilgrimage is called Haj and Umra (lesser pilgrimage). It has been written that Mulla Sadra went to seven (pay attention to the holy figure '7') pilgrimages (apparently on foot). Nowadays, in spite of the comforts offered by traveling by plane, there are still some difficulties associated with going on this pilgrimage. Nevertheless, four hundred years ago, they made this journey on horse or camel and through the dry central desert of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the Haj pilgrimage was also considered a kind of ascetic practice.

On this journey, which was made in the form of big Karavans of hajjis (Mecca pilgrims) moving towards Mecca, several people died from heat, thirst, or exhaustion on the way. Thus, making such a journey, which meant traveling for some thousands of kilometers on foot, certainly involved much more hardships than it does today and required a strong will and profound faith.

To add such an endeavor to his other ascetic practices, Mulla Sadra stepped on this way seven times, and eventually, on his seventh journey to Mecca for the visitation of Ka'ba, fell ill in the city of Basra in Iraq and passed away, leaving this world for those who were obsessed by it.

The route of his journey, if we consider its place of origin as Shiraz, was the waterway from the eastern coast of Persian Gulf

towards its western coast, and to Basra port in Iraq, which was a part of Iran at that time.

It is commonly said that Mulla Sadra passed away in 1050 A.H/1640 A.D; however, we believe that a more exact date is 1045 A.H/1635 A.D, which his grandson, Ilm al-Huda, one of the stars of the sky of knowledge of his time and the son of 'Allamah Faydh Kashani, has recorded in his notes. The sudden discontinuation of some of his compositions, such as *Interpretation of Qu'ran* and *Sharh-i Usul Kafi* (Muhadith Kulayni), in about 1044 A.H/1634 A.D are good pieces of evidence supporting this claim.

Mulla Sadra died in Basra, but according to the Shi'ite tradition, he was taken to Najaf (in Iraq), which houses the tomb of Imam Ali (AS), the vicegerent, cousin, and son-in-law of prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h), and the first leader of Shi'ites, and, as his grandson, Ilm al-Huda, says, he was buried in the left side of the court of Imam Ali's (AS) harram (sacred shrine).

## Mulla Sadra's Teachers, Children, and Students

### A. Teachers

Mulla Sadra was a master of all sciences of his time; however, none of them were as important as philosophy in his eyes. As mentioned previously, due to the outstanding spiritual and economic facilities provided by his family, particularly by his father, he enjoyed the benefits of studying under the most knowledgeable teachers of that period.

In Qazwin, Mulla Sadra studied under his two prominent masters, Shaykh Baha al-Din and Mir Damad, and when the capital changed to Isfahan in 1006 A.H/1596 A.D, he moved there in company of his two masters, and in addition to completing his higher education, particularly in philosophy, started a profound line of research on contemporary philosophical issues. Due to his great talent, depth of thought, and vast knowledge of rational sciences, logic, and gnosis, Mulla Sadra succeeded in developing a series of unprecedented principles and basic rules. In this way, the young tree of Transcendental Philosophy, which is the name of his unique school of thought, gradually grew until it raised its head highly in the sky.

Mulla Sadra acquired most of his scholarly knowledge from the two above-mentioned masters. Thus it would be deserving to know a little more about these unparalleled thinkers.

## 1. Shaykh Baha al-Din 'Ameli

Shaykh Baha (953-1030 A.H) was not Mulla Sadra's first teacher; however, it seems that from among all his teachers, he played the most significant role in developing Mulla Sadra's personality, and exercised the greatest influence upon the formation of his spiritual, moral, and scientific character.

He was the son of a Lebanese jurispudent called Shaykh Hussayn, the son of Shaykh Abdul Samad Ameli. Jabal Amel is one of the northern cities of Syria, which is populated by Shi'ite Muslims. At that time, it was ruled by the cruel and tyrant Ottoman government. A lot of Shi'ite jurisprudents and scholars living in this city ran away from the cruelties of ottoman rulers and sought refuge in the Safavid Iran. Shaykh Baha al-Din was seven (or 13) years old when he came to Iran with his father, who was later appointed the religious leader of Muslims, which was a sublime and spiritual position, in Harat in Khorasan. Baha al-Din began to acquire the sciences of his time in Iran and soon became a very well-known scientist.

Shaykh Baha's vast knowledge of different areas, from jurisprudence, interpretation, *hadith*, and literature to mathematics, engineering, astronomy, and the like, as well as the stories narrated about the wonders of his life, have turned him into a fabulous and legendary character, unparalleled by any other scientist in the one thousand- year-old history of science after Islam. In fact, in terms of knowledge, he can be considered as an equal to Pythagoras or Hermes in the history of Greek science.

## 2. Mir Damad

Mir Muhammad Baqir Hussayni, known as Mir Damad, was one of the most prominent scholars of his time and a great master of Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools of philosophy, gnosis, jurisprudence, and Islamic law. His father, too, was a jurispudent and was originally from Astarabad (the present Gorgan). He spent his

youth studying in Khorasan and was later honored by becoming the son-in-law of a famous Lebanese scientist called Shaykh Ali Karaki, who was known as the second researcher, the high counselor of the Safavid king. Because of this honor, the title of 'Damad' (Persian word for son-in-law) remained on Mir Muhammad Baqir Hussayni.

Some people believe that Mir Damad was born in 969 A.H (1562 A.D), but there is no certain evidence for it. He was born in Khorasan and passed his adolescence in Mashad (the center of Khorasan province)<sup>1</sup>, and because of his genius, he reached high scientific levels in a very short time. When he arrived in Qazwin (Capital of the Safavid kings at that time) to complete his education, he became fast famous and reached the station of mastership.

Mulla Sadra, who had most probably gone to Isfahan with his father in childhood, went to Mir Damad's teaching classes hurriedly and passed the higher courses of philosophy, *hadith*, and other sciences once more under his supervision.

With the change of the Safavid capital from Qazwin to Isfahan, Mir Damad moved his teaching center there, too. Mulla Sadra, during his years of residence in Isfahan, took the greatest advantage of his classes, and his scientific relation with this knowledgeable teacher was never disrupted. Mir Damad fell ill in 1041 A.H (1631 A.D) on his way to Iraq and passed away there.

Mir Fendereski has also been cited as one of Mulla Sadra's teachers. His complete name is Mir Abulqasim Astarabadi, and he is famous as Fendereski. He lived for a while in Isfahan at the same time as Mir Damad, spent a great part of his life in India among yogis and Zoroastrians, and learnt certain things from them.

In spite of what is commonly believed, there is no valid evidence indicating the existence of any student-teacher relation between Mir Fendereski and Mulla Sadra; moreover, the school of philosophy left by Fendereski and publicized by his students, such as Mulla Rajab Ali Tabrizi, is completely in contrast to that of Mulla Sadra.

## B. Children

Mulla Sadra's date of marriage is not clearly known to us. He married most probably at the age of 40 and his first child was born in

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<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh alam array-e Abbasi*, vol. 1, p. 146, *Tazkarat khulasat al-ash'ar*, Taqi al-Din Hussayni Kashani, *Ahvali Mir Damad*.

1019 A.H (1609 A.D). He had five children, 3 daughters and two sons, as follows:

1. Um Kulthum, born in 1019 A.H (1609 A.D)
2. Ibrahim, born in 1021 A.H (1611 A.D)
3. Zubaydah, born in 1024 A.H (1614 A.D)
4. Nizam al-Din Ahmad, born in 1031 A.H (1621 A.D)
5. Ma'sumah, born in 1033 A.H (1623 A.D)

## 1. Sons

Mirza Ibrahim, whose formal name was 'Sharaf al-Din Abu Ali Ibrahim Ibn Muhammed', is said to have been born in Shiraz in 1021 A.H (1611 A.D). He was one of the scientists of his time and was considered a philosopher, jurispudent, theologian, and interpreter at the same time. He had also studied other sciences such as mathematics. He wrote a book called *Urwat al-wuthqa* on the interpretation of the Qur'an and a commentary on *Rozah*, the book written by the well-known Lebanese jurispudent, Shahid. Some other books in philosophy have also been attributed to Mirza Ibrahim.

Mulla Sadra's other son, Ahmad, was born in 1031 A.H (1621 A.D) in Kashan and passed away in Shiraz in 1074 A.H (1664 A.D). He was also a philosopher, literary man and poet and some books have been attributed to him.

## 2. Daughters

Mulla Sadra's eldest child was his daughter, Um Kulthum, who was a poet and scientist and a woman of prayer and piety. She was married to Mulla Abdul Razzaq Lahiji, Mulla Sadra's famous student.

His second daughter was called Zubaydah. She was married to Faydh Kashani (Mulla Sadra's other student) and gave birth to some well-reputed children. She was also famous for having a vast knowledge of science and literature, and being a poet.

Ma'sumah, Mulla Sadra's third daughter, was born in 1033 A.H (1623 A.D) in Shiraz and was famous for being a knowledgeable woman and a master of poetry and literature. She married one of Mulla Sadra's other students, Qawam al-Din

Muhammed Neyrizi. Some people believe that her husband was another person called Mulla Abdul Muhsin Kashani, who was also one of Mulla Sadra's students.

## C. Students

In spite of the long time that Mulla Sadra was involved in teaching philosophy, interpretation, and *hadith*, including the last 5 (or 10) years of his life in Shiraz (1040 till 1045 or 1050), and more than 20 years in middle of his lifetime in Qum (from about 1020 till 1040) or perhaps a few years before that in Shiraz or Isfahan, except for a few, there is no record of the names of his students in historical documents and writings.

Undoubtedly some prominent philosophers and scientists were trained in his classes; however, surprisingly enough, none of them became famous, or if they did, we have no knowledge of their names. This, of course, might have been due to the weak relation between their life and Mulla Sadra's life.

We know about 10 of Mulla Sadra's well-known students, among whom Faydh Kashani and Fayyadh Lahiji are the most reputable ones.

### 1. Faydh Kashani

This student of Mulla Sadra was called Muhammed Ibn al-Murtada, nicknamed Muhsen, but he was known as Faydh. He was mainly famous for being a master of jurisprudence, *hadith*, ethics, and gnosis. His father was one of the scholars of Kashan. Faydh went to Isfahan (the capital of the time) at the age of 20. Later he went to Shiraz and acquired the sciences of that time. Then he went to Qum, where Mulla Sadra had established a vast teaching center. After being acquainted with this great master, Faydh studied under him for about 10 years (till Mulla Sadra's return to Shiraz) and was honored by being accepted as his son-in-law. He even went to Shiraz in Mulla Sadra's company and stayed there for another two years; nevertheless, since at that time (about the age of forty) he had become a knowledgeable scholar and a master of all sciences, he returned to his town, Kashan, and established a teaching center there.

During his lifetime, in addition to training a great number of students, he composed several books on jurisprudence, *hadith*, ethics,

and gnosis. His method of treating the science of ethics was such that he was called the second Gazzali; however, he was much higher than Abu Hamid Gazzali Tusi in his gnostic taste and scientific depth of knowledge.

He was also a poet. He has left a book of poems in Persian, mainly consisting of gnostic and moral poems, and mostly in the lyric form.

The Safavid king (known as Shah Safi) invited him in the last years of life to Isfahan to serve as the leader of Friday prayer there, but he refused this invitation and returned to his own town. However, the insistence of the other Safavid king (Shah Abbas II) dragged him to Isfahan most probably in the years after 1052 A.H (1643 A.D).

Faydh wrote more than 100 books, the most famous of which are *Mafatih* in jurisprudence, *al-Wafi* in *hadith*, *al-Safi* and *al-Asfia* on the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, *Usul al-Ma'arif* in philosophy and gnosis, and *al-Muhajj al-bayza'* in ethics. All these books are written in Arabic, and each is considered important in its own right.

Faydh had six children. His son, Muhammed A'alam al-Huda, was a well-known scholar who composed a lot of works. According to the date written on his gravestone, Faydh deceased in 1091 A.H (1681 A.D), apparently at the age of 84.

## 2. Fayyadh Lahiji

Mulla Sadra's other student was Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, the son of Ali, known as Fayyadh. He was mainly famous as a philosopher and theologian and was considered one of the distinguished poets of his time.

He spent a part of his life in Mashad (the center of Khorasan province) studying and, then, in about 1030 A.H (1621 A.D), or a few years after that, he went to Qum, was acquainted with Mulla Sadra, attended his classes, and, later, became one of his most faithful students. Before Mulla Sadra's return to Shiraz, Fayyadh was honored by being accepted as his son-in-law (probably in about 1035 A.H).

Unlike his friend Faydh Kashani, Fayyadh did not go to Shiraz with Mulla Sadra. It is likely that Mulla Sadra left him in Qum as his substitute to continue his teaching work as a master.

Fayyadh was a prominent philosopher who sometimes appeared in the role of a theologian following Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi (writer of *Tajrid al-Kalam*). He had a profound poetic and

literary taste and, as one of the outstanding poets of that time, had a *Diwan* (collection of poems) consisting of a variety of 12000 couplets in ballad, lyric and quatrain (ruba'i) forms.

He was one of the most reputable and distinguished figures of the Safavid period whom the Safavid Shah greatly admired and respected. He was also quite popular among ordinary people. He socialized with them and loved them so much and, in return, received their great respect and devotion. However, in reality, he was a God-fearing, pious, and secluded man who was heedless to worldly attractions (This judgment has been made by his contemporaries about him).<sup>1</sup>

Lahiji has a lot of works in philosophy and theology, the most famous of which are: *Shawariq al-ilham* (a commentary on *Tajrid al-kalam*), *Gohar Murad* (written in a simple language on theology, a commentary on Suhrawardi's *al-Nur*, glosses on *Sharh Isharat*, and some other books, treatises, and a collection of poems.

Fayyadh was the father of at least three sons, who were all among the scholars of their time. The name of his eldest son is Mulla Hasan Lahiji, who became a master and succeeded his father in Qum. Fayyadh is said to have lived for 70 years. He passed away in 1072 A.H (1662 A.D) in Qum and was buried in the same place.

### 3. Mulla Hussayn Tunekaboni

One of the other famous students of Mulla Sadra is Mulla Hussayn Tunekaboni or Gilani. Tunekabon is a town in Mazandaran province in the north of Iran and on the shores of Caspian Sea. A great number of reputable philosophers and scientists have arisen from this town.

There are a lot of ambiguous points in his life; nevertheless, what is certain is his expertise in Mulla Sadra's school of thought, and teaching philosophy and gnosis. His decease or martyrdom was quite sad. On his Haj pilgrimage, when making his visitation to Ka'ba (in Mecca in Hijaz in Saudi Arabia), he was passionately holding the walls of the House of Ka'ba in his arms and rubbing his face to them in a mystic manner, but the laymen assumed that he was insulting the court of Ka'ba and, thus, hit him harshly. After this incident he suffered so much, so that he could not bear the depression anymore

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<sup>1</sup>. *Tazkarah Nasrabadi*, vol.1, p. 226.

and passed away in Mecca in 1105 A.H (1695 A.D). He has also left some books in philosophy to his later generations.

#### 4. Hakim Aqajani

Hakim Mulla Muhammed Aqajani has been cited as one of Mulla Sadra's students. His life is also full of ambiguous points. He is mainly famous for the commentary he wrote on Mir Damad's (Mulla Sadra's master) important and difficult book, *al-Qabassat*, in 1071 A.H (1661 A.D).

### Mulla Sadra's Works

Mulla Sadra was a prolific writer. He did not write at all during his time of seclusion and asceticism and, after that, he was continually involved in teaching and training the students of philosophy who attended his classes from all over Iran; however, at all times, when traveling or at home, he seized all possible chances to write books and long or short treatises in philosophy. As a result, he created a varied, useful, and inferential philosophical collection of writings in different forms following different purposes.

Some of his books are textbooks and quite useful for gaining a preliminary or complementary acquaintance with philosophy and gnosis on the basis of his specific school of thought, Transcendent Philosophy. Some of his other books are on the explanation and demonstration of his own theories, and some others can be considered as being on human ethics and manners.

He has devoted an important part of his works to the interpretation of the Qu'ran, and although death did not allow him to provide a philosophical and gnostic commentary on the whole Qu'ran, what he wrote in this regard enjoys certain features which have made them unique among similar interpretations.

Mulla Sadra, who was a *Muhaddith* (an expert in *hadith* and traditions quoted from the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his descendants), has an important work on *hadith*. This is a commentary on a famous book of *hadiths*, called *al-Kafi*, written by Kulayni Razi. Mulla Sadra has commented on its chapter of '*Usul*'; however, perhaps due to his

decease, it has remained incomplete. He also has two books in logic, called *Tanquih al-Mantiq* and *Risalah fil Tasawwur wa Tasdiq*.

His well-known books which have been published so far include the following:

### ***1. al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyah fi'l-asfar al-arba'ah***

The discussions in this book start with the issues of being and quiddity and continue with the issues of motion, time, perception, substance, and accident. A part of this book is devoted to proving the existence of God and his attributes, and, eventually, it comes to an end with a discussion of man's soul and the subjects of death and resurrection. The novelty which he has exclusively employed in writing this interesting and important book is classifying the themes of the book in the mould of 4 stages of gnostics' spiritual and mystic journeys, with each stage considered as one journey. Therefore, as a gnostic's journey in the first stage is from his self and people towards God; in the second and third stages from God to God (from His Essence to His Attributes and Acts); and in the fourth stage from God to people; this book begins with existents and continues with the Hereafter, God, and the mustered people. The original book is in 4 big-sized volumes which have been published in nine small-sized volumes several times.<sup>1</sup>

This book is, in fact, a philosophical encyclopedia and a collection of important issues discussed in Islamic philosophy, enriched by the ideas of preceding philosophers, from Pythagoras to those living at the same time with Mulla Sadra, and containing the related responses on the basis of new and strong arguments. All these features have made it the book of choice for teaching at higher levels of philosophical education in scientific and religious centers.

The composition of this book gradually started from about 1015 A.H (1605 A.D), and its completion took almost 25 years, till some years after 1040 A.H (1630 A.D).

### ***2. al-Tafsir (A commentary upon the Qur'an)***

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<sup>1</sup>. The last and most complete edition of this book, along with some critical corrections, has been published by Mulla Sadra Publications Foundation, Tehran, Iran.

During his life, Mulla Sadra, at some times and in certain occasions, interpreted one of the chapters (*Surahs*) of the Qur'an. In the last decade of his life, he started his work from the beginning of this Holy Book in order to compile all his interpretations into a complete work, but death did not allow him to accomplish this task to the end. The names of the chapters he interpreted in an approximate chronological order is as follows: 1. chapter 57: *al-Hadid*, 2. commentary on *Ayat al-Kursi* (chapter 2: *al-Baqarah*), 3. chapter 32: *Sajda*, 4. chapter 99: *al-Zilzal*, 5. verses *al-Nur*, *al-Yasin*, *al-Tariq*, 6. chapter 87: *al-A'la*, 7. chapter 56: *al-waqi'ah*, 8. chapter 1: *al-Fatiha*, 9. chapter 62: *al-Jumu'ah*, and 10. chapter 2: *al-Baqarah*.

In the bibliography of Mulla Sadra's book, each of the above has appeared as an independent work, but we have cited them here all under the single title of *Commentary upon the Qur'an*. He has also two other books on the Qur'an, called *Mafatih al-qayb* and *Asrar al-ayat*, which are considered as introductions to the interpretation of the Qur'an, and represent the philosophy behind this task.

### 3. *Sharh al-hidayah*

This work is a commentary on a book called *Hidayah* which has been written on the basis of Peripatetic philosophy, and was previously used for giving a preliminary familiarity with philosophy to students. However, it is rarely used today.

### 4. *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*

Also called *al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyyah*, this book can be considered a summary of the second half of *Asfar*. It has been written away from all discussions that Mulla Sadra views as being useless and unnecessary. He called this book the Beginning and the End due to the fact that he believed it in heart that philosophy means the knowledge of the Origin and the Return. This book is mainly on issues related to theology and eschatology, and is considered one of Mulla Sadra's important books.

### 5. *al-Mazahir*

This book is similar to *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*, but is shorter than that. It is, in fact, a handbook for familiarizing readers with Mulla Sadra's philosophy.

### **6. *Huduth al-'alam***

The issue of the origination of the world is a complicated and disputable problem for many philosophers. In this book, in addition to quoting the theories of philosophers before and after Socrates, and those of some Muslim philosophers, Mulla Sadra has proved his solid theory through the theory of the trans-substantial motion.

### **7. *Iksir al-'arifin***

As the name suggests, this is a gnostic and educative book.

### **8. *al-Hashr***

The central theme of this book is the quality of existents' resurrection in the Hereafter. Here, Mulla Sadra has expressed the theory of the resurrection of animals and objects in the Hereafter.

### **9. *al-Masha'ir***

This is a short but profound and rich book on existence and its related subjects. Professor Henry Corbin has translated it into French and written an introduction to it. This book has recently been translated into English, too.

### **10. *al-waridat al-qalbiyyah***

Mulla Sadra has presented a brief account of important philosophical problems in this book, and it seems to be an inventory of the Divine inspirations and illuminations he had received all through his life.

### **11. *Iqad al-na'imin***

This book is on theoretical and actual gnosis, and on the science of monotheism. It presents some guidelines and instructional points to wake up the sleeping.

### **12. *al-Masa'it al-qudsiyyah***

This booklet deals mainly with issues such as existence in mind and epistemology. Here, Mulla Sadra has combined epistemology and ontology with each other.

### **13. *'Arshiyyah***

Also called *al-Hikmat al-'arshiyah*, this is another referential book about Mulla Sadra's philosophy. Like in *al-Mazahir*, he has tried to demonstrate the Beginning and the End concisely but precisely. This book has been translated by professor James Winston Maurice into English. He has also written an informative introduction to it.

#### **14. *al-Shawadhid al-rububiyah***

This philosophical book has been mainly written in the Illuminationist style, and represents Mulla Sadra's ideas during the early periods of his philosophical thoughts.

#### **15. *Sharh-i Shafa***

Mulla Sadra has written this book as a commentary upon some of the issues discussed in the part on theology (*Ilahiyyat*) in Ibn-Sina's *al-Shifa*. *Sharh-i Shafa* has also been published in the form of glosses clearly expressing Mulla Sadra's ideas in this regard.

#### **16. *Sharh-i Hikmat al-ishraq***

This work is a useful and profound commentary or collection of glosses on Suhrawardi's *Hikmat al-ishraq* and Qutb al-Din Shirazi's commentary upon it.

#### **17. *Ittihad al-'aquil wa'l-ma'qul***

This is a monographic treatise on the demonstration of a complicated philosophical theory, the Union of the Intellect and the Intelligible, which no one could prove and rationalize prior to Mulla Sadra.

#### **18. *Ajwibah al-masa'il***

This book consists of at least three treatises in which Mulla Sadra responds to the philosophical questions posed by his contemporary philosophers.

#### **19. *Ittisaf al-mahiyyah bi'l wujud***

This treatise is a monographic treatise dealing with the problem of existence and its relation to quiddities.

#### **20. *al-Tashakkkhus***

In this book, Mulla Sadra has explained the problem of individuation and clarified its relation to existence and its principiality, which is one of the most fundamental principles he has propounded.

### **21. *Sarayan nur wujud***

This treatise deals with the quality of the descent or diffusion of existence from the True Source to existents (quiddities).

### **22. *Limmi'yya ikhtisas al-mintaqah***

A treatise on logic, this work focuses on the cause of the specific form of the sphere.

### **23. *Khalq al-a'mal***

This treatise is on man's determinism and free will.

### **24. *al-Qada' wa'l-qadar***

This treatise is on the problem of Divine Decree and Destiny.

### **25. *Zad al-musafir***

In this book (which is probably the same as *Zad al-salik*), Mulla Sadra has tried to demonstrate resurrection and the Hereafter following a philosophical approach.

### **26. *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah***

This treatise is not related to Mulla Sadra's book of *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*. It is an inventory of his particular theories and opinions which he has been able to express in philosophical terms.

### **27. *al-Mizaj***

Mulla Sadra has written this treatise on the reality of man's temperament and its relation to the body and soul.

### **28. *Mutashabihat al-Qur'an***

This treatise consists of Mulla Sadra's interpretations of those Qura'nic verses which have secret and complicated meanings. It is considered as one of the chapters in *Mafatih al-qayb*.

### **29. *Isalat-i Ja'l-i wujud***

This book is on existence and its principiality as opposed to quiddities.

### **30. *al-Hashriyyah***

A treatise on resurrection and people's presence in the Hereafter, it deals with man's being rewarded in paradise and punished in hell.

### **31. *al-alfad al-mufradah***

This book is used as an abridged dictionary for interpreting words in the Qur'an.

### **32. *Radd-i shubahat-i iblis***

Here, Mulla Sadra has explained Satan's seven paradoxes and provided the related answers.

### **33. *Si Asl***

This is Mulla Sadra's only book in Persian. Here, by resorting to the main three moral principles, he has dealt with moral and educative subjects related to scientists, and advised his contemporary philosophers.

### **34. *Kasr al-asnam al-jahiliyyah***

The title of this book means demolishing the idols of the periods of barbarism and man's ignorance. His intention here is to condemn and disgrace impious sophists.

### **35. *al-Tanquih***

In this book, Mulla Sadra has concisely dealt with formal logic. It is a good book for instructional purposes.

### **36. *al-Tasawwur wa'l-tasdiq***

This treatise deals with issues of the philosophy of logic and inquires into concept and judgment.

### **37. *Diwan Shi'r (Collection of Poems)***

Mulla Sadra has written a number of scholarly and mystic poems in Persian which have been compiled in this book.

### **38. *A Collection of Scientific-Literary Notes***

In his youth, Mulla Sadra studied a lot of philosophical and gnostic books; moreover, due to his poetic taste, he had access to the poetry books written by different poets and was interested in them. Therefore, some short notes of his own poetry, the statements of philosophers and gnostics, and scientific issues have been left from his youth, which comprise a precious collection. It is said that this book can familiarize the readers with subtleties of Mulla Sadra's nature.

These notes have been compiled in two different collections, and it is likely that the smaller collection was compiled on one of his journeys.

### **39. *Letters***

Except for a few letters exchanged between Mulla Sadra and his master, Mir Damad, nothing has been left from them. These letters have been presented at the beginning of the 3-volume book of *Mulla Sadra's Life, Character and School*, which have been written in Persian. This book has also been translated into English.

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If we consider the above 39 books along with his 12-volume books of interpretation, which we referred to as *Tafasir* in number 2, as well as with his *Mafatih al-qayb* and *Asrar al-ayat*, we have cited more than 50 of his works (exactly 53) so far. Some other books have also been attributed to him; however, we will not refer to their names, since they have either been discussed in other more comprehensive books, or their being written by Mulla Sadra has been denied.

One of the problems which has raised a lot of arguments concerning Mulla Sadra's books is the place and time of their composition. Most of his books have no composition date, and, in order to know about this, one must refer to certain documents and

evidences. For example, the composition dates of some of his books have been implied in his *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*, *al-Hashr* and interpretations of some of the *surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an.

For instance, *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad* was written in 1019 A.H (1609 A.D), *Interpretation of Ayat al-kursi* in about 1023 A.H (1613 A.D); *Kasr al-asnam* in 1027 A.H (1617 A.D); *Iksir al-'arifin* in 1031 A.H (1621 A.D); the treatise of *al-Hashr* in 1032 A.H (1622 A.D); the treatise of *Ittihad al-'aqil wa'l-ma'qul* in about 1037 A.H (1627 A.D); and *Mafatih al-qayb* in 1029 A.H (1619 A.D). The dates of his other books could only be approximately reckoned.

In order to know about their place of composition, we must pay attention that Mulla Sadra moved from Qum to Shiraz in about 1040 A.H (1630 A.D), and before 1015 A.H (1605 A.D), he went to Qum and its suburbs from Shiraz or some other place. Therefore, the books which he wrote before 1040 A.H must have been written in Qum or some place in its vicinity, unless he has written some of these books and treatises on his long journeys.

### An Analysis, Critique, and Study of Mulla Sadra's Books

Mulla Sadra's character is of different dimensions, and his life is an eventful one. Unlike other philosophers, he did not live a normal life. He was not merely a philosopher, thinker, and founder of a philosophical school of thought, possessing the knowledge of the common sciences of his time, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and Islamic sciences such as interpretation and *hadith*. He was also a successful teacher of philosophy and a distinguished writer of several useful philosophical books. From another point of view, he was a gnostic and pious ascetic and worshiper who had some supernatural abilities, so that, as he himself implicitly claimed, he could fly his spirit out of his body whenever he wished and go with it to observe the supernatural.

Undoubtedly, the title of philosopher is not enough for Mulla Sadra, and even if we also call him by titles such as gnostic and expert in theoretical gnosis, they will not be sufficient to introduce his sublime station.

Mulla Sadra was like a polygon, holding on each dimension one of the common sciences of his period. He was a Peripatetic

philosopher, an expert in Illuminationist philosophy, a conversant scholar of the science of Islamic theology, a master of theoretical gnosis, an outstanding commentator, a unique expert in *hadith*, a master of Persian and Arabic literature, and a mathematician. He also possessed the knowledge of old medicine, astronomy, natural sciences, and even those branches of science known as secret ones, which should, of course, not be mistaken with magic and wizardry.

All the above indicates that his domain of knowledge was incredibly vast; however, Mulla Sadra had two other scholarly characteristics rarely witnessed in other scientists. The first was related to the depth of his knowledge. He never sufficed to knowing, learning, teaching, and writing; rather, he used to delve into philosophical problems as deeply as possible, and discover all there was to know. It was in the light of this characteristic that he managed to plant the seed of a great revolution in philosophy.

His second scholarly characteristic was related to the peak of his philosophical knowledge. He always tried to utilize research as wings to go beyond the common inferences and perceptions of philosophers, and examine difficult philosophical problems following a more general and pervasive approach. Thus we can consider him a creative philosopher who introduced a number of unprecedented theories in the area of philosophy. His innovations in this regard are world-famous.

Like Suhrawardi (the Iranian Illuminationist philosopher of the 6<sup>th</sup> century) and Plotinus, Mulla Sadra believed that one who cannot separate his soul from his body and perform extraordinary or supernatural deeds is not a true sage and philosopher. Both of his teachers, Shaykh Baha al-Din and Mir Damad, possessed great spiritual powers. Mulla Sadra studied under these two prominent scholars and remained in their company for some time; nevertheless, he believed that his retreat (from the age of 30 to 35) in a village (Kahak) near Qum and his solitude, worship, bereavement, and despair of people, altogether, helped to open a new window before his eyes towards the truth and the hidden world.

He has written about this issue in the introduction of *Asfar*. His seclusion, which was accompanied with a kind of spiritual failure, aided him in becoming a strong man with a strong soul, so that, like Plato, he could perceive the realities of philosophy not only through reasoning but also through intuition. Such ascetic practices turned that

sensitive and frail young man into an enduring, perseverant, and patient master who could stand against the attacks of envious and superficial scholars of his time like a mountain, and follow his holy mission to the end of life.

His retreat in Kahak was a significant turning point in Mulla Sadra's life, accelerated his spiritual and academic growth to a great extent, and consolidated his determination for choosing his path of life. The history of his youth and even adolescence reveals that, from the very beginning of his education, he was as interested in acquiring knowledge as he was in purification and training of his soul and, like other farers, had chosen his way in advance; however, his retreat and spiritual ascetic practices in that small village of Kahak had made him more determined in depicting his way of life.

Mulla Sadra has no equal either in philosophy or in character and spirit among western philosophers. Professor Henry Corbin believes that if we could put Jacob Boheme and Emanuel Swedenborg together, and add them to Thomas Aquinas, Mulla Sadra would be born.

However, the writer is of the view that this admiration is not enough to celebrate Mulla Sadra's greatness. The history of his life and works indicates that he can only be equated with a figure like Pythagoras or, at least, Plato. A close study of his philosophy reveals that it has some roots in the thoughts of these two prominent philosophers, so that Henry Corbin and some others have called him a Neo-Pythagorean or Neo-Platonic philosopher.

Apart from his extraordinary perfections, we must admit that he was a typical example of a true human being, possessing a sublime character, admirable manners, a purified soul, and a profound knowledge of all sciences, particularly, of philosophy, and all this characteristics had been accumulated in this very man in the most perfect way possible. What is more, in addition to his reputable school of thought, he supervised a teaching center in which, even years after him, a great number of prominent scholars were trained.

Mulla Sadra's personal characteristics can be studied from different dimensions, as follows:

1. His psychology, manners, religiously trained spirit, and freedom from worldly interests
2. His vast knowledge of all sciences of his time, particularly, of philosophy and gnosis

3. His holding a sublime social station, in spite of the enmity of envious, proud, and superficial people
4. His role in reviving and publicizing the science of philosophy, promoting the declining status of philosophy in Iran, and introducing the philosophy of Islam
5. The magnitude of his works and their scientific, qualitative, and quantitative value
6. His academic courage, innovations, and defense of his ideas
7. His religious faith and inclinations
8. His creativity, the ability to infer other's ideas, and a great power of reasoning, intuition, and illumination

## **Mulla Sadra's School of Thought: Transcendent Philosophy**

### **1. Background**

Before introducing Mulla Sadra's school, it is first necessary to take a glance at the historical background of Islamic philosophy in Iran, and that of other schools of philosophy all over the world.

Nowadays, it is a proven fact to researchers that, unlike what was believed before, philosophy did not originate from Greece; rather, it started in the east, particularly, in Iran, and later it went to different regions of Asia Minor and Mediterranean, Greece, Ionia, Syria, and Lebanon. The school of philosophy developed before Aristotle was called Illuminationist philosophy, which is sometimes called as Pythagorean, Platonic, and, perhaps, gnostic and Orpheistic philosophy, as well.

For some reasons, Aristotle did not agree with the foundations of this school and, as a result, Peripatetic philosophy was developed alongside it. After Aristotle, although his school (Peripatetic philosophy) was forgotten, it was not completely destroyed. The books written by philosophers following this schools and their

students, as well as those of Plotinus and his disciples, moved from hand to hand in the academic centers of the Middle East till Muslims, persuaded by one of Abbasi vicegerents (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D), translated them into Arabic.

Farabi (258-339 A.H/ 870-950 A.D), the Iranian philosopher,<sup>1</sup> was the first one who gave a philosophical system to the scattered translations of books written on Illuminationist and Peripatetic philosophies and other fields. That is why he was nicknamed the 'Second Teacher'. He also wrote a number of books and commentaries on the philosophical problems of his time.

After Farabi, some other philosophers appeared; however, none of them was as conversant as Ibn-Sina (370-428 A.H/ 980-1037 A.D). He was a genius, and this aided him in creating a school of philosophy on the basis of Aristotle's limited principles at a very young age. This new school was greatly superior to that of Aristotle (introduced through his translated works) due to its depth of approach, its monotheistic perspective, and the plurality of the issues and problems discussed therein. It was in the light of Ibn-Sina's endeavors that the peripatetic Aristotelian philosophy<sup>2</sup> reached its zenith. At the beginning of his studies, Ibn-Sina did not pay attention to Illuminationist philosophy. In his period, the political atmosphere of this vast Islamic country was so turbulent.

With the coming of Abbasi vicegerency to power and their cruel oppression of Shi'ites, and, particularly, their torturing and killing of their leaders, a secret movement was started, called *Batiniyyah* (Esotericism). The ideology of this movement was rooted in the Qur'an and the *hadiths* narrated by the holy Prophet and his descendants. The followers of this movement, in addition to being completely familiar with Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophies, actually believed in sophism and held ideas similar to those of Pythagoras and Hermes. They tried to publicize their views by

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<sup>1</sup> Farabi's father was originally Iranian and served as a sirdar (commander) under one of the rulers of Turkistan. He went from Khorasan to Farab, where Farabi was born.

<sup>2</sup> All the problems of Peripatetic philosophy, before the translation of its related books by Muslims, amounted to 200; however, this was increased to 700 by Islamic philosophers, and, later, they propounded a number of complicated problems which had never been discussed in Greece previously.

philosophical and logical reasoning. This group can be considered as preservers of different periods of philosophy among Muslims. One example of their propagandistic works includes a number of treatises, called *Rasai'l Ikhwan al-safa'*, which is a simple and concise collection of issues related to philosophy and other sciences. The title of this work was a cover term for the party and its leaders.

The government which supported the vicegerents in Iran and Iraq (the dynasty of Saljuk Turks, with the ministry of Khwajah Nizam al-Mulk) harshly confronted this apparently philosophical and gnostic but, in fact, Shi'ite and anti-vicegerency movement. For instance it founded a number of schools in the forms of seminaries in Khorasan and Baqdad, called Nizamiyyah, mainly employing those scholars and theologians who were against Shi'ism for opposing esoterics' propagandas.

The most famous of all such theologians is Abu Hamid Gazzali (450-504 A.H / 1111-1059 A.D), who was born in Khorasan (Neyshabur) and was involved in teaching, training missionaries, and propagating against Shi'ism in its famous Nizamiyyah School. Later he came to Baqdad and founded a school of thought that was in sharp contrast and opposition to *Batiniyyah* (esotericism).

Initially, he wrote a book as a summary of the principles of Peripatetic philosophy and, later, in another book, he included the controversies it involved in his own view. This book and his other books were fast spread all over the lands ruled by Saljuk governments (from the present Afqanistan to the Mediterranean). Such endeavors resulted in the confinement of philosophy to the majority of the society (non-Shi'ite people). However, heedless to what was going on, Shi'ite philosophers continued teaching, writing, and publicizing philosophy and gnosis, and Shi'ite seminaries were officially involved in teaching Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools of philosophy and mysticism and writing the related books.

The other well-known theologian who continued Gazzali's work more profoundly and on the basis of philosophical arguments Farkhr Razi (543-605 A.H / 1149-1209 A.D). He wrote a commentary on Ibn-Sina's famous book, *al-Isharat*, which was, in fact, on the rejection of the ideas therein.

In that century, two prominent Shi'ite philosophers and luminous stars of the sky of philosophy appeared in Iran. The first was

Suhrawardi,<sup>1</sup> Shahab al-Din Yahya (549-587 A.H / 1153-1191 A.D), who revived the ancient Iranian Illuminationist philosophy and wrote a book on Illuminationism. He became famous as 'Shaykh Ishraq'. Some have proved that he was a member of *Batiniyyah* movement, and was, in fact, martyred by Ayyubi government due to political reasons (but apparently due to being excommunicated by those jurisprudents who were against Shi'ism in Syria). However, his school of philosophy still lives on.

The next philosopher who stepped into the domain of philosophy shortly after Fakhr-Razi and Suhrawardi was Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi. He strongly defended philosophy against the attacks of Sunni theologians, and can be considered as the reviver of philosophy after the assaults made by Gazzali and Razi, as well as the founder of the most complicated form of the science of theology ever developed. He was also a master of all the sciences of his time to the level of perfection, and his works in astronomy and mathematics are world famous.

The Andalusian Ibn-Rushd (the Spanish Muslim philosopher, 520-595 A.H / 1126-1198 A.D) is the other figure who has become well-known in the west and among Christians through the translation of Islamic Arabic books in Andalusia into Latin during the period of Scholasticism. One of his most famous books is on the rejection of Gazzali's book, *Tahafat al-falasafah*. He chose the title of *Tahafat al-tahafat* for his own book, meaning the controversies of Gazzali's book.

After Tusi, a great number of Muslim philosophers and theologians appeared (mainly in Iran); however, none of them succeeded to attain Mulla Sadra's sublime status. Some of Tusi's students (such as Qutb al-Din Shirazi) founded a vast center for publicizing the Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools of philosophy, theology, and gnosis. This center was called 'Shiraz school'. It continued its activities for several years and produced some well-known philosophers and theologians.

Although Mulla Sadra had left Shiraz in childhood, he was greatly influenced by this school and, as we will discuss later, his

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<sup>1</sup> Suhraward is one of the towns in Iran in Azerbaijan province. There is another man who was a contemporary to Suhrawardi and was called by the same name. This person was a sophist.

thoughts were the outcome of a synthesis of all the philosophical theories taught there, and the fruit of the works of all the philosophers who were involved in research and study in that school.

Simultaneous with the development of philosophy in Iran and in the Islamic world, two other major schools of thought were in the process of flourishing. The first was mysticism (Islamic gnosis), which was rooted in the Qur'anic worldview and the Prophet's tradition. Later it was intermixed with the Illuminationist philosophy of ancient Iran and Plotinist philosophy and gnosis, and propagated piety, ascetic practice, and practical ethics. As a result, it turned into a powerful and independent school against Peripatetic philosophy and developed several scientific and theoretical dimensions after Muhyaddin Ibn-Arabi Andalusian (from southern Spain). The lives of some of the proponents of this school remind the reader of Diogenes, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Plotinus.

The other school was Islamic theology, which was started by the descendants and people of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his successor, Imam Ali (AS), and consisted of a collection of the interpretations these two holy leaders had presented in response to people's inquiries. The most reputable propagandist of this school was a man called Hasan Basari. In his time, one of his students, called Vasil, separated from him and founded the school of *I'tizal* or *Mu'tazilah*. Later, one of Vasil's students established another school of thought against *Mu'tazilah* which is known as *Asha'rites*.

In the years to come, the followers of *Mu'tazilah* greatly benefited from those works of Greek philosophers which had been translated into Arabic and learnt a lot from their ideas. However, it did not take long before they were suppressed under the pressure of different governments and the domination of *Ash'arites* theology.

From then on, theology continued its existence in two branches: *Shi'ite* theology (current among the Prophet's descendants and people), which had a longer history, and *Ash'arites* theology, which was, at times, strongly supported by vicegerents. Finally, Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi cast theology in the mould of philosophy. Mulla Sadra, too, resorted to its principles in developing his own school of thought.

## 2. Origins of Mulla Sadra's School

Mulla Sadra's philosophy is an independent school of thought, possessing a specific system of its own. He has established a philosophical system which comprises all philosophical problems, so that one can claim that this school, in the light of its basic principles, could efficiently solve even those peripheral problems which might arise in field of philosophy in future. The available documents strongly indicate that, apart from the ancient Illuminationist school, Peripatetic philosophy, and gnosis, no other independent school of philosophy, except for Transcendent Philosophy, has been developed either in the East or the West to possess such universality, all-inclusiveness, and answerability to problems.<sup>1</sup>

It is a widely accepted fact that the independence of a school does not indicate that it has put up with all the ideas and theories of previous schools, since each and every new philosophical system certainly requires some input from preceding ones to be able to utilize them as its components and building blocks. However, it normally puts the previous coherence governing the combination of those constituent parts aside, grants them new versatility, and transforms them quite efficiently in the light of its own principles.

Mulla Sadra's creative soul and scientific power and perfection allowed him to create a school which was independent of all philosophical, gnostic, and theological schools and, at the same time, enjoyed all their strength and positive aspects.

Sadrian philosophy is similar to Peripatetic philosophy in its surface form. In fact, one can say that the body of his philosophy is Peripatetic, while its soul is Illuminationist. At the same time, most of the problems of the science of Islamic theology can be found there in a philosophical form. Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy, on the one hand, comprises all schools of philosophy, gnosis, theology, and the like, and connects them to each other; on the other hand, it reacts as a rival against all of them.

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<sup>1</sup>. Among the philosophers of the modern era, Hegel is said to have been able to develop an independent and systematic school of philosophy. Unfortunately, this Hegelian system involves a series of controversies that disrupt its orderliness; therefore, it cannot be considered a perfect philosophical system.

The other important point which is worth a mention here is Mulla Sadra's strong and logical belief in the Qur'an and *hadith*. He is inspired by the spirit of the Qur'an in solving some complexities and problems and tries to expand the dimensions of his philosophical and theological ideas and thoughts by resorting to the *hadith* and *Sunna* (traditions) of the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his descendants. At the same time, he sometimes directly refers to some Qur'anic verses as evidence for his arguments or, perhaps, for demonstrating the rationality of this Holy Book.

Unlike other heavenly books, the Qur'an involves some very profound and discussion raising verses and statements on theology, worldview, and anthropology. This Holy Book, from the very early days of the prevalence of Islam - when there was no word of Greek or Oriental philosophy - could introduce a series of important philosophical issues such as God's knowledge, the meaning of His Will and Attributes, the concepts of Divine Decree and Destiny, predestination, renunciation, life after death, resurrection, and the Hereafter to the field of thought and philosophy. Moreover, it makes references to the quality of the creation of the material world, the birth of prime matter, the end of world, the annihilation of matter, and, basically, cosmology.

It is true that the collection of such verses and their interpretations, which had been given by the Prophet (p.b.u.h), Imam Ali (AS) and Muhammed's descendants, planted the seeds for the growth of Shi'ite theology and, later, for the so-called science of theology; however, it was not limited to theologians' use. The gate of knowledge and teaching in the Qur'an has always been open to all, as it became a source of inspiration for Mulla Sadra, too. Our great philosopher, who always criticized theologians' ideas, viewed Qur'anic verses and the interpretations given by Muhammed's (P.b.u.h) descendants with utter respect, relied on them, and was inspired by their heavenly words.<sup>1</sup>

The other point to be emphasized here is Mulla Sadra's power of intuition in the sense of communicating with the hidden world and unveiling the realities. This was a power possessed by all prominent masters of Ishraqi philosophy. In some of his books, Mulla Sadra

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<sup>1</sup>. For example, Mulla Sadra has been inspired by one of the verses in the Qur'an in formulating his famous and important theory of the 'trans-substantial motion'. He has also resorted to other verses in his other works.

emphasizes that he first perceives the truth of every philosophical and rational problem through intuition, and then demonstrates it on the basis of rational and philosophical arguments.

He claims that he is the only philosopher who has been able to transform the issues that Ishraqi philosophers had perceived through unveiling and intuition, and presented as undemonstrated theories into logical and philosophical arguments. He does this so conversantly that even those who do not believe in intuitive perception surrender to his ideas. As we will discuss later, a great number of his well-known theories and ideas had been previously stated by Ishraqi sages; however, they had not been philosophically proved.

Mulla Sadra has profoundly benefited from Peripatetic, Ishraqi, theological, and sophist schools of thought and can be said to owe a great part of this knowledge to the masters of these schools. Apart from the Qur'an, the Prophet (p.b.u.h), Imam Ali (As), and the Prophet's descendants, he has a deep-rooted belief in Muhyaddin, Ibn-Sina, Aristotle, Plotinus, Suhrawardi, Tusi, Sadr al-Din, Qiyath al-Din Dashtaki, Dawani, and pre-Socratic philosophers, particularly Pythagoras and Empedocles. He also agrees with Qazzali's ideas concerning ethics, and favors Fakhr Razi's method of analyzing theological and philosophical problems; nevertheless, he does not consider them as philosophers and refutes their philosophical ideas in many respects. However, in cases where he agrees with their views, he never hesitates to praise them, and, in order to show his confirmation and acceptance of their ideas, he quotes from them verbatim, as if he himself has originally uttered those words.

One of the sources of Mulla Sadra's philosophy is the pre-Socratic history of philosophy. The philosophers of that time mainly consisted of Ishraqi sages, who followed Oriental and Iranian ancient philosophies to a great extent.

Generally speaking, unlike the case with Peripatetic philosophy, Mulla Sadra's sources of philosophy were not merely confined to the intellect, so that he would ignore other sources such as revelation and inspiration. In the same way, he did not limit himself only to inspiration and illumination, so that, like gnostics and sophists, he would regard the intellect as being incapable of the perception of realities. He even considered revelation as the most important, valid, and reliable source of knowledge, and, as we mentioned previously, he also attached too much importance to what can be learnt from the Qur'an and *hadith*.

Mulla Sadra is one of the exceptional philosophers who has graded these sources. He believes that the first basis for accessing truth is the intellect; however, he does not consider it as being capable of solving the subtle problems of metaphysics. Therefore, a philosopher or sage should not stop halfway through seeking the reality and deprive himself from intuition and using prophets' revelation.

He states that man's intellect confirms revelation, and revelation completes the intellect. One who has a religion and depends on revelation must accept the role of the intellect in discovering the truth; likewise, one who follows the intellect and wisdom, must confirm and accept revelation. Intuition and illumination can be demonstrated by means of argumentation and reasoning and, as a result, grant universality to personal experiences, exactly in the same way that the hidden principles of nature could be proved by resorting to mathematical laws.

However, one must admit that the power of wisdom is limited, but intuition and love have no boundaries and can aid man in attaining the truth. The vastness and breadth of Mulla Sadra's domain of views, and the plurality of the origins of his thoughts granted more freedom to him to expand the realm of philosophy. As a result, there is no trace of different types of narrow-mindedness witnessed in other schools of philosophy in his philosophy.

### 3. Methodology

Mulla Sadra's philosophical methodology can be inferred from what we have so far stated concerning his school of thought. In *Asfar*, when dealing with almost every problem, he firstly presents its Peripatetic sketch, and propounds it within the framework of the principles that conform to it in the Peripatetic school. Then he restates the different old and new ideas which are related to that problem. Following this, he rejects, modifies, confirms, or completes it, or presents a series of new and more comprehensive arguments.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, when necessary, he provides evidences from sophism, particularly from Muhyaddin, Ibn-Arabi, and Plotinus (like other Muslim philosophers preceding him, Mulla Sadra sometimes mistakes him for Aristotle, because, even until recently, Plotinus's book of *Tasu'at (Ennead)* was considered to have been written by Aristotle).

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<sup>1</sup>. He uses this method mainly for preventing students' confusion in problem solving.

Mulla Sadra has his eyes on the Qur'an in dealing with all major philosophical problems, and benefits from its Divine Graces so much so that some assume that he employs the Qur'anic verses in his philosophical reasonings. This is totally absurd; however, as mentioned before, the Qur'an was always a source of inspiration for him. Accordingly, he managed to discover certain realities that were not accessible to others.

Mulla Sadra's most important characteristic, which can rarely be seen (if at all) even in Ishraqi philosophers, is his reliance on intuition, unveiling, and perception of the realities of the world, and solving intricate philosophical problems through ascetic practice, worship, and connecting to the world beyond the matter and sense, which he believes means the real sense. However, he neither suffices to this, nor gives a decree in this regard to others; rather, his methodology is to dress the realities that have been unveiled to him through intuition, and that have been hidden under the cover of logical reasoning in guise of a kind of reasoning which employs the common terminology used in Peripatetic philosophy. He, himself, has referred to this unique method of his in the introduction of *Asfar*.

As discussed above, he cast even those theories and ideas of his preceding philosophers (whether before or after Socrates) which also enjoyed an intuitive aspect, and which had not assumed an inferential nature into the mould of common (or Peripatetic) philosophical problems, and presented a series of philosophical arguments and reasonings for them. Mulla Sadra prefers to call his school of thought as one of wisdom rather than philosophy. As the readers are well aware, he chose the name of Transcendent Wisdom<sup>1</sup> for his school. This is because, firstly, wisdom has an outstandingly long historical record, and is assumed to be the same as what was called '*Sophia*' in the past. Secondly, long ago, wisdom consisted of a vast field of knowledge embracing all natural and mathematical sciences, and possessed a worldview which was wider than that of modern scholars. Thirdly, wisdom has been frequently praised in the Qur'an and *hadith*, while there is no word of philosophy therein.

The subtle point here is that we can employ wisdom as a bridge to fill the gap between philosophy and gnosis, which are two totally

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<sup>1</sup>. This word had been previously used as an adjective in mystic works of Ibn-Sina and Qaysari, the well-known commentator of Ibn-Arabi's *Fusus*. However, Mulla Sadra used it formally as the title of his great book.

different fields of knowledge. Wisdom was Mulla Sadra's secret key for having access to and mastering the philosophical and gnostic schools of his time, and making peace between them.

The Peripatetics agreed that wisdom or philosophical journey is, in fact, a process of becoming which comes to an end through the development and growth of material intelligence (*intellectus materialis*) into *intellectus in habitu* and, then, into actual reason (*intellectus in actu*) and acquired reason (*intellectus adeptus or acquisitus*), and through connection to the origin of knowledge (perhaps the same Promete of ancient Greece), which Aristotle called active intellect. The end result of this process is man's transforming into a wiseman.

Gnostics and sophists, too, believed that gaining knowledge or becoming a wiseman means knowing the world, passing through the sense and material world (which they called traversing the heavens and Unity of Divine Acts), beginning the process of knowing the human self (or traversing the soul), and passing through the immaterial depth of the world: that is, the Ideal and rational world, or traversing the Unity of Acts and observing the pre-eternal beauty and eternal truth, which is usually referred to as the four-fold spiritual journey; a journey whose first stage is moving from existents and creatures towards absolute reality (the Truth); the second is moving towards the Truth, accompanied with and aided by the Truth; the third is traversing in the Truth and attaining all existential realities; the fourth is returning towards creatures and existents with a new outlook and fresh step.

Wisdom is consistent with both interpretations of knowledge and the real and beyond-matter knowledge of the world. Accordingly, Mulla Sadra innovated a method which was based on both philosophy and gnosis, and employed it to solve the problems related to the knowledge of the world. It is from here that one can grasp the reason behind calling his philosophical school as 'Transcendent Wisdom' or superior philosophy. Therefore, it was not just by accident that he named his magnum opus as 'Transcendent Wisdom in Four-Fold Journeys'. The superiority of his school lies in his smart methodology, through which he could make peace between two opposite schools of thought, namely, Peripatetic and Ishraqi philosophies (and sophism), and brought them into unity and, in fact, to transcendence – he showed this superiority by means of employing the word 'transcendence'.

#### 4. Parts of Transcendent Philosophy

In Mulla Sadra's perfect system of thought, one can find all significant components and branches of philosophy, which, all together, comprise a coherent philosophical system. Ontology and the issues related to metaphysics have the greatest share in this regard and, following them, the majority of discussions are related to theology, psychology, eschatology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics,<sup>1</sup> and logic, respectively.

These components, although intermixed, are connected to each other according to a logical order, as it is necessary for a perfect philosophical system enjoying a high level of coherence and versatility. In this system, ontological issues are employed as the bases for demonstrating other issues.

Mulla Sadra's epistemological views are presented scatteredly under other issues. One can seek them under issues such as mental existence, psychological qualities and accidents, the unity of the knower and the known, and the unity of the intellect and the intelligible, and synthesize them with each other. Likewise, his ideas with regard to the philosophy of ethics and political philosophy have not been presented in a focused form. Although he has two independent books on formal logic, we can find among his philosophical discussions a great number of logical issues whose collection could comprise a valuable book on logic and the philosophy of logic.

Mulla Sadra attaches too much importance to the knowledge of the soul on the basis of the Islamic tradition of 'know yourself to know God', and has dealt with the subject of the soul in almost most of his books. Nevertheless, he has devoted almost a quarter of *Asfar Arba'ah* to the discussions of the soul, and the end of its ontological journey towards the Day of Resurrection, Paradise, and Hell. In addition to some issues that, for some reasons, have been analyzed amid other discussions, problems related to eschatology and life after death of animate beings comprise another important part of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, and have appeared under topics such as psychology and eschatology.

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that the issues related to love and aesthetics are categorized under theology in Mulla Sadra's philosophy.

# *Ontology*



# Foundations and Basic Principles of Mulla Sadra's Philosophy

All philosophical systems, in addition to their minor and major problems, are based on a series of principles or pillars. Mulla Sadra's school of thought is not an exception in this regard. In a treatise called *Shawahid*,<sup>1</sup> he recounts his philosophical achievements as amounting to 170; nevertheless, the most important principles and bases of his school are usually considered to consist of the following: principle of the principiality of existence (rather than quiddity), principle of gradation of existence in infinity, principle of motion in the substance of things, principle of the immateriality of imagination, principle of the Simple Truth is everything (and is none of them), principle of the corporeal origination of the soul from the body, theory of the origination of the world, the relation between knowledge and existence.

In what follows, we will briefly discuss each of the above principles and theories separately.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Shawahid al-rububiyyah* is a short treatise which is different from *al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah*. Refer to the list of Mulla Sadra's books.



# Ontology

## 1. Principiality of Existence

**B**efore explaining this principle, it is first necessary to define some technical terms. The first term is '*wujud*' in Islamic philosophy, which is equivalent to 'being' and 'existence' in English, and 'Être' and 'existence' in French. '*Wujud*' or existence is a mental concept that is in contrast to the concept of '*Nihil*' (non-existence). 'External existence' is concrete and identical with the realization of things and individuals in the outside world.

When one asks about the reality of 'things', the response he receives is 'quiddity'. The definition of 'tree' is equal to describing its quiddity. Thus every external thing can be considered as consisting of two parts, one being its existence, since we see that it is present and exists, and the other being its essence and characteristics, which separate it from other things, are employed in defining that thing, and are used in the response given to the question of 'what is it?'; this part is called quiddity.

In spite of the fact that every thing has a quiddity and an existence, we know that considering its external realization, it is only one thing and cannot be more than that. For example, we can only see a tree or a man before our eyes, rather than both the existence of the tree and the tree itself, or the existence of man and the man himself. This is because every external thing, that is, the realized and existing thing, is only one thing rather than two. Therefore, the realization of things is through either their quiddity or their existence, and it is only one of them that is principial, with the other being only its shadow that man's intellect abstracts from the other. This apparently simple plan is the response given by Mulla Sadra to the same intricate problem which had remained unanswered for centuries.

*Knowledge of Existence*

Existence is the only thing that is needless of demonstration, and that everyone perceives instinctively either in his essence or in practice and through experimentation. There is nothing more obvious than existence, and everything is realized in the light of existence. The instincts of every animate being indicate that its 'existence' dominates it and the world surrounding it. There is no definition for existence, and it can only be perceived by means of intuitive knowledge and internal personal feelings. It is the very 'reality of existence' that has filled the world; of course, we sometimes perceive the 'concept of existence' (only in the mind); however, we should not mistake it with the reality of external existence, because their characteristics are different from each other and sometimes lead man to confusion.

Although 'existence', itself, can be called a 'thing', it actually grants existence to things and makes every thing a 'thing'. There is a reason why 'existence' has been assimilated to 'light'; when light shines to anything, it illuminates and individuates it, and makes it stand out among other things. Existence, by itself, is only one thing; however, the quiddity of things in the world are various and of different types. Inanimate bodies, vegetations, animals, and humans are all different from each other. Each type possesses certain distinctive limits and borderlines which comprise the essence and reality of existents. In fact, each existent has a specific mould and pattern for itself which is called quiddity in philosophical terms.

Existence can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, we abstract the concept of existence from the presence of objects, that is, the existing external quiddities in the world – although different from each other – and maintain that these or those objects exist, that is, possess existence.

If we view objects ordinarily (rather than philosophically), we assume that the reality of objects is the same as their quiddity rather than their existence. As a result, we say that we have extracted existence from the presence of objects. If quiddity is identical with the objectivity of objects, it seems that existence lacks reality and is, rather, a mental phenomenon.

On the other hand, closer inspection reveals that, quite the opposite, it is the quiddity of objects which is a mental phenomenon, is located in the mind, constantly uses it as its workshop, and is abstracted from the existence of the external existent. Therefore, quiddity does not require existence at all times, and is not concomitant with it. As the famous saying goes, quiddity, by itself, is neither existent nor non-existent; it is only itself (quiddity).

In other words, as a philosophical argument, we should pay attention to the point that quiddity is not always concomitant with real and external existence and its effects, since the truth of everything is something which possesses the effect of that thing, and the effects of things arise from their existence. A great number of quiddities which appear in our mind, writing, and speaking are created there inside, and lack the effect of an external existent, thus they have not been realized yet.

Mulla Sadra argued that if quiddity is not in 'permanent concomitance' with existence, how could it be considered as the main underlying reason for the existence of external existence; however, we actually see that the existence of external realities (not mental ones) is self-subsistent and needless of another existence for its existentiality and realization. This is because existence is an 'essential' (*dhati*) feature rather than an accident for it.

In other words, existence exists *per se* (by its essence) and not through something else. These are quiddities that require existence to be realized. In fact, existence is not an accident for quiddity; rather, it is quiddity which, like a mental mould and linguistic and conventional garment, dresses the external realized existent.

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Mulla Sadra adduces several reasons for demonstrating 'the principiality of existence'. For one thing, when proving an accident or attribute in a proposition for a subject, or issuing a judgment, there should always be an existential unity between the

subject and the predicate. This is because the subject and the predicate are two different concepts, and what permits predication or judgment is their unity in existence. Thus principiality belongs to existence.

Now, if we consider the quiddity of objects, rather than their existence, as being principial and as the reality of their essence (we know that quiddities are different from each other in existence and essence), the predication of the predicate on the subject will be impossible. We can no more say that in the statement, 'the tree is green', the quiddity of the tree is essentially different from the quiddity of green. If the verb 'to exist' – 'to be' – (which is the sign of the interference of external existence) does not appear between the two, these concepts will never come into unity with each other, and no predication or unity will ever be realized in the world.

Mulla Sadra maintains that if the 'realization' of every thing or quiddity is due to the addition of existence to it, thus existence, itself, is prior to realization in the outside and more attainable than other things. For example, if we believe that the existence of water in something justifies its being wet, the demonstration of wetness for water is more necessary, and the water itself is prior to wetness and closer to it than other things. And, basically, the affirmation of 'existence' for existence does not require any proof, since 'existence' is essential for 'existence', as wetness is essential for water.

Mulla Sadra illustrates his point by referring to whiteness in the case of white objects, and says that when you qualify a piece of paper, which is not identical with whiteness but occurs to it, by whiteness and say that 'it is white', whiteness, itself, is prior to and more deserving than the paper to possess the 'whiteness' attribute (since it is whiteness by itself).

By viewing the problem of quiddity and existence from another angle, Mulla Sadra asserts: sometimes we assume a quiddity without existence; that is, we ignore its external existence (while it is not the case with existence). In other words, quiddity is not such to be always concomitant with realization in the objective

world; therefore, it is existence which is principal and necessary for the realization of things and existents. And it is our mind that abstracts the quiddity from that external existent and posits it: 'individuations are mentally-positing things'.

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The problem of the principality of existence has a long history. A study of the ideas of *Ishraqi* (Illuminationist) philosophers of ancient Iran and pre-Aristotelian philosophers reveals that this principle was known as a crude theory in the past, and that they considered existence as being principal, and as possessing external realization. At that time, there was no word of quiddity unless as an object or the matter and element of the world. The significance of propounding this issue in Mulla Sadra's philosophy was stating it in practical terms and demonstrating it by means of a number of philosophical reasons which were peculiar to him, as well as responding to his opponents' arguments.

The philosophical demonstration of the principality of existence created a revolution in philosophy and granted it the sublime status it really deserved. Moreover, in the light of this principle, he could pave the ground for solving some very difficult and complicated problems. Peripatetic philosophy had cornered the field of philosophy in the path of perversion for centuries by granting centrality to 'existent' rather than to 'existence', exactly in the same way that Ptolemaic astronomy, which was based on the centrality of the earth, had created some complications for the science of astronomy.

The significance of the central role of existence instead of existent was the same thing that Heidegger discovered in the west 4 centuries after Mulla Sadra<sup>1</sup> and based his philosophy upon it, yet he never managed to obtain his ideal in its complete form.

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<sup>1</sup>. Some scholars had seen Heidegger reading the translation of Mulla Sadra's *al-Mashair* into French, *Les Penetrations Metaphisiques*, by Henry Corbin. Thus it is highly probable that he was under Mulla Sadra's influence in developing some of his ideas.

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In the last two centuries, certain schools of thought categorized under the title of 'existentialism' have become famous in Europe. It is necessary to emphasize that the word 'existence' in such schools (except for Heidegger's philosophy) is completely different from '*wujud*' and principiality of *wujud* (existence) in Islamic philosophy and in Mulla Sadra's philosophy, and stands at a great distance from them.

One of the distinctions here is that in Europe, they only pay attention to man's existence rather than the existence of the whole world of being. Such schools, in spite of their important differences, share certain features with each other. According to the followers of existentialism, 'existence' is prior to 'quiddity'; however, by existence, they mean the same ordinary and conventional existence which everyone has in mind. Besides, by 'posteriority of quiddity', they mean that man, due to his free will, at all times during his life, gives form to his 'quiddity' and makes himself, and that it is with his death, that his quiddity takes its ultimate form.

Accordingly, it becomes clear that the quiddity they have in mind is not identical with philosophical quiddity; rather, they are referring to man's 'personality'. Man's reactions to the dilemmas of life and his anxieties, fears, sorrows, and pains both demonstrate his existence and make up his personality (as well as his quiddity in their words).

Here, Heidegger's words sound to some extent familiar; however, it can be said that he is not after knowing existence; rather, he is seeking for an ambiguous issue which is different from existence in Islamic gnosis and philosophy, and which, in comparison to what Mulla Sadra's school propagates, is highly primitive and incomplete, and suffers from a series of important defects.

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Mulla Sadra did not suffice to the important task of demonstrating the principiality of existence and its being abstract.

Rather, he tried to formulate some principles for it through drawing upon Ishraqi and Islamic philosophies and proving it in philosophical terms. As a result, he also tried to demonstrate that existence is graded (possesses diffusion) in terms of unity, simplicity, power, and the like.

## 2. Gradation of Existence

After demonstrating the principality of existence and quiddity's being abstract, the problem of gradation of existence is posed.<sup>1</sup> However, before inquiring into this issue, we should first define the communal meaning of existence.

As mentioned previously, existence is manifest in all quiddities, that is, those external existents possessing their own peculiar mould, form, and characteristics. And in spite of the variety in existence (due to variety in quiddities and moulds), all of them are of the same type, i.e., existence. In other words, existence is common to all of them.

However, two forms of commonality are possible: commonality sometimes appears in the form of absolute homonymy; for instance, the word *bat* has different meanings in English which are not at all related to each other, and this name is shared by different concepts that are not semantically identical.

Sometimes, this commonality is semantic rather than verbal; to put it more clearly, there might be a common reality among different people, shared at different degrees of strength and weakness. Sharing existence by all existents and quiddities is of this type, since it is, indeed, commonly shared by all existents. Of course, the existence of one thing is no different from the existence of another thing unless in its limits, quantity, and definition. This kind of commonality is called 'spiritual or immaterial commonality' in Islamic philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup>. Gradation has no meaning when it comes to the concept of existence (with respect to its being a concept rather than a referent).

The question here is if the existence of all things is the same, and if all of them share it, all differences should disappear and all things should become like each other. The response given by Mulla Sadra and Ishraqi philosophers is that existence is truly shared by all things, but its degrees of weakness and strength differ from one existent to another. And it is this very difference in grades of existence which creates the distinctions in the definitions, limits, and boundaries of objects and quiddities, and gives rise to multiplicity in its philosophical sense (without causing any ambiguity in them). It is from here that one can infer the principle of gradation of existence.

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The historical background of this subject dates back to the time before Aristotle. This issue was completely known in Oriental and ancient Iranian philosophies; however, after the translation of Aristotle's books by Muslims (since they had based their philosophy upon his ideas),<sup>1</sup> the issue of gradation of existence was refuted or neglected.

*Ishraqi* (Illuminationist) philosophers and sages, particularly the philosophers of ancient Iran, assimilated existence to light, and some of them, because of similarities between the two, even preferred to use the word 'light' instead of existence. Like existence, light specifies things and has an infinite number of degrees of strength and weakness.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to emphasize that the difference between two things is normally other than their common attributes. However, concerning light (also existence), we should say that the difference between two lights and their similarity lies exactly in one thing which is light itself, that is, in the feature they share with each other, rather than in something in the outside; in other words, 'what differentiates between them is the same as what is common between the two.'

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<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps because, in this way *khalifs'* governments intended to culturally confront *Batiniyyah*, who were the heirs to Ishraqi philosophy.

<sup>2</sup>. The Fuzzy logic in physics has been inspired by the theory of gradation of existence.

Imagine two lamps, one a 100-Luxe lamp and the other a 150 Luxe one. Certainly, the common point between them is that both emit light; nevertheless, their difference lies in nothing other than their light. No philosopher or physicist will ever accept that the light of a 150-Luxe lamp is plus-darkness, while the light of a 100 Luxe lamp is minus-darkness. This is because as everybody knows, light is against darkness, and it is impossible for something to be light and not to be light at the same time. Moreover, there is no sense in talking about plus- or minus-light.

Thus the difference between two sources of light lies in the intensity of the light they produce; likewise, the distinction between two quiddities, one weaker and the other stronger, is due to their strength or weakness of existence. As a result, we can provide another philosophical definition for quiddity, stating that 'quiddity refers to the things' capacity for existence'.

On returning to the beginning of the discussion, we should say that although existence is an indivisible and even undefinable reality, its degrees of radiation upon objects could create several existences, each different from the other, and each possessing a specific definition and some features such as time and place. We might call each of them a *Dasein*.<sup>1</sup>

Philosophically speaking, existence enjoys plurality while having unity, and all the existents and quiddities which represent plurality in the world, while being plural, due to having existence, return to a single truth, i.e., existence.

The secret here is that 'existence' has no tolerance for solitude, and it is in its essence to appear in full beauty in a world which it has created itself. Iranian gnostics assimilate existence to a beautiful woman who cannot bear hiding herself, and always tries to reveal her beauty to others.

It is emphasized that the stepping of existence into the domain of plurality and variety does not decrease or damage its essential unity and simplicity, exactly like light, which is at all times and in all places the same thing and the same reality,

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<sup>1</sup>. The term used by Heidegger in his philosophy.

although appearing in different receptacles. The appearance of light and its coming to multiplicity from unity are essential features of light.

Perhaps assimilating existence to light has been out of obligation, and perhaps the material and physical light is not what 'existence' could be, in fact, equated with. However, the kind of light intended by Illuminationist philosophers was different from physical light; it was, rather, a symbol they used for explaining true 'existence'. In Illuminationist philosophy, light is the same as existence and lacks a material dimension.

This theory proves that, firstly, the objects we see in our surroundings are parts of existence and their limits and boundaries are different from each other. Consequently, it is their definitions and names that are different from each other, rather than the objects from which the mind abstracts existence.

Secondly, differences, quiddities, and the names of existents, all, refer to the existential degrees of objects. In fact, the difference between two things lies in their weakness or strength of existence. The one which is strong possesses the same 'existence' of the weak existent plus something more, and what is weak lacks some of the more intense degrees. For example, if we wish to explain this issue in mathematical terms, we should say:

$$20 = 18 + 2$$

$$18 = 20 - 2$$

Here, the two numbers (20 and 18) are completely different from each other; however, number 2 could both introduce them and, at the same time, discriminate between them, because their difference lies in 2. Number 20 is more complete than 18, and 18 is less perfect than 20. In Peripatetic philosophy, essence consisted of 5 components: hyle, form, body, soul, and intellect. All these five substances, while being substances, are of different degrees: the lowest of them is the hyle, and the highest and strongest is the intellect. Peripatetics might have found out about the gradation of existence quite unintentionally.

Of course, Aristotle was either not aware of the significance of the theory of gradation of existence or had ignored it; however,

with respect to the degrees of these five substances, he had actually no choice but to agree with their differences while being in unity, and believe in the principiality of existence. In Peripatetic philosophers' view, objects were completely distinguished from each other and had no real common point. This view is more consistent with the principiality of quiddity; as a result, we can conclude that Aristotle and his followers did not believe in the principiality of existence and existents' having a common point while being different.

The perfection and imperfection of existents are completely clarified in the light of the theory of gradation of existence, the reason being that the narrower the framework of quiddity, and the less its capacity for existence, the more imperfect it will be, and the more its existential capacity (extent), and the fewer its limitations, the more perfect it will be. What remains here is the essence of true existence (the Necessary Being) which is absolute and infinite. Therefore, it is the most perfect, and there is no defect in it.<sup>1</sup>

Mulla Sadra is the only philosopher who, considering the background of this issue in Illuminationist philosophy, pinpointed it and, as we saw, transformed it into an demonstrative philosophical problem.

This issue, that is, the gradation of existence, in the light of the sharpness of world view and attentiveness of Islamic philosophers and gnostics, was led to more subtle directions, including the division of the types of gradation of existence to universal, particular, and super-elect gradations.

Nevertheless, some Muslim peripatetics did not agree with gradation of existence and existents. For instance, they reasoned that we cannot consider two things which are of different degrees in essence as having semantic commonality, since if we set perfect existence as the criterion, the imperfect existence will lack that essence, and if we set the imperfect existence as the criterion, the

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<sup>1</sup> Mulla Sadra demonstrated through a subtle philosophical analysis that the existence of the Necessary Being, and, basically, His existence, are different from the existence of contingent things.

perfect existence will be other than the imperfect one, and, as a result, it will be lacking in that essence. Therefore, they will have no common existential value, unless when they are mentally-positated or assumed.

### 3. Simple Truth is All Things

One of the consequences of the principle of the principiality of existence is the principle of '*the simple truth and essence is not separate from other things*', which has been rephrased as '*the simple truth is all things*'. Before beginning this discussion, it is noted that Mulla Sadra's philosophy proves that all existents, in spite of all the differences they have in their degrees of existence, are possible rather than necessary, and obtain their existence – in the chain of causes and effects – from an essence that is the 'Pure and Absolute Existence' and the Necessary Being,<sup>1</sup> that is, existence is in His Essence;<sup>2</sup> it is impossible and absurd to negate existence to Him, and assuming this is equal to contradicting non-existence.

Assuming a pure and absolute existence is concomitant with oneness, unity, simplicity, eternity, infinity, absoluteness, perfection, and lacking quiddity and a logical definition (with genus and differentia).

This absolute or pure existence has a number of exclusive characteristics, one of which is being non-composite (simple), since 'pure existence' is the same as needlessness (for it has no negative aspect to be removed), and as we know, composition necessitates need, thus absolute existence is simple.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, we attribute wetness in all wet objects to water, but wetness is essential for water and not added to its essence. Thus wetness is 'necessary and obligatory' for water, but possible for other wet objects.

<sup>2</sup> Since existence is essential for the Necessary Being, it does not logically require demonstration, and, according to the philosophical principle of '*the essential is needless of a cause*', the concept of the Necessary Being is concomitant with existence.

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In Mulla Sadra's school of thought, this principle is stated as follows: 'anything' whose 'truth' (the essence of that existence) is simple (non-composite) is 'everything' (it is not separate from other objects).

This principle is based on the law that existence is a simple and absolute 'truth', and every absolute simple thing possesses all existential perfections, and each and every existence is contained in it. Therefore, firstly, the external reality of 'existence' (not its mental concept) cannot be more than one thing (it is single and one). Secondly, there is no sense in its not being pre-eternal, and having come into existence from non-existence (every existence requires a maker). Thirdly, the existence of all existents is no separate from that very origin of existents, is in need of it, and depends on it. Fourthly, it is absolute, for it is impossible for something that is called the origin, essence, and reality of existence to have limits and boundaries, and not to be absolute and all-inclusive. The reason is that limits and boundaries are signs of need, while the absolute and perfect is not needy.

Consequently, an existence in the light of which all existents come into being is absolute and void of non-existence and imperfection, and we cannot, even in our mind, view it as being a composite (of its own existence and non-existence of others); for example, if we consider the absolute and original existence as A, and other existents as B, we must say:  $A \subset B$ , rather than  $A = \sim B$ , since in this case it will be composed of  $A + \sim B$ , which is a contradiction, for the first existence was assumed a single and absolute existence and cannot be composite and non-absolute, i.e., have limits (separability). The absolute existence or the creator of other existents must logically possess all the existential perfections, and be free from any sign of non-existence and imperfection. It is reminded that composition means imperfection and absolute non-existence.

Now, when this existence (for example, A) is not composed of A and the opposite of B ( $\sim B$ ), its opposite,  $A = B$ , must be true, and this means that every simple existent (non-composite) in which composition has no way 'includes all things'.

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This argument can also be stated as follows:

- 1) All objects can be posited or considered in two independent ways; in one of them they possess existence and are ‘themselves’, and in the other they are ‘not other than themselves’. These two considerations are independent, and have their own logical place. Therefore, every possible thing is composed of two conceptual and logical parts, and ‘composition’ is the sign of need and imperfection, since each of its components is in need of its other component, and need is the sign of ‘possibility’ or lack of necessity.
- 2) The Necessary Being is simple due to His being the Absolute Existence and being needless of everything else (even in man’s imagination). Thus He cannot be mentally divided into two things, namely, ‘self’ and ‘not other than self’. As a result:
- 3) Simple truth contains all the perfections and positive aspects of all existents, although it is not identical with them.

The next argument indicates that:

- 1) All existents are the effects and creations of the Necessary Being; that is, they have taken whatever degree of existence they possess from the Necessary Being and Absolute Truth.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) Since it is impossible for the Giver of perfection to lack it Himself, the Necessary Being possesses all perfections (positive aspects) of its effects, of course not in a scattered form, but in a simple, focused, and single form.

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<sup>1</sup>. The Absolute and Pure Existence, Himself, is needless of a cause; rather, its essence necessitates existence; otherwise, the impossible will be necessitated, and the origin of existence will be negated.

Mulla Sadra illustrates this point by saying that if we assume an infinite line which has existence, it will be superior to all other short and long lines in the sense of being a line, because, while enjoying unity, it contains all their aspects of being a line (existential aspects), without suffering from their limitations (imperfections).

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This principle by no means indicates that the essence of the Necessary Being is the same as the essence of all things and existents, and that all existents can be referred back to its essence. Rather, it means that since there exist in all existents some existential and perfectional aspects, as well as some negative and defective ones, all existential and perfectional aspects of existents which have been obtained from the theophany of the principal essence and existence of the Necessary Being exist in His Essence in a simple and single form, without there being any trace of their negative aspects and imperfections. And since the thingness and truth of a thing are due to its existential aspect, and since imperfection is the same as negation and non-existence, all things are present in the essence of the simple thing, and the simple truth and pure existence is everything by itself, without being identical with their quiddity.

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One of the consequences of this principle is the demonstration of the Necessary Being's 'Absolute Beauty' and 'Simple Truth', since beauty is nothing but lack of imperfection, and lack of imperfection, which means perfection, is a characteristic of Absolute Existence or the Necessary Being. This principle can yield other consequences and principles in the philosophy of aesthetics.

The other consequence is that absolute and pre-eternal knowledge is God, since according to this principle, the Necessary Being, Who is all things, logically, has 'existential dominance' over all existence, and exists in every part of them, without becoming a part of their quiddity, because existence, due to being existence and considering its positive (rather than negative) aspects, is not separate from other existences; existence is

‘existence’ at all times and in all its forms, exactly in the same way that sunlight is not separate from daylight.

Absolute Existence, logically, is Omnipotent and dominates everything in its philosophical nature, and God’s Power and other Attributes originate from His Absolute and Simple Existence.

#### 4. Indigence Possibility

One of the consequences of the principle of the principality of existence is Mulla Sadra’s accurate division of existence into three types, as given below:

1. The existence of the existent is for it and depends on it (psychological or predicative existence).<sup>1</sup>
2. The existence of the existent is for something else, such as the existence of attributes and accidents for things (e.g., whiteness for paper), since, although we assume an independent existence for whiteness, its existence cannot be realized unless in the paper, and thus it is a predicate and attribute for the paper (unlike the first type, in which ‘existence’ is the subject, and its existence depends on itself).
3. This type of existence can be found in the relation between the subject and the predicate (It is shown by ‘*ast*’ in Persian and by ‘is’ in English). This existence has no independence of itself, and, even unlike accidents and attributes, cannot be assumed by itself in the mind. This existence is nothing except for a relation with the subject (i.e., original existence), and has no share of existence by itself.

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<sup>1</sup>. Kant believed that employing such an existence in propositions is wrong and said that when existence is the predicate of propositions, nothing is added to the subject. Mulla Sadra had answered this objection about two centuries before him and argued that existence makes the subject in such propositions (known as simple whetherness), and reveals the affirmation of the subject rather than the affirmation of the predicate for the subject.

In Islamic philosophy, the first and second types of existence are granted lexical meaning (having independence in the mind), and the third type is granted functional meaning, since, like conjunctions and prepositions, it has no meaning when standing alone.

Mulla Sadra has delicately directed this discussion to the issue of cause and effect. He argues that possibility exists in two fields: one is possibility in quiddities, which philosophers employ along with necessity and impossibility, and use in modal logic, and the other is possibility in the field of external existents.

The relation between cause and effect is always in the form of cause's giving existence to the effect. A true cause always grants existence. Therefore, the existence of the effect is continually in need of and dependent on the existence which the cause has granted (e.g. the existence of a geometrical shape in the mind depends on one's creative attention, and if the attention is directed towards something else, that shape will disappear).

Thus it is absurd to say that external existents, which are the effects of Almighty God (Who is the Absolute and True Existence, and the Real and Perfect Cause of all existents), possess an independent existence by themselves (as we agree in the case of attributes and accidents). Rather, the relation between all existents and the Necessary Being is a kind of 'absolute relation', and, as mentioned previously, 'copulative existence' is indigent and in need of a subject (existing in the proposition) at all times, and has nothing (i.e., existence) of itself.

Mulla Sadra views such a relation among effects (all possible things and existents) as a kind of possibility, but one which is peculiar to the field of ontology and calls it 'Indigence Possibility'. Moreover, instead of 'cause and effect', suggesting a kind of duality, and giving rise to the mistake that the effect, too, has an independent existence against the cause, he uses the phrase 'indigence possibility'.

According to the above view, all possible things and creatures are 'indigence' itself, rather than 'indigent'; they continually require a cause not only in their very being made but also in their survival.

This profound view of the issue of cause and effect, which has been supported by the philosophical arguments Mulla Sadra presents in different places in *al-Asfar*, is one of the specific characteristics of his school of philosophy. It is worth a mention that, unlike logical possibility, indigence possibility is not in contrast to necessity and existence; rather, it is the same as them, and assuming it depends on assuming existence and existential relation.

Indigence possibility is a gnostic view that Mulla Sadra has introduced to philosophy, and granted it a philosophical nature. In Islamic gnosis, it is only Almighty God that deserves the name of 'Existence'; He is the Essence and Origin of existence, and the world and all the existents there inside are the manifestations and theophanies of that existence. Mulla Sadra presents this idea within the framework of the cause-effect theory, and maintains that the cause is always the basis and the origin, and the effect needs it to receive existence and nothing else; therefore, it is nothing without the cause, and depends on it, as well as on its evolutions and manifestations.<sup>1</sup>

The issue of the necessity of commensurability between existents and possible things on the one hand, and the Necessary Being, on the other, as well as the one between the effects and their causes, is clarified in the light of this argument. It is emphasized that the cause referred to in this discussion is the perfect cause.<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Motion in Substance

No one has ever denied the principle of existence of motion, but philosophers previously believed that it existed only in

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<sup>1</sup>. *al-Mashair*, p. 84, *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*.

<sup>2</sup>. In Islamic philosophy, cause is divided into perfect and imperfect ones. A perfect cause creates the effect without the mediation of another thing, and an imperfect cause is in fact a part of the cause and creates the effect through the contribution of other factors. For example, we cannot consider parents as the perfect cause of a child's existence, and man's acts all depend on a series of conditions and absence of obstacles.

four categories of Aristotle's ten-fold categories, that is, quantity, quality, position, and place. The most obvious of them is motion in place; the motion of individuals and vehicles, as well as birds' flying, are good examples for this kind of motion. Another type of motion is motion in quantity, which is also called growth. The examples in this regard include a child's growth and his becoming mature or reaching perfection, or the growth of a sapling and its transforming into a tree. Another type of motion witnessed in case of humans, trees, and other animate beings is the change of their state, which is called motion in quality in philosophical terms. In this regard, we can refer to changes in man's appearance, chemical changes in fruit, which lead to their change of color, taste, or form, or internal evolutionary changes in one's psychological states.

The fourth motion is of the type of a body's rotation around itself and around a specific axis, such as the motion of wheels, gearwheels, and the conventional and physical motion of bodies, which is called motion in place.

Philosophers admitted the possibility of existence of motion in these four categories; however, they considered the essence or substance of objects which were the locus of quantity, quality, and position as being fixed and motionless. They did not dare or were not able to demonstrate motion in substance and essence (not states) of objects, or even express it or have any claim in this regard. Even the prominent philosopher of all centuries, Ibn-Sina, harshly refuted it and believed that if we accept motion in substance, every substance will leave its self and identity with that motion and turn into something with an identity other than its previous one.

Mulla Sadra provided a simple argument for demonstrating motion in objects' substance. He said if the objects' substance and essential nature – which are characterized by quantity, quality, position, and place – were void of motion, it would be impossible for their attributes, states, and status to be affected by motion, since, in relation to accidents, substance plays the role of the cause for the effect. It is impossible for the cause to be separated from the effect (otherwise, there could be no causal relationship), and it is absurd for the effect, which is, in fact, the manifestation of the existence of the cause, to be superior to it.

We can also observe a kind of behavioral coordination and unity among these four-fold moving accidents,<sup>1</sup> which is itself an evidence for their harmony and unity with their essence and substance. For example, the growth of a fruit (which is a quantitative motion) usually results in changes in its color and taste (which is a qualitative motion). The attributes of a body are not separate from its essence. So, how is it possible for motion to be in one thing and, at the same time, not to be there?

This issue has a long historical background in a purely theoretical form (and without reasoning), and existed in the philosophical schools of ancient Iran and old Greece. Heraclitus,<sup>2</sup> who came from Asia Minor (475-535 A.H), believed in the permanent and continuous motion of nature and had a famous statement in relation to this issue: “You can never swim in the same river twice/you can never smell the same flower twice.”

Reference has also been made to this permanent motion and moment by moment existence in Islamic gnosis under issues such as ‘continuous creation’ and ‘renewal of similars (creatures)’, and several moral and educational benefits have been derived out of it. The theory of moment by moment existence, stating that, like the pulse and the heart, the world has beats, had been exposed to Muslim sophists through revelation and intuition, and they called it ‘state’. And some believe that this theory also has a record in Chinese philosophy and school of Xen.<sup>3</sup>

However, from the viewpoint of Peripatetic philosophy, motion in substance was so indemonstrable that even the supreme genius of the time, Ibn-Sina, considered it as being impossible, and assumed that if there were motion in the substance of motion, its

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<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the relation between substance and accident is similar to the one between a horse and its rider in that if the horse is motionless and its rider moving, it will be impossible for the horse to move along a distance.

<sup>2</sup>. Khamenei, S.M, 2000, *Development of Wisdom in Iran and in the World*, Tehran, SIPRIn Publications, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>. Isutsu, T, *Continuous Creation*. In this book, Isutsu expresses that Master Kai, from Japan (1042-1117 A.D) has some statements which refer to the same gnostic ideas of Muslims and Heraclitus.

quiddity would change into another quiddity; as a result, its identity and essence would be transformed.

Mulla Sadra drew upon the two theories of the 'principality of existence' and 'gradation of existence' and proved that the essence of every material existent (whose essence or nature is a limited existence), is, firstly, gradable (since existential motion is a gradual one, and since every existence is gradable, i.e., capable of motion), and, secondly, in self-motion (motion by essence). This is because the nature, structure, or quiddity of objects is of two types: the first consists of immaterial (abstract) substances, which due to being immaterial, are fixed and static (however, this is limited to immaterial objects), and the second consists of material substances of objects which all possess an essentially fluid and moving nature; that is, their existence is gradual and step by step rather sudden and repulsive. If the existence of material existents were not 'fluid', there would be no development (no sapling would grow into a tree, and no infant would reach maturity). Unlike preceding philosophers (as well as physicists living before the advent of relativity physics) who believed that time (like place)<sup>1</sup> has an objective existence and is a fixed receptacle for objects and events, Mulla Sadra argued that time possesses an immaterial rather than objective existence and is abstracted from the trans-substantial motion of things and events.

This argument proves that the trans-substantial motion of objects exists in their essence and does not occur to them as an accident, and, thus, it is needless of a particular reason and cannot be questioned. In other words, we never ask 'why does material substance have motion?', for it is like asking 'why is water wet?', and 'why is oil oily?'. Such a question is absurd, because it is similar to asking why water is water, or why oil is oil.

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<sup>1</sup>. Peripatetics conceived of time as the product of the motion of spheres. Mulla Sadra, apparently, does not deny this view; nevertheless, he does not, in fact, agree with this view either, and believes that time is related to the trans-substantial motion.

If the essence or inner nature of something – and, in philosophical terms, its quiddity – is fluid, nothing can stop its motion except for annihilation.

The general theory of relativity in modern physics confirmed Mulla Sadra's philosophical theory, since in this theory 'time' is a part of everything, i.e., its fourth dimension, and everything has its own time, as well.

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The problem which existed in Peripatetic philosophy, and which Mulla Sadra removed was that Peripatetic philosophers maintained that the changes in substance or accidents are always in the form of annihilation of the previous component and the coming into being of another component in its place. This process is philosophically expressed in terms of 'dressing and undressing' (exactly like the case in which man should first take off his overcoat to be able to put on another one). It was for this reason that they thought if substance were in motion, substance **A** had to be first annihilated so that substance **B** could replace it; however, through the principle of motion in substance, Mulla Sadra proved that the substantiality of substance and the quality of its creation are in the form of addition of a strong degree to the previous weak degree.

He explains this by resorting to the expression of 'dressing after dressing' (as according to Fuzzy logic, we can change the light of a one-hundred-candle chandelier to that of a one-hundred and one- or more chandelier by means of pressing a button without its being necessary for the first 100-candle chandelier to be completely turned off so that the one with more light to be turned on). This is because one of the characteristics of existence and light is to be capable of being graded and increased without having their quiddity undergo any change. The principle of perfection in human beings and the world is also based on this very graded motion, and its being essential for humans.

According to Mulla Sadra's reasoning, motion in substance never causes a change in its essence and, for example, everybody

clearly understands and feels that, in spite of the changes that continually occur during his long life, he is the same person that he was before. When we see a person after a long time, we never say that we have seen a different man; rather, we agree that he is the same person he was years ago.

If, due to its motion, unity in substance – a substance which is in motion – were not preserved, we had to believe the same with respect to accidents, too. For instance, when a sapling turns into a tree, we must accept that this big tree is different from the previous sapling, while no one has such a conception, and if another person claims that this fruit tree belongs to him, and is other than the young sapling it was previously, no legal entity will ever surrender to this belief. Quite conversely, to solve the problem respecting accidents, we should attribute their motion to motion in substance, and, inevitably, believe in unity in this very continuity regarding the moving substance.

Through the theory of the trans-substantial motion, Mulla Sadra managed to solve some other problems in philosophy. One of these problems was the 'origination or pre-eternity of the world', which philosophers and theologians had not been able to solve before, and the other was the problem of the relation between the originated and the pre-eternal, that is, the relation between the world, the universe, and all existents (which are all 'contingent' in philosophical terms), on the one hand, and the Necessary Being, on the other. All existents are effects and originated beings, and every originated being must be related to its pre-eternal cause and creator in a rational way. Thus, how could the pre-eternal be similar to and commensurate with the originated?

The other problem which was demonstrated on the basis of the theory of the trans-substantial motion was Mulla Sadra's other theory on man's soul. He believes that the soul rises from Man's body, but develops in the light of perfectional motion and, finally, becomes needless of matter. We will refer to this issue later.

## **Resemblance and Concordance**

This theory has had a number of useful and sublime consequences for philosophy, as follows:

1. The dynamic essence of the world is identical with nature. Sadrian nature, unlike the Aristotelian nature, is a dynamic one.
2. Motion in nature is purposeful and leads the world and all its existents towards perfection.
3. The nature of time and, to some extent, its relativity are revealed in the light of this theory and, in this way, one can provide an exact definition for time.
4. Perfection is one of the products and necessities of the world.
5. Motion is conjunctive, linear, and chain-like. In Mulla Sadra's view, the curve or the linear and directional movement of nature (the so-called *Harekate qat'iyah*) is a real and objective quiddity rather than an imaginative and hypothetical line, and it is the only thing that portrays time.

## 6. Love

### Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics of Love

Love is considered indefinable in Iranian (Persian) and Islamic gnostic literature, and thus we might inevitably introduce it as a state of bilateral attraction between two things in its general sense, and as a state of strong attraction and desire among human souls in its particular human sense. Love has also been defined as strong affection in dictionaries.

Man's love can be divided into two major types: natural love and transcendental love. Natural and psychological love is an attraction originating from natural instincts coming into being on the basis of a kind of unconscious and spiritual agreement for obtaining the goals of nature, including preserving generations.

This kind of love should be studied under the field of psychology. Transcendental love is based on philosophical and gnostic principles, and is among the issues studied in philosophy and metaphysics.

Since Mulla Sadra has devoted some chapters to love in his magnum opus, *al-Asfar*, and has dealt with it from philosophical and gnostic standpoints, we will deal with his theory in this regard, as follows:

Mulla Sadra's metaphysics of love, like all his other theories, is based on the principle of the principiality of existence and gradation of existence. As we know, like some philosophers, he views the 'good' and 'beauty' the same as existence, since wherever there is existence, non-existence, imperfection, and evil (which all have the same meaning) are not witnessed, and perfection and the 'good' are all that flaunt before eyes. The good, perfection, and beauty are three of the existential things that man finds desirable. 'Beauty' is the same as absence of defect (the very perfection and good), and, all of them can be covered by a single word: 'existence'. Existence creates love; wherever there is existence, there is love, too.

In the vanguard of the discussions related to love, Mulla Sadra says, 'In the creation of every existent of any type, God has determined an end and a perfection, and has placed a motivation and enthusiasm in its instinct and essence to push it to obtain that degree of perfection, which is the end of the line of its existence. Such motivation and enthusiasm are called love.'<sup>1</sup>

It is this very essential motivation that creates 'motion' in the existent, and if this very 'motion' reaches its natural limit, it will take that existent towards its natural perfection and end which have been set for it by its creation. Therefore, in his view, love is not restricted to man, and all things must be viewed as having instinctive love.

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<sup>1</sup>. *al-Asfar*, vol. 7, p. 197, Tehran, Sadra Islamic Philosophy Foundation (SIPRIIn), 1382 A.S.

Here, we should refer to two important realities. First, where there is true perfection, that is, absolute existence (the Necessary Being), even without a natural zeal and need, love still exists. This is because existence is the same as beauty, and absolute existence is the same as absolute beauty, and since there is a direct relation between love and beauty in absolute and pure 'existence', it is concluded that the Necessary Being loves Himself. This love is the Origin of all other loves, and He is both the Lover and the Beloved.

Second, the creation and effect of this Pure Existence is His Beloved in proportion to the existence and perfection it has received from that source. It is from here that we can conclude that God, the Compassionate, loves all His creatures on the basis of a general law.

In the light of what was discussed above, we can infer that existence is the origin of perfection and beauty; that the headspring of perfection and beauty is the Necessary Being Himself; and that love is necessary for them. Accordingly:

1. The Necessary Being loves Himself, too, since He is aware of His Beauty more than all others.
2. All existents, which suffer from certain essential limitations and defects in their existence, in order to achieve perfection, love the Necessary Being unconsciously, and all of man's endeavors for seeking perfection, as well as his ambitions, are related to this very motivation for seeking God. No matter what the target of love is, the ultimate love will be for the Necessary Being and Pure Existence.
3. Pure Existence, Who is the cause of all existences, loves everything and everybody, and the love of the cause for its effect is more than the love of effects and creatures for themselves.

One of the important points of Mulla Sadra's metaphysics is that, as he says, there is a direct relation between existence, love, and life (being alive), since, in his view, existence is equal to life,

knowledge, and power. The higher the existential degree of something, the stronger his life, and the more his knowledge and power. Therefore, all existents – even inanimate bodies – possess a kind of silent life.<sup>1</sup>

When it is proved that everything has life, perception, and awareness, it will also be proved that it possesses the motivation and enthusiasm for obtaining perfection; in other words, it is full of love. Love relates all things to each other like a chain: 'bodies' are in love with 'nature', and nature means the world of matter, and loves its own 'controlling soul'; the soul is in love with 'intellectuality', which is its perfection, and all intellects, souls, natures, and particles are in love and obsessed with the 'Necessary Being' and Pure Existence, Who is Absolute Perfection and the goal and end of the development of all objects, and this very love flows mutually from up to down, since, as mentioned previously, every cause loves the signs of its existence, that is, its effects and creations.

According to the theory of metaphysics, the whole world is full of love, and wherever there is existence, life, and beauty, that place swells with love, and it is this very view that grants meaning and enjoyment to man's life. The spirit of Islamic gnosis and Mulla Sadra's school of philosophy is mixed with the essence of love, and possesses a particular, all-inclusive, and exact view of the world of existence.

## 7. Platonic Idea

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Ford calls the motions of electrons in the atom 'the energy dance'. Capra (in his *Tao of Physics*), after referring to this issue, quotes from a Tibetan monk that all objects are masses of atoms which produce sounds and songs by means of their dance and motions. In the Qur'an, too, in order to say that all particles of the world 'remember and glorify' (*dhekr*) God, the word '*tasbih*' (glorify, praise), which has a fluid sense, has been used. In Persian (Iranian) gnostic literature, all particles of the universe are said to be dancing and rejoicing.

One of the issues that has a long historical record, and is one of the fundamental themes in Illuminationist philosophy, ancient Iranian philosophy, and pre-Socratic schools of thought, although famous in Plato's name, is the issue of luminous Ideas or Divine Ideas, known as Platonic Ideas.

This issue obtained an important place in Iranian Islamic philosophy, and although some philosophers such as Ibn-Sina did not agree with it, some others such as Suhrawardi, Mir Damad, and Mulla Sadra accepted its principles but interpreted it in different ways.

Illuminationist philosophers used to propound the basic issues of their philosophy without argumentation, and only in form of a theory. Mulla Sadra transformed some of these important issues into formal philosophical problems, and employed a number of logical arguments to demonstrate them. Likewise, he discussed the above issue, which Plato had referred to in some of his works,<sup>1</sup> and managed to justify, interpret, and demonstrate it.

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Mulla Sadra says that Plato, in line with his master, Socrates, believed that all sensible and material existents of nature in the world possess a similar form or symbol in the other world. This form is immaterial and, unlike the material existents of this world, is immortal and not prone to destruction and annihilation. He called these forms the 'Divine Ideas'.<sup>2</sup> Muslim philosophers, each in line with his beliefs and thoughts, interpreted them in different ways; for instance, Farabi equated them with the same forms existing in Divine Knowledge, and Ibn-Sina said that they conformed to natural universals or quiddities. And Suhrawardi defined them as parallel and horizontal intellects; those intellects which are the origin of realization of material objects. Some others have also introduced them as suspending Ideal existents and spirits

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<sup>1</sup>. Mulla Sadra, *Huduth al-'alam*, p. 184, Tehran, Sadra Islamic Philosophy Foundation (SIPRI), 1378 A.S.

<sup>2</sup>. *Eidos*.

in the world of Ideas (between the world of matter and the world of intellects).<sup>1</sup>

After rejecting the above interpretations, Mulla Sadra defines and demonstrates the issue in his own way. He first refers to the point that the Ideas intended by Plato are immaterial realities which are completely of the same type of external objects rather than quiddities different from them. That is why in ancient Iranian philosophy the Idea of everything was called by its own name. For example, they had chosen the name '*khordad*' for water, '*mordad*' for tree, and *Hum-e Izad* (God's Hum) for the holy plant, Hume (an angel whose name was *khordad*, one whose name was *mordad*, and one whose name was *Hum*).

Accordingly, Plato's Ideas must be considered each as one of the individuals of a species and the main and primary creation and progenitor of each species; the material and this-worldly things are the other individuals of that species which, due to being bound by matter and its limitations, have turned into weaker and more imperfect existents.<sup>2</sup> He adds that from the viewpoint of the principiality of existence (and its gradation), it is not a problem for some of the individuals of a species to be stronger and more perfect than the other individuals of the same species. Besides, it should be taken into account that these ideas are not the patterns and moulds for other individuals; rather, they are their analogs.

In order to demonstrate this theory philosophically, Mulla Sadra has proposed some philosophical arguments in his *al-Asfar* and *al-Shawahid*.

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<sup>1</sup>. *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*, p. 191, Tehran, Sadra Islamic Philosophy Foundation (SIPRI), 1382 A.S.

<sup>2</sup>. In Mulla Sadra's school, every quiddity whose existence and realization does not require going through the degrees of potency and act (and, as a result, through motion and time), and is an actual existence is a perfect existence. Nevertheless, not all existents and individuals of every species are like this, and thus they must go through a specific route to gain perfection in existence.

One of the basic consequences of the theory of Ideas is the ontological definition of the 'universal': Peripatetics declined the issue of the universal into a concept that only the faculty of the intellect can perceive, and some of them, when trying to solve the problem, completely evaded the burden of argumentation, and believed that the universal of everything consists of the mental abstraction of external objects from the characteristics of each individual or particular thing. In other words, through limiting the inter-species and inter-personal distinctions, something called universal (in contrast to particular) is obtained. In this interpretation, the 'universal' is an unreal, abstract, and absolutely mental concept. And even Nominalists and another group in the middle-age Europe did not suffice to this, and called 'universals' as homonyms (for them, each universal, like a homonym, was a word used commonly for denoting different meanings) and turned their back to Illuminationist philosophy.

However, in Illuminationists' view, the universal was an external 'reality' rather than a 'concept', which is known to have been called 'Idea' by Plato.

In this interpretation, the distinction between the entity of the universal and the particular lies in the idea that since 'the particular' possesses a restricted range of existence, and is limited by material boundaries; it is more vulnerable to man's perception, and is apprehended clearly, while the universal, due to its separation from the matter, is of such a wide range of existence (owing to lacking the imperfections of material entities) that a material existent such as man cannot see and perceive it accurately and clearly in the material conditions of this world, exactly in the same way that the image of a vast view or big body cannot be seen as it is in a small mirror, and, naturally, we only perceive a vague picture of it.

According to this theory, the 'universals' are perceived – but apparently in the form of a common and vast concept – by means of the intellect, because both the Ideas and the intellect are more in conformity with each other in terms of abstraction and separation from the matter, rather than the universals' consisting of merely concepts.

Mulla Sadra agrees with Illuminationists in this regard, and maintains that although, in line with others (Peripatetics), we agree with the idea of universal species (natural universal), which is abstracted by accident from each individual of that species, and does not exist directly, we also believe that the rational universal is an independent reality in its own place. Nevertheless, in material conditions, man's view shows that reality like a ghost, lacking the existing features of material objects. This ghost sounds quite common and universal, and is mistaken by more than one thing; we call the ambiguity resulting from such a viewing from a distance as universality. This is like viewing a cypress tree from a distance in a foggy environment; at first sight, it might look like a universal thing, and be commonly perceived as a stone, tree, or man. Such an illusion and commonality which originates from its ambiguity – which is a reference for universality – is nothing but just our mistake; however, when the fog and dust go away, and we get closer to what we saw from a distance, we will see it not only as a tree, but also as a cypress tree.

Following this example, Mulla Sadra states that the criterion for universality for the terrestrial perceiver is the viewer's weakness of sight and existence, and, considering man's weak intellect, he cannot perceive more than one 'concept' from immaterial realities.

All the above holds true provided that man reaches these Ideas through acquired knowledge and his bodily senses, and in a material situation. However, they will see the Ideas quite clearly if they perceive them through presential knowledge. Mulla Sadra, who, like Suhrawardi and Plotinus, has reached this stage of experience, prefers Platonists' ideas concerning the issue of universals, and believes that there are two types of universals: the natural universal, whose extensions are external individuals, luminous universals or Ideas, which, due to their vastness of existence and lack of material limitations, reach an 'absolute' status, and affect the smaller existences by their inclusiveness and universality.

In Mulla Sadra's philosophical system, this theory has had some other consequences as well.



# *Epistemology*

# *Epistemology*

## **1. Mental Existence**

**M**uslim philosophers have divided existence into two types: objective (or external) existence and mental (or psychological) existence. Mental existence represents the existence of subjects in the mind when they are imagined or function as subjects for predicates in propositions. Such subjects or mental existents might have an extension in the outside, as well as not.

For example, we sometimes consider ‘non-existence’ as the subject, and pose a number of judgments for it in the mind and in propositions which are true but lack external objectivity. Besides, concerning non-existent and impossible objects (agreement of opposites), we sometimes imagine the universalities (as well as existents, completely detached from all their characteristics) in the mind. A universal thing, whether a concept or a judgment, is created in the mind, and, as we know, is of an abstract existence; however, since it has no existence in the outside world; it exists in another place, i.e., in the mind. The existence of such existents is called mental existence. The perception of such an existence is instinctive, and everybody perceives and accepts it by his inner sense (This issue supports the idea of mental existence).

The division of existence into mental and external ones could also be generalized to the division of quiddity. Accordingly, it can be said that quiddity or essence is of two types: external and mental.

Available evidence suggests that this important philosophical issue has no record in Greek philosophy, and is among the findings of Muslim philosophers and Islamic philosophy. Apparently, the first person who devoted an independent chapter to mental existence in his book was Fakhri Razi, the well-known Iranian theologian (in his *al-Mabahith al-mashriqiyyah*).

<sup>1</sup> In the introduction of his book, he states that he has been inspired by the ideas of his preceding philosophers in writing this book.

The issue of mental existence has two aspects. On the one hand, it has an ontological dimension, since it is a kind of existence which has been weakened to a great extent and lost the features and effects of external existence. However, in its own turn – and not in opposition to external existence – it is an external existence (since man and his soul and mind possess such an existence), yet, when it is contrasted with an objective external existent, it is called mental existence.

On the other hand, this issue is an epistemological one and deals with the formation of knowledge and awareness in man and his relation with the outside world.

In occidental philosophy, epistemology is separated from ontology and appears in a different horizon, so that, unless the problem of knowledge is clarified, there will logically remain no context for ontology. Nevertheless, these two disciplines have been intermixed to some extent in Islamic philosophy, where man's knowledge is related to the knowledge of existence. In systematic philosophical discussions, however, epistemology comes before ontology and other philosophical issues, and is considered as their threshold. Mulla Sadra has discussed the topic of knowledge – of which mental existence is a part – in different places for specific philosophical considerations. We will refer to a part of this issue in the discussion of the unity of the knower, the known, and knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup>. Vol. 1, Introduction.

The issue of mental existence can be viewed as a link between ontology and epistemology, clarifying the relation between man and the world. The issue of the correspondence between the external world and the mind is posed and analyzed in this part. Most Muslim philosophers believe that what is formed in the mind is the very essence or quiddity rather than an image, so that if a quiddity refers to an external existent and, in fact, belongs to the category of knowledge, it will be the same as the quiddity of the external object which has been transferred to the mind without its objective existence and external effects.

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In the past, a number of important and technical criticisms were targeted at the problem of mental existence which many philosophers were unable to respond to or solve. For example, they said that knowledge and perception are qualities (which are called mental qualities) that occur to man's mind (and the soul), while if the essence of an external object enters the mind, it is necessary for it to turn into a mental quality, and the changing of essence into accident is impossible.<sup>1</sup>

Second, when we gain the knowledge of a thing in terms of its quantity or other accidents (except for its quality) and internalize it, we have, in fact, transformed it into a mental quality. However, as we know, according to philosophical-logical definitions and data, the ten-fold categories (Aristotelian categories) are completely different from each other in essence and quiddity, and can never turn into each other. Some Muslim philosophers and theologians tried to respond to this objection through resorting to false justifications, and some others, due to not knowing the answer, completely denied the issue of mental existence. However, to solve the problem, Mulla Sadra propounded one of his philosophical masterpieces which could also be employed in solving other related philosophical intricacies. Therefore, the issue of mental existence can be considered as one of the innovations of Mulla Sadra's school of thought.

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<sup>1</sup>. Due to conservation of essences and the impossibility of categories' transforming into each other.

To disentangle this problem, Mulla Sadra resorted to logic and started analyzing ‘predication’ in propositions. Normally, when a predicate is predicated on and attributed to a subject, it is intended to demonstrate or express the existence of the predicate in the subject. Generally speaking, this could be true only when the predicate embodies existence, and the subject is an extension for it, as in the proposition, ‘*Man is greedy*’.

Mulla Sadra maintains: “There is another kind of predication which can be found in propositions such as ‘*Man is a species*’. Here, the intention is to state the identity between the subject and the predicate; that is, referring to the unity of two apparently different quiddities. This kind of predication is called *haml-i awwali / dhati* (primary and essential predication), since it is only true about essences, and since it is ‘primary in truth /or falsity, and the proposition given in the previous paragraph is called *haml-i shay’a-i sana’i* (prevalent technical predication).<sup>1</sup>

The other important logical point which Mulla Sadra has referred to in the same place is that logicians commonly believe that for the realization of the ‘contradiction’ relation between two things, it is necessary to observe unity in eight conditions (subject, predicate, place, time, potency and act, general and particular, condition, and relation). Nevertheless, he adds a ninth condition and states that for contradiction to be realized, in addition to unity in the above-mentioned conditions, unity in predication is also necessary. In other words, both of them should be of the type of either common or primary essential predication; otherwise, there would be no contradiction.

He solved the problem of mental existence in the same way and said that when the external essence or quality (or any other accident) occurs to the mind and develops mental existence (and is, in fact, denied external existence), we can conceive of two different kinds of predication: 1. This mental existence is conceptually and essentially in unity with the external existent in terms of quiddity and, as a result, is predicated on it through the so-called *haml-i awwali* (primary and essential predication); 2.

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<sup>1</sup>. *al-Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 292, Mustafawi Publications.

However, when we examine its status and existence in the mind, we see that it is a 'mental quality', and, therefore, of the type of the so-called *haml-i shay'a-i sana'i* (prevalent predication, since we are, in fact, faced with its existentiality. When we imagine an essence or accident in the outside, we attend to its external effect; nevertheless, when the external effect is negated, i.e., when it enters the mind, it is only a quality, and this is the key to solving the problem.

Mulla Sadra uses the word 'particular' in his example: The proposition, '*The particular is not applicable to multiple things*', must be viewed in two ways: 1) since in practice and in the outside, the particular is not the universal, it is an extension for the label 'particular'. However, as in the above proposition the word 'particular' is considered to include all the particulars of the world, it is a universal (an extension for universal) and by no means a particular (in other words, it is a universal existentially and practically, but a particular conceptually and essentially).

Thus the 'particular' is, in a sense, not universal and an opposite for it, 2) in another sense, it is a universal, including numerous extensions. However, there is no contrast between these two propositions: '*particular is particular*' and '*particular is universal*', since one is of the type of primary essential predication, and the other of the type of prevalent technical predication.

Concerning the problem of mental existence, it should be said that all the essences and accidents that occur to the mind are mental qualities, since their existence in the mind is realized through prevalent technical predication. Yet, comparing to each other, they are either the external concept of essence or an accident which is predicable to it (through primary essential predication). Moreover, essence is the same essence and accident which exist in the world.

## 2. Unity of the Intellect, Intelligible, and

### Intelligent

This issue partly pertains to the relation between man and his knowledge. Mulla Sadra's epistemology has been scatteredly discussed amid the different parts of his philosophy, and, in every part, one of its dimensions has been introduced. In his tackling of this issue, Mulla Sadra responds to the following questions:

- 1) Is our knowledge separate from us and only a mirror-like reflection of external objects in our mind and senses?
- 2) Is the way knowledge reaches man similar to the pouring of something into an empty container, and their relation like the one between the container and the content, or is it a function of man's mind (and soul) and its effect?

As we know, there are several ideas about knowledge in preceding and modern philosophical schools in the West which suffer from certain shortcomings and are not supported by any logical arguments. However, to demonstrate the essential relation between knowledge, the knower, and the known, Mulla Sadra has presented a number of rational arguments.

In the light of his theory, and on the basis of a series of philosophical arguments, Mulla Sadra proves that the perceiver, the mentally perceived object, and knowledge, itself, are the same and one. As he, himself, says, 'the intellect, the intelligent, and the intelligible', or 'knowledge, the knower, and the directly known (subject)' are in unity with each other. This issue is known as the 'unity of the intellect, intelligent, and intelligible'.

It should also be added that, here, by the perceived object (or the intelligible), he means the same form which has been produced in man's mind, which is technically referred to as the directly known (subject), rather than the external object which is called the indirectly known (fact / object).

The issue of the unity of the intelligent and intelligible is basically related to the unity of the knower or the perceiver (the knowing agent) with the directly known, i.e., the same mental existent and the same intelligible and known in man's mind, rather

than its external existence. This is because it is a certain fact that objects never enter our mind exactly as they are through our perception and knowledge of them.

Philosophers' disagreements in this regard center around the question of whether the picture-like quiddity of objects in the mind (the so-called directly known by each individual in the process of perception) is in unity with his intellect and soul or not.

If the answer to the above question is positive, knowledge, the knower, and the known, all, refer to the same reality, and analyzing this reality into three different things is only the product of man's mental power. In other words, the relation among them is of the type of the one between the creator and the created, rather than the one between the container and the contained.

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This issue has a long historical record, and we might be able to find its roots in Ancient Iranian philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> It has been said that it was Porphyry (232-304 A.D), Plotinus's student, who for the first time wrote a book in this regard, and that is why this issue has become famous in his name. Before Mulla Sadra, no one had posed any argument for it, or, at least, we do not know of any.

Ibn-Sina and a group of Peripatetic philosophers did not agree with this theory, since, in their opinion, there was no rational and demonstrative method for proving it. At last, Mulla Sadra found it of interest, started studying it, and in the course of a revelation he received during his period of ascetic practices in the suburbs of Qum (in 1037 A.H, when he was 58 years old), he found the related arguments and, following a philosophical approach, proved his theory.

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<sup>1</sup>. Mulla Sadra, *Treatise on the Unity of the Intellect, Intelligent, and Intelligible*, Direct reference has been made to this point at the end of the first essay of this treatise.

In addition to an extensive explanation of this issue in his *al-Asfar*, Mulla Sadra has also dealt with it in some of his other books, and written an independent treatise on it. Obviously, the philosophical demonstration of this old and obsolete theory was of high importance to him, and we might even say that it was the most important theme in his epistemology, since he conceives of his success in demonstrating this issue as a miracle, the result of the direct assistance he received from God and the Holy Lady (M'asumah, the daughter of the 6<sup>th</sup> leader of Shi'ites, who has a shrine in Qum in her name), and the fruit of his ascetic practices, worships, and lamentations in God's Presence.<sup>1</sup>

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Mulla Sadra's arguments concerning this issue have been based on his other principles, the most important of which perhaps include 'the principiality of existence', 'the trans-substantial motion', 'soul's creativity', 'gradation of existence', and 'the difference between primary and prevalent predications'. In order to understand Mulla Sadra's arguments in this regard, one should first perceive the meaning of 'unity' (*ittihad*). Obviously, unity in the sense of having two different existents, objects, concepts, or quiddities become one is impossible and absurd. Clearly, two separate things or two contradictory concepts are always two things and will never become one. This is the same objection than Ibn-Sina and others advanced against this issue, because they assumed that the unity between the intelligent and the intelligible is of this type.

Moreover, the meanings of 'perception' and 'knowledge' or rationalization need to be clarified here. The perception of things means 'presence', and presence means the 'existence', rather than appearance, of that thing before the perceiver, since 'presence' is other than appearance.

Now the question is whether the 'existence' of each 'form' of the perceived object is separate and independent from the

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<sup>1</sup>. *al-Asfar*, vol. 3. p. 313, Tehran.

‘existence’ of the perceiver (or the intelligent), or in unity with it and has come into existence through that existence.

The answer to the above question is that if the existence of each were different from the other, each of the two had to be conceivable without the other (while it is impossible to have perception without a perceiver or a perceiver without perception). Accordingly, perception and the ‘*form*’ that is perceived and enters the mind are not anything other than the *mind* and the soul, so that they would have to appear before it. Rather, they are a part of it, and are made by the mind itself; they are the same as the existence of the soul and have presence for it. Again, it is emphasized that there is a difference between ‘presence’ and ‘appearance’.<sup>1</sup>

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Another argument here is that there is a mutual relation between the perceived object and the perceiver, which is technically referred to as correlation. Related examples include the relation between a child and his father, the owner and his property, or a husband and wife.

This mutual relation, at all times and in all cases, makes it necessary for one side to come into existence or be assumed if the other side is in existence or is assumed; in other words, their separation from each other is impossible. According to Islamic philosophy, two correlatives are identical and commensurate in terms of their existence, non-existence, and potency and act.

Therefore, if there is a perceiver, there is also a perceived, and it is absurd for one of them to exist actually while the other is non-existent. Besides, since this relation is merely an ‘existential relation’, it is absurd for it to involve more than the existence of one of the two. Thus, since the relation between the perceiver and the perceived is of the type of correlation, both of them have the same existence.

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<sup>1</sup>. This difference is the same as the one between nomen and phenomenon.

Let's review this argument once more: As mentioned previously, perception means the presence and existence of the 'form' of the perceived object, and there exists nothing like 'perception' in separation from the form of the perceived object in the mind (unless we separate them from each other through mental analysis). 'Perception' and 'the perceived' or the cognitive form are two different things in concept, but the same thing in existence. That is,

Perception (Knowledge or Intellection) ↔ Known and the Perceived (Directly Known)

On the other hand, 'perception is the act (or passivity) of the perceiver; no act is ever separable from its agent, and their existences are the same as each other. In fact, the existence of acts or passivity in man is no different from the existence of the agent or the patient.

Thus the existence of the perceiver (the knower or the intelligent) is not separate from the existence of his knowledge and intelligence, and both of them exist through one 'existence', i.e., they are in unity. Accordingly, wherever there is knowledge, there is inevitably a knower, too, and both are interdependent and correlative, so that if the existence of the knower fades away, there would remain no existence for the perceived, either. Thus,

Perception (Knowledge or Intellection) ↔ Perceiver (Intelligent or Knower)

A combination of the above two relations leads us to the conclusion that the knower and the known (and knowledge) exist through one existence, and are in unity with each other. Therefore:

Perceiver ↔ Perceived

Clearly, what is intended by the perceived is its mental concept and quiddity rather than its external equivalent.

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There are certain subtleties in knowledge that require profound analysis and careful treatment, and cannot be discovered through the simplistic approaches that some philosophers might follow. Pre-Sadrian philosophers viewed knowledge and its consequences as accidents that occur to the mind (or the soul) exactly in the same way that dust covers the surface of a table.

Mulla Sadra rejected this idea, since he believed that, firstly, the soul is creative and can negate external existence to quiddities existing in the outside, create them exactly as they are in itself, and grant them mental existence.

Secondly, ‘the form of knowledge’, i.e., the knowledge whose form is made in the mind, like any form (as in Aristotelian philosophy), requires matter (*hyle*), and the matter of the form of the mind and knowledge is the very human soul. In fact, man’s knowledge or intellection is a part of his identity (a part of his soul) and *develops his existence*.

According to Peripatetics, matter or *hyle* is a potency for the ‘form’, and form plays the role of the cause for the *hyle*. *Hyle* and the faculty of the soul, through receiving or creating certain forms of perception and knowledge, grant actuality to themselves and, as a result, grow more, and with every step they take towards intellection and perception, they come one step closer to perfection.

In other words, man’s soul is like a *tabula rasa* (white tablet) which is the same as pure potency: the more its intellect (and intelligible), which is created (and caused) by itself, the more its actuality, and the higher its perfection.

Pre-Sadrian philosophers believed that the relation between knowledge and intelligibles, on the one hand, and the soul, on the other, is like the relation between the container and the contained (and its secondary perfection)<sup>1</sup>; however, Mulla Sadra proved that the intellect and intelligibles of the soul are the product of its own endeavors, as well as the developmental motion of man's existence, and that with every bit of knowledge that is gained, something is added to man's existence (and the primary perfection<sup>2</sup> of the soul); it is more like adding a brick to a building in its process of completion, rather than splashing some paint on it or filling a container with its content.

The more knowledge reaches man's soul, the grosser and the more perfect his existence. Thus man's knowledge (and perception which is the introduction to knowledge) is a part of his existence, rather than one of the accidents that might occur to him.

### 3. Man's Perceptions

Perception has always been, and still is, one of the themes raising a great amount of commotion in philosophical discussions. Mulla Sadra has a particular theory in this regard, too, and it seems to be more accurate and comprehensive than the ideas of other philosophers.

He accepts philosophers' classification of perception into sense, imaginal, rational, and estimative perceptions.

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<sup>1</sup>. Final entelechy.

<sup>2</sup>. First entelechy.

<sup>1</sup> However, he does not agree with the way they qualify them, and, ultimately, maintains that perception is of three types: sense perception, imaginal perception, and rational perception.

Mulla Sadra believes that the origin of all perceptions is the external object, which, immediately after entering the mind, obtains some degree of immateriality. He adds that, basically, all human perceptions are immaterial, and do not depend on a specific matter in the brain or the body for their existence, since matter, which is essentially followed by the trans-substantial motion, and its every moment is separate from the other, has no self-awareness, much less to be aware of another existent.

The mind, which, according to some philosophers, is like a receptacle for knowledge, is nothing other than the very perceptions and pieces of knowledge that man's soul creates through its specific power of creativity.

We discussed imaginal perception previously in an independent section, thus in what follows, we will deal with the other two types of perception, namely, sense and rational perceptions.

## **Sense perception**

Mulla Sadra believes that sense perception has different stages:

**First stage:** This stage consists of the reflection of external facts by the five senses. He conceives of this stage as the effect and reflection of an image on a photography negative, and maintains that it is too imperfect and low to be called perception and result in knowledge for man. This stage consists of a series of code-like signals that create a faint picture in the brain (and in early philosophers' words, in the common sense).

This stage is only halfway through perception, and empiricists, who equate reflection on the senses with perception,

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<sup>1</sup>. In his books, Mulla Sadra expresses his doubts about estimative perception, and equates it with imagination.

have sufficed to half of what really takes place, and, thus, they cannot deny the complete process of perception.

**Second stage:** At this stage, it is the human soul's turn to gain knowledge from these images and codes. Here, two important elements are necessary for sense perception: 'attention' and 'awareness'. Attention is a psychological phenomenon, and has nothing to do with the body. Unless the soul's attention is completely focused on the functions of the five senses, none of the signals transmitted by them can be regarded as perception.

We have also seen in practice that man, while crossing the street, does not perceive all the things his senses (such as sight and hearing) experience, unless he pays attention to them.

'Attention' is also a psychological phenomenon, out of the realms of the body and the brain. Attention is the result of man's 'attention' to those things which have 'presence' for him. Awareness is the very presence of external objects in man's mind (and soul). Mulla Sadra calls this attention and awareness of the soul as 'presential knowledge'.

In Islamic philosophy, knowledge and perception are divided into two groups: acquired knowledge and presential knowledge.

'Acquired knowledge' consists of what is acquired through the five senses. It can introduce and present the quiddity (rather than existence) of objects to the mind. In Islamic philosophy, the cognitive form that is created in the mind is called the 'indirectly known'.

As to his acquired knowledge, man is never confronted with the 'existence' of perceived things, because, as mentioned in the part related to mental existence, external existence cannot enter the mind without declining to the degree of mental existence, and is, in fact, not perceptible (that is why we perceive the fire, but its existential features, i.e., warmth, do not come to the mind). In acquired knowledge, man only deals with the 'quiddity' of objects; hence, his knowledge of phenomena lacks their characteristics and effects, and is useless.

‘Presential knowledge’ is, however, a direct kind of knowledge, needless of the mediation of the senses, and is interpreted as ‘intuition’. This knowledge involves the characteristics of the perceived existent. When a person looks at objects with his inward intuition, it is as if his ‘self’ has turned into the ‘self of the perceived object’, and the separation of the agent of perception and the object, as well as the distance between them, will not be sensed.

Sometimes, we perceive our own existence without the interference of our senses, and all our perceptions, including our feelings, desires, thoughts, internal motivations, affections, and perceptions, and psychological acts are in the form of presential knowledge. It is at this point that we reach the third stage of sense perception.

**Third stage:** This is the important stage of sense perception after the soul’s ‘attention’ to and presential knowledge of the signals transmitted from the five senses. Here, the soul, through its power of creativity,

<sup>1</sup> and through making a model of those signals, reconstructs the ‘quiddity’ of the perceived object for itself, and substitutes it for the quiddity of that external existent. And as we know, the quiddity of every object consists of the totality of its reality, of course, without the existential effects of its external characteristics.

Accordingly, man’s perception is not in the form of the indwelling and presence of the form of external objects in the mind; rather, it is a kind of ‘creation’ that is manifested in the form of ‘emanation’ from the soul. Besides, all the previous stages of perception consist of, in fact, a series of peripheral and marginal contributions or so-called prerequisites, rather than true reasons. Therefore, knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (the unity of the knower and knowledge).

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<sup>1</sup>. The issue of creativity has been extensively discussed in Islamic gnosis and Mulla Sadra’s school of thought, as illustrated in the part on mental existence. For more information, refer to the article written by Seyyed Muhammed Khamenci, ‘*Creativity and Man’s Vicegerency*’.

The important point in such an interpretation of sense perception is solving the problem of the correspondence of the perceived external object with perception or knowledge (subject), which is technically called the correspondence between the directly known and the indirectly known. This point is at the center of philosophy, and is considered as the basis of all sciences.

The solution to the problem of the correspondence between the outside and knowledge, or between the truth of knowledge and perception lies in the unity of the quiddity of the directly known object and the perception of the indirectly known or the subject. Mulla Sadra believes that a perception which fails to unveil the truth does not result in knowledge acquisition. Quiddity is the very external and objective reality of objects which has taken off the dress of external existence, and put on the dress of mental existence. And since the criteria for 'unveiling' is the very quiddity of objects, i.e., its limits and definitions, whenever we have access to the quiddity of something through acquired knowledge, we have gained the knowledge of that thing. All the primary and secondary qualities, quantities, attributes, and states of objects could be found in their quiddity, and perceived by means of the senses.

Mulla Sadra does not deny the error of the senses; however, he believes that what is known as the error of the senses is, in fact, an error in making correspondences and judgments. He maintains that man's estimative faculty interferes with his judgments, and leads him towards committing errors. Error is an exceptional issue with respect to people suffering from mental diseases, and does not damage the universal principle of the truth of perceptions.

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The immateriality of imagination and imaginal perception has been discussed elsewhere, thus we will now restate Mulla Sadra's view of intellectual perception or perception of universals in brief. Intellectual perception means the presence of the universal form of any intelligible before the mind (and wisdom).

'Intelligible', which is what man's mind and soul perceive universally (abstractly and free from any relation) is divided into three groups: 'primary intelligibles', 'secondary philosophical intelligibles', and 'secondary logical intelligibles'.

Primary intelligibles consist of those universal principles and known facts which are abstracted and inferred from external objects and phenomena, such as the principles of natural sciences, physics, chemistry, and the like. Aristotelian intelligibles are of this type.

Primary intelligibles are those universal forms and issues that man abstracts from particulars, such as individuals and objects. When studying these intelligibles and universal concepts, we sometimes encounter certain common universal issues among them. For example, they are either a cause or an effect; either one or multiple; either potential or actual. Moreover, they might consist of those universal attributes that qualify the objects out of the mind. Such secondary universals are called secondary philosophical intelligibles.

There are also some other secondary intelligibles whose receptacle of qualification is the mind, such as universal abstraction and being particular, which are called secondary logical intelligibles. There is a linear relation or connection among these perceptions, including sense and intellectual perceptions, and its degrees could be assimilated to the degrees of water temperature. The degrees of this line are different from the fixed degrees on a ruler, and, in fact, they represent a kind of fluctuation in mental and psychological acts that indicates the soul's descent and ascend. Such intelligibles have been explained and demonstrated in a number of philosophical books.

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### **3. Immaterial Imagination**

According to common people, imagination means a series of free and sometimes baseless images which have no share of reality. Psychology views imagination as a phenomenon or force in humans that can freely create some objects or scenes that, like dreams, occupy man's mind.

Peripatetic philosophers considered imagination as one of man's internal faculties and powers. For them, his external perceptions were obtained through the five senses, and his internal perceptions included common sense,<sup>1</sup> imagination, imaginal memory (conceptual intellect), and faculty of the estimate. They also held that imagination was the vault of those forms which entered the mind through common sense, and memory was the reservoir of concepts and meanings. At the same time, imagination was equipped with another faculty which could synthesize the received forms and pictures at free will like an experienced director, and the faculty of estimate could construct the concepts as it wished. For Peripatetics, all these faculties dealt with particulars, and it was only the faculty of the intellect that dealt with universals.

Suhrawardi, the spokesman of Illuminationist philosophy, claimed that imagination had a receptacle other than man, consisting of an intermediate world (purgatory) between the world of the sense and matter and the world of intellects. He called this the world of Ideas or disjunctive imagination. The world of Ideas is stronger and more important than the material life, and weaker and lower than the world of intelligibles and intellects. According to his Illuminationist theory, all immaterial and beyond-sense forms come into existence in the world of imagination and Ideas. In this world, there is no trace of matter, but objects enjoy form and quantity there inside and resemble the things we see in our dreams without using the outward eye.

Peripatetic philosophers believed in the existence of two worlds for man: world of sensibles and world of intelligibles. However, Suhrawardi said that there existed three worlds, and added the world of Imagination to the two stated previously. This was the very limited world of Ideas, which Ibn-Arabi has sometimes referred to as the world of imagination. This world provides the basis for his worldview.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Sensus Communis* in Latin.

Mulla Sadra, too, believes in the three-fold worlds. He agrees with Peripatetics and other philosophers concerning the world of intelligibles, and with Suhrawardi and Ibn-Arabi concerning the world of imagination or Ideas. In his books, he refers to imagination as one of man's internal perceptions; nevertheless, he disagrees with these two schools in certain respects:

First, unlike Peripatetics, who did not believe in the immateriality of imagination, he considers it, like the faculty of the intellect, as being separate from man's organs (Peripatetics had assigned to it a specific place in the structure of the brain)<sup>1</sup> and as possessing the characteristics of abstract things. Of course, Peripatetics' belief in the immateriality of the faculty of the intellect, and Mulla Sadra's belief in the immateriality of the faculties of the intellect and imagination are both based on accepting and believing in the philosophical immateriality of the soul which philosophers had demonstrated through their arguments.

Although imagination is a psychological phenomenon in man, in Mulla Sadra's view, it is neither in the imaginal faculty nor in the brain; rather, it is a creation of the soul and depends on the immaterial aspects of man's soul.<sup>2</sup>

Second, in contrast to Illuminationists, Mulla Sadra maintains that imagination exists in man and in the soul, and is dependent on it, rather than in the external world depending on itself. Illuminationists called this type of imagination Idea or disjunctive imagination; accordingly, Sadrian imagination has been called conjunctive imagination.

Mulla Sadra considers all types of man's perceptions as the acts of the soul (not affections) for which the senses and other perceptive faculties function as tools. As the soul is immaterial, all

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<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the hole, the front part of the brain.

<sup>2</sup>. This is because, like the body, the soul possesses certain senses such as sight (insight). Man can experience it and gain certainty about its reality when dreaming or dying.

its particular and universal perceptions are immaterial and needless of the body. Through his faculty of imagination, even without copying from the data of the senses, man can create forms which resemble God's innovative creation (creation from non-existence)

<sup>1</sup> in every respect.

According to the theory of the true three-fold worlds, i.e., the worlds of sense, Ideas, and intelligibles, which Mulla Sadra also agrees with, and on the basis of the principle of the correspondence between man's internal three-fold perceptive faculties, i.e., sense, imaginal, and intellectual perceptions, and the above three-fold worlds, he believes that man's soul enters the world of the sense through the perception of sensibles, the world of Ideas through imaginal perception, and the world of intellects through the perception of universals and intelligibles.<sup>2</sup>

In Mulla Sadra's view, imaginal forms are of two types: 1) those forms which are received even without employing the content of the mind and memory, through the reflection of the beyond-sense realities on the mirror of man's soul, or through the coordination and resonance of man's soul (microcosm) or macro-anthropo (macro-cosmos); 2) those forms which take control through man's faculty of imagination, and, by means of a skillful synthesis of some of the forms recorded in the mind, construct new forms, such as a winged-horse or a gold mountain.

Perhaps the origin of Mulla Sadra's opposition to Suhrawardi's theory of disjunctive imagination is the existence of this second group of low-value imaginal forms to which Mulla Sadra assigns no place in the disjunctive world of Ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> *Creation ex nihilo*.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Mabda' wal-ma'ad*, vol. 2, p. 647, Mulla Sadra Philosophy Foundation Publications. *Al-Asfar*, vol. 8. p. 234.

# *Soul–Eschatology*



# *Soul - Eschatology*

## **1. Corporeal Origination of the Soul**

**I**n the past, two major theories concerning the human soul were quite popular among philosophers. One of these theories was the Platonic theory of the spirit and the soul, suggesting that the existence of the soul was eternal, spiritual, and prior to the creation of the body (Timaeus). The second theory belonged to Peripatetics, and Ibn-Sina provided a thorough explanation for it. This theory dealt with the immaterial or non-corporeal origination of the soul, along with the corporeal origination and creation of the body. Later Mulla Sadra presented an innovative theory in this regard. He proved that although man's soul ultimately becomes immaterial in its particular course of development, it is corporeal at the outset of creation, and is born from the body.

In Mulla Sadra's view, man's soul is initially solid, and then, after leaving the stage of solidity behind, turns into an embryo and steps into the vegetative stage (vegetative soul). Later it arrives at the animal stage (animal soul), and then, in the process of its real maturity, reaches the stage of human soul and becomes a 'rational soul'. After this stage, in the light of its efforts, practice, and rational and spiritual training, it can also achieve human maturity (which he calls the holy soul and actual intellect (*intellectus in actu*)). This is a stage which quite a few are capable of reaching.

All these stages, in fact, represent moving in the same route in order to leave potency and enter actuality. Each succeeding

stage is a potential for the preceding one, and going through them means passing through grades of intensity, and moving from weakness to strength. However, the collection of these stages comprises the points of a line called 'human life' and 'line of development', and which is formed on the basis of the principle of graded existence and the trans-substantial motion.

It is important to know that entering each stage does not mean getting away from the previous stage; rather, each higher stage, at all times, embodies and includes the weaker stages prior to itself, as well. The rule here suggests that every strong existence – according to gradation of existence – embraces all the weaker existential stages before it.

Mulla Sadra blames philosophers like Peripatetics who consider the soul a static substance which remains in the same state from the beginning to the end of life, and has no trans-substantial motion. Obviously, he also disagrees with people like Descartes who believe in the absolute separation of the soul and body.

Like other Muslim philosophers, Mulla Sadra believes in the abstraction (immateriality) of the soul, but not in the sense intended by his preceding schools of thought. In his view, the immateriality of the soul is gradual owing to its ascending and developmental journey, and, in his own terms, due to its trans-substantial motion. This motion leads to body's senility and annihilation; however, it is a motion towards rationality in the soul, and becomes more powerful and active day after day. The developed soul, after separating from the body and becoming needless of it, ultimately, turns into the 'abstract intellect', and continues its life in a space which is more desirable than the material one.

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Mulla Sadra's philosophical psychology is based on his other philosophical principles, which are considered exactly the very reasons he adduces to prove his theory. Such principles are presented below:

1. Material substance naturally enjoys a developmental motion, and, unlike what Peripatetics say, nature is not

static; rather, the trans-substantial motion is at the heart of its dynamism.

2. The ultimate goal of the creation of each existence leaves a series of predispositions in it which must be divulged through its trans-substantial motion. Although both the body and the soul are in the matter of the existent's body, the difference between their ultimate ends has left two different types of predispositions in them, which is quite natural, since as we can see, both a plant and an animal are born from matter, yet one obtains an animal soul, and the other remains vegetation.

3. Man's soul is his very 'I' and 'self', and, in spite of the graded difference between the soul and body, man's 'self' or 'I' cannot be decomposed. The synthesis of the body and the soul is in the form of unity, rather than annexation and external synthesis.

4. Although the body is made of the matter, and consists of several components, the human 'I' or soul is simple and indivisible. According to the philosophical principle stating that *'the simple truth is everything'*, all man's internal and external effects, acts, and affections belong to his 'self' and soul and originate from his unity. In other words, the soul, while having unity and simplicity, consists of all his faculties.

5. Despite being abstract and independent, the soul is practically dependent on the five senses, the brain, and nerves for its perceptions. Likewise, for its physical activities, it depends on the related organs. All these organs and senses are the soul's tools for its affections and activities. Mulla Sadra considers the soul the director and guide of the body rather than vice versa, and states that it is the wind that directs the ship forward rather than the other way round.

6. The more the soul is developed in the course of the trans-substantial motion, the less its dependence upon the body will be. Natural death (one that is not due to

accidents) is the result of the voluntary separation of the soul from the body and its actual abstraction. Such an interpretation of death by Mulla Sadra is in contrast to that of both ancient (Galen and Hippocrates) and modern medicines.

To demonstrate the immateriality of the soul,<sup>1</sup> Muslim philosophers have adduced a number of arguments, including the following:

- In addition to sensing and perceiving particulars, man is capable of apprehending and analyzing abstract and universal issues and concepts, and developing some judgments for them. All abstract and universal affairs are immaterial (since all the related characteristics have been previously negated to them), and each immaterial thing ranks higher than matter, and cannot depend on it; it should possess an independent and immaterial receptacle and field for itself to predicate it;<sup>2</sup> otherwise, it will become material.
- The independent field containing the universals (man's universal and abstract perceptions) is called 'mind' by philosophers. This field must be viewed as being separate from the material tools and layers of the brain (cortex).
- Denying the immateriality of the soul or the mind is a kind of leniency in research, and philosophical laziness. This is because paying attention to philosophical reasons

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<sup>1</sup>. Henry Corbin believes that '*mujarad*' (abstract) in the terminology of Islamic philosophy is the same as the Greek '*khoristos*' and an equivalent to 'transcendent' rather than to 'immaterial' or 'incorporeal'.

<sup>2</sup>. Such independence for abstract things from the matter is not in contrast to the idea that the material body should make the provisions necessary for abstract things; for example, the upper layer of the brain and the nervous system serve as tools for exerting the soul's will or transferring affections to it. In real life instances we see that electrical keys and tools are not electrical by themselves, but they can (and must) be at the service of electricity and its connection to other parts, and manifest its benefits.

could lead one to the immateriality of the soul and mind, which does not seem an easy undertaking to some people.

Philosophers have also adduced some others reasons which have been presented in Mulla Sadra's books, as well as in those of others.

Experiences such as the sixth sense, telepathy, after-death perceptions for those who have come back to life, true dreams, and the like are among those meta-psychological and supernatural phenomena that are not in conformity with the structure of the body, and can refer to the immateriality of the soul.

## 2. Metaphysics of Death

One of the important topics of the philosophical discussions related to the soul is 'death', which Mulla Sadra has borrowed from natural sciences, and introduced and discussed in the field of philosophy.

Mulla Sadra views death as the soul's desertion of the body. He disagrees with this idea of biologists and physicians suggesting that death is the effect of the destruction and annihilation of the body, and the derangement of its natural order, like one whose house has been destroyed and is forced to seek shelter somewhere else.

He maintains that death is of two types: natural death and accidental death. In natural death, the soul, in its journey towards perfection, leaves the body when it does not need it anymore. He assimilates the body to a ship, and the soul to the wind that pushes the ship forward, and says that if there is no wind, the ship will stop moving; likewise, when the soul departs with the body, there will be no life.

By reference to a *hadith* from the Holy Prophet (saas), stating that 'the soil will rot the whole body except for the substance<sup>1</sup> from which it has been created', Mulla Sadra states

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<sup>1</sup>. We can consider it as DNA or something like it but unknown. It is called '*ajb al-dhanab*' in the *hadith*.

that, after death, man takes the faculty of imagination away with himself. This faculty is his substance, contains all forms and data of the worldly man, and is immaterial and independent from the material world. The personality of the same worldly man is reconstructed in the Hereafter with more abilities and faculties in the light of this very faculty of imagination.

Death does not ruin the body; rather it disperses it, and, while maintaining its origin and substance, takes its attributes away from it, and, whenever it wishes, it can return those attributes to the original substance of the body.<sup>1</sup>

In the Iranian Islamic gnostic literature, particularly in Rumi's *Mathnawi*, death is considered a rebirth and a gate for entering another world, and it had better to call it life rather than death. Rumi uses the words 'dying' or 'being reborn in stages' to refer to the change of the human embryo from spiritless matter into the vegetative form, then into the animal form, and finally into the human form. He maintains that the developed man can turn into an angel by death, or even go higher than angels.

### 3. Resurrection

The issue of resurrection can be considered as one of the neglected themes in philosophy and metaphysics. Although resurrection is one of the subcategories of the issue of the soul, and although its mortality or immortality after death is among the themes dealt with in philosophy, before Mulla Sadra, it was classified under the subjects studied in theology.<sup>2</sup> The most non-philosophical answer to this problem is the denial of resurrection, the world, or other worlds that religions and Illuminationist philosophers have referred to.

Mulla Sadra could propound this subject in the mould of a philosophical issue, and place it among the discussions following

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<sup>1</sup>. In the Qur'an, human death has been assimilated to vegetations' hibernation.

<sup>2</sup>. Considering the entropy of the world matter, and the assumption of the subsistence of energy, natural sciences and physics, too, should inevitably deal with this problem, and find out about the fate of the world and the universe after the 'Big Bang' or another possible event.

the issues related to man's soul and his faculties and perceptions. According to Islamic and Qur'anic beliefs, the world of matter has a destiny in which the matter changes shape<sup>1</sup> or is completely annihilated. However, in a repeated event (which can be called the big explosion or the second Big Bang), human beings and objects will appear in a specific form.

Mulla Sadra stated in a new theory that 'revivification', or collective presence in the resurrection day, is not restricted to human beings and includes all existents.<sup>2</sup> This theory of resurrection is more in conformity with the theories of the end of the transformation of the physical quiddity of the world.

Resurrection or the day of deranging the order and form of nature is followed by the scene of revivification, i.e., the presence of all human beings and things.

According to Mulla Sadra, time is the cause of separation among people in its course of passage, and when time and place, which are the two factors causing dispersion among people, are annihilated, all of them will come together in the same place. In Mulla Sadra's philosophy, the world of the Hereafter is another world which is no different from this world except in its matter, mass, body, and time, yet the form and shape of objects are apparently the same as before.

This world has been called the 'Ideal world', and its characteristics are mainly similar to the characteristics of pure energy.

The 'Ideal world' is one of the three-fold worlds Mulla Sadra – in line with sophists – agrees with in his worldview. These worlds consist of the world of matter, the world of Ideas (or imagination), and the world of intellect and intelligibles.

The above worlds are not three separate places; rather, their classification is based on their strength, weakness, perfection, imperfections, and, in Mulla Sadra's words, their proximity to or distance from the Pure Origin or God.

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<sup>1</sup>. In physicists' words, anti-matter will dominate the matter, and the present matter of the world will be destroyed.

<sup>2</sup>. Mulla Sadra's treatise, *Risalat al-hashr*, is on this issue.

In this theory, the world of intellect is more complete than other worlds, and has complete dominance over its lower worlds. This dominance has a philosophical sense rather than a geometrical one, thus the world of intellect possesses all the positive aspects of the lower world. The world of matter is an imperfect world, and its existents are the prisoners of time, place, and corporeality, and suffer from numerous physical and natural limitations.

A higher world is the world of Ideas, with no temporal, spatial, and corporeal limitations (like man's faculty of imagination). The existents of this world have a more perfect life, and their existential degree is higher. The world of intellect is even more infinite and perfect than this world.

In Mulla Sadra's view, after death or the destruction of the world, although man apparently loses his outward body, he will own another body which is like his previous one, and has its characteristics.<sup>1</sup> He also possesses in the new mould the scientific data which had been stored in his faculty of imagination (it was previously mentioned that, according to Mulla Sadra, this faculty is immaterial). As a result, after his death, man's 'I' appears as a body possessing a soul with all his attributes, characteristics, and worldly desires. And all human beings will see each other in that world in the same form (without matter), and with the same worldly characteristics, and will recognize each other quite clearly.

Some of the theologians who agreed with bodily resurrection assumed that on the Day of Resurrection the soul must return to its previous material status in retrogression. Mulla Sadra argues that this idea merely originates from the common sense, and tries to prove that the body will possess a body without retrogression to the previous material status; a body which he believes is like a dress which is worn under the dress on the top; it is in the innermost of this outward body, and functions as the mould of man's soul. This body has been made of apparent chemical and organic substances (and its cells change

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<sup>1</sup>. Mulla Sadra emphasizes that, unlike the common belief, the body is not the guard and carrier of the soul; rather, it is the soul that preserves the body after its own establishment. Thus the soul has a body for itself after death.

everyday), and since it has no stability, it does not deserve to belong to the abstract soul.

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Mulla Sadra believed that his solution for demonstrating man's corporeal resurrection is in conformity with the Qur'an; however, some of his succeeding philosophers have some doubts in this regard, or completely deny this idea. They maintain that this brave and innovative theory is in need of completion, and that future scientific advancements might contribute to the perfection of man's ideas of after-death life and eternity.

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Mulla Sadra harshly attacks the idea of reincarnation and rejects it by philosophical reasons. He tries to justify the theories attributed to some pre-Socratic philosophers, and argues that man's real body, which accompanies his soul after death, is influenced by his thoughts and conducts and changes face. Those people with prominent animal characteristics turn into the same animal, and are embodied and imagined in the same form in the Hereafter and the Day of Revivification. He maintains that the intention of early philosophers and some religions of reincarnation was this very transformation of man's inner nature.



# *Hermeneutics*



# *Hermeneutics*

## **Mulla Sadra's Interpretation and Hermeneutics**

The discussion of the issues related to the interpretation of the Heavenly Book became quite common right from the beginning of its descent in Muslim societies. Naturally, different methods of interpretation were also developed later. Mulla Sadra followed a method and a number of principles in interpretation which can be said to have been more or less known to *Batini Shi'ites* (Esoterics).

As mentioned previously, he believes in the vertical three-fold worlds, consisting of the sense world, imaginal or Ideal world, and, finally, the intellectual world. According to a gnostic theory, 'revelation' or the Divine language is not directly descended to the world of matter; descent means going through the intellectual, Ideal, and material or sense stages in a stepwise fashion, and the Prophet's soul must first go through the two material and Ideal stages, so that it could receive revelation at the stage of intellects, and hear and perceive God's language. This language is later transformed into a language comprehensible to ordinary people, and descended to the world of matter. Mulla Sadra believes that to perceive the Qura'nic concepts, one must go beyond the words and understand the concepts behind them in superior worlds. This is technically called '*ta'wil*' (interpretation). In Arabic, this word means 'reaching the origin', i.e., one must discover the depth of such concepts without dispensing with the surface meaning of the words in the Qur'an. This can be done through seeking help from inwardly senses, and is not possible without revelation.

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On the other hand, Mulla Sadra and some sophists regard God's language as one of His Acts, since, as written in the Qur'an, when God wishes for something, He orders it: '*Become*', and that thing comes into being. This language is called 'existential becoming', which might be of the same meaning with *Logos*. Thus God employs the 'existential language' for creation, and the common and conventional language for speaking to people.

It can be inferred from this point that, generally speaking, the interpretation of God's language involves the interpretation of worldly phenomena as well. Mulla Sadra combined philosophical hermeneutics with the traditional hermeneutics of the Holy Book three centuries before Heidegger and other philosophers, and we might conceive of his philosophy of interpretation as a bridge filling the gap between these two schools of thought.

*Conclusion*

## Conclusion

**I**t was previously mentioned that Mulla Sadra's school of thought, as a perfect philosophical system, and in spite of various problems, is of a coherent and congruent form. In this system, the process of philosophical thought (or, in his own words, man's first spiritual journey) begins with 'existence' and 'existent'. Even if we accept that, logically, the issue of knowledge (epistemology) is prior to ontology, Mulla Sadra is still justified in considering 'existence' as the beginning point for thinking. This is because even 'knowledge', as a phenomenon, requires an existential basis, too, and in order to keep away from skepticism, one must, inevitably, recognize man's existence (or as Descartes says, his *Cogito*) officially.

This might have been the reason why Muslim philosophers have mixed the issues related to knowledge and existence in their works. Mulla Sadra has started his book with existence, since it is the most comprehensive and inclusive subject for philosophical thought.

Islamic philosophy is based on the interaction and bilateral relation between ontology and epistemology, and as it discusses the issues of quiddity (questioning the what of something) and quality (questioning the how of something), it also deals with their ontological relation with the outside.

The second feature of Sadrian philosophy is demonstrating the 'gradational relation' of existents with each other, as well as with their pre-eternal source. From one aspect, this principle cannot be separated from the previous issue – principiality of existence – and this very principle can pave the way for

disentangling several other philosophical problems, one of the most important of which is ‘motion in substance’.

The trans-substantial motion, in addition to providing a correct interpretation of the material world and the dynamism of world system, has solved a lot of other puzzles. It was through this very principle that Mulla Sadra was able to define the ‘soul’, and account for its amazing processes of ‘becoming’, ‘being’, and development till after death. He also classified the issues of motion and the soul, which Aristotle had subcategorized under natural sciences, under issues related to ontology.

One of the consequences of gradation of existence was the demonstration of ‘mental existence’. It enabled Mulla Sadra to take a big step forward in demonstrating man’s true knowledge and its interaction with existence. The issue of ‘mental existence’ clarified the philosophical aspect of the creativity of man’s soul, as well as the relation among knowledge, the knower, and the known, or the correspondence between the subject and object; a subject which is still considered a very complicated issue in the present Western philosophy.

The issue of imagination, and the demonstration of its immateriality is also a very important philosophical problem. Mulla Sadra provided a firm basis for this issue by presenting a solid principle in this regard, and, in this way, brought the relation between art (as well as aesthetics) and ontology into light.

Mulla Sadra’s precision in expressing the types of intelligibles (primary and secondary intelligibles), in its own right, could provide the necessary responses to some of the present day philosophical problems, and clarify the ambiguities arising from Kant’s anti-philosophy theory.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to refer to and explain every single issue that Mulla Sadra has dealt with (he, himself, says that they amount to 170 in number) in this booklet. However, some of his innovations have been discussed in a book called ‘*Mulla Sadra’s Life, Character, and School*’.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Seyyed Mohammed Khamenci, Tehran, Sadra Islamic Philosophy Foundation.

It is also necessary to add that Mulla Sadra has left a number of works in other fields, including the science of logic, political philosophy, art, interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, and technical commenting on *hadith*. Interested readers are recommended to refer to the list of books to get more information in this regard.

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		Commentary on al-Hadid chapter	1011	
			1012	
			1013	Tarh al-kawnayn
			1014	
Vol 1	Asfar		1015	
Vol 2		Shawq al-hayula ila al-surat	1016	al-Mazahir al-ilahiyya
			1017	
		Sharh al-hidayat	1018	al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad
			1019	
			1020	Sharh-i hikmat al-ishraq, al-Shawhid al-rubūbiyyah, Mulla Sadra's Notes
			1021	
		Al-waridat al-qalbiyyah	1022	
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			1030	Commentary on al-Nur Verse
		Commentary on al-Zakāta al-A'la and al-Waqi'a chapters	1031	Commentary on al-Yasin
			1032	Commentary on al-Tariq chapter
		Ajwibat al-mas'ul al-nasiriyyat	1033	Iksir al-'arifin
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