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BIBLIOGRAPHY


Chapter XLVIII

SA'DR AL-DIN SHIRZAI (Mulla Sadra) 1

A LIFE AND WORKS

The intellectual activity revived in Persia during the Safavid period, some features of which we have discussed in the previous chapter, "The School of Isfahan," found its culmination in Sa'dr al-Din Shirzai known to his contemporaries as Akhund Mulla Sadra and to his disciples as simply Akhund or as Sa'dr al-Mafi'fat, i.e., the foremost among the theosophes. This figure, about whom the whole intellectual life of Persia has revolved in the past three centuries and a half who is one of the major expositors of Islamic intellectual doctrines in the Shi'ah world, has remained until today almost completely unknown outside Persia, even in other Muslim countries. Many have heard of his name, and nearly all travellers to Persia since the Safavid period, who have been interested in the intellectual life of the country, have recognized his importance and have been impressed by his fame. 2 Yet no one outside a group of his disciples in Persia, who have kept his school alive until today, has done justice to his doctrines in presenting them to the world at large.

Mulla Sadra, whose complete name is Sa'dr al-Din Muhammad, was born in Shiraz in about 979/1571, 3 the only son of Ibrahim Shirzai. A member of the famous Qawwāl family of Shiraz, Ibrahim held the post of a viceroy and was a powerful political and social figure in his native city. The young Sa'dr al-Din exhibited his exceptional intelligence from childhood and was given the best possible education in Shiraz.

Having completed his early studies, he became intensely interested in the intellectual sciences (al-'ilm al-tafhīs), especially metaphysics, and, 4

1 Conte de Gobineau, one of the most observant of travellers who have visited Persia during the past few centuries, was quite aware of Mulla Sadra's significance although not quite well acquainted with his ideas, for, in a well-known passage he wrote: "Le vrai, l'incontestable mérite de Mulla Sadra reste celui que j'ai indiqué plus haut: c'est d'avoir rassemblé, regroupé, pour le temps où il vivait, la philosophie antérieure, en lui conservant les moins possible de ses formes anciennes . . . . Gobineau, Les religions et les philosophes dans l'Afrique centrale, les Éditions G. Gréau et Cie, Paris, 1923, pp. 192.

2 The data of Mulla Sadra's birth was unknown until quite recently when in the new edition of the Asfār, Tabatabai collected a large number of hand-written manuscripts of the work. On the margin of one of the manuscripts dated 1197/1782 with marginal notes by Mulla Sadra himself, the authenticity of which cannot be doubted, there appears this statement: "This truth was revealed to me on Friday, the 7th of Jamadi al-Ula 1037 A.H. when 58 years had passed from the beginning of my life . . . . Therefore, the date of his birth can be established as 979/1571 or 980/1572.


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therefore, left Shirāz for Iṣfahān which was at that time the capital and major seat of learning in Persia. In Iṣfahān he studied first with Bahā’ al-Dīn Ḥāmid, learning the transmitted sciences (al-‘ulam al-madjdīyah) from him and later with Mīr Dīmāl who was his most famous master in the intellectual sciences. Within a few years he became himself a recognized master in all the branches of formal learning especially in Ḥikmat in which he soon surpassed his own teachers.

Not satisfied simply with formal learning, Mulla Ṣadrā left worldly life in general and retired to a small village named Kakh in Qum where he spent fifteen years in asceticism and purification of his soul until, as he claims in his introduction to the Ḥisār, he became endowed with the direct vision of the intelligible world. He now came to "see" through illumination (‘ishq) what he had previously learned theoretically from books.

Having reached both formal and spiritual perfection, Mulla Ṣadrā returned once again to the world. Meanwhile Alīkhān, the Governor of Shirāz, had built a large madrasah and invited Mulla Ṣadrā to return to Shirāz as the head of the new school. Ḥāfizī accepted the offer and returned to his native city, making the school of Alīkhān the major centre of intellectual studies in Persia. He remained there until the end of his life spending the last period of his terrestrial existence entirely in teaching and writing.

Despite his extreme piety which is shown by the fact that he made the pilgrimage to Mecca seven times on foot—he died in Baṣrah in 1060/1649 during the seventh journey—Mulla Ṣadrā was often mocked by some of the exoteric ‘ulamā’ who could not accept his gnostic interpretation of the doctrines of the faith and who denounced him publicly on more than one occasion. It was only the influence of his powerful family that made it possible for him to continue his teaching activities.

Mulla Ṣadrā’s life, then, can be divided into three distinct periods: the period of childhood and schooling in Shirāz and Iṣfahān, the period of asceticism near Qum at the end of which the composition of the Ḥisār was begun, and the period of teaching and writing which represents the result and fruition of the other two periods. His life is itself the testimony of one of the main aspects of his wisdom, that in order to be effective theoretical knowledge must be combined with spiritual realization.

The writings of Mulla Ṣadrā, nearly all of which were composed in the last period of his life, are almost without exception of great merit and have been among the main sources from which the later generations of theologians, philosophers, and gnostics have drawn their inspiration. All his writings concern either religious sciences or metaphysic, theology or Ḥikmat, and are in a very clear and fluent style making them more easily understandable to the reader than the writings of his predecessors like Mīr Dīmāl. Since Mulla Ṣadrā’s writings are nearly completely unknown outside Persia, we take this opportunity to list the works which, according to the leading learning authorities and the best historical evidence, were written by him. The works dealing with metaphysics and intellectual sciences include: al-‘Asfār al-‘Arba’ah; al-Mashā‘ī al-‘Arba’ah; Shīr al-‘Aṣrāf (possibly not authentic); al-Mashā‘ī al-Ruhbānīyah; his most lucid and masterly work; al-Ḥikmat al-‘Arba’ah; glosses upon the Ḥikmat al-‘Arba’ah of Shurshwarī Muntūz; commentary ( żbīz) upon the Ḥikmat al-‘Arba’ah; glosses upon the metaphysical parts of Ibn Sīnā’s Ḥikmat; Fī Ḥisār al-‘As’il w-al-Maqfī; Fī Ḥikmat al-Makhtūthiyah w-al-Wujūd; Fī Bad’ Wujūd al-Jawwāz; Fī al-Tasawwur wa-al-Tṣabbiq; Fī al-Jawr w-al-Tṣabbiq; Fī Ḥudūd al-‘Am; Fī Ḥudūd al-Wujūd; Fī Ḥudūd al-Wujūd; Fī Quds al-‘Adīf; Fī Quds al-Qudtuwā; Fī al-‘Asfār al-Mustawwir al-Mustaqfī: Fī Quds al-Wujūd; Fī Quds al-Wujūd al-Mutqaddim; Fī ʿIlāl al-Mustaqfī.

1 Concerning Bahā’ al-Dīn Ḥāmid and Mīr Dīmāl, see the preceding chapter.

2 To know the names of the masters of a Ḥakim is important because being a Ḥikmat from "within" is impossible without a master for the majority of people who are gifted to pursue it. One can learn certain ideas from books alone but really to understand what Ḥikmat means and what the various authorities meant by various expressions there is need of a master who himself learnt the doctrines from another master and so on going back to the early masters. The Ḥakim is, therefore, as essential upon the authenticity of his chain of masters as a vahdat of waḥdat is always the product of a tradition or a Sufi master about the vahdat or chain of his waḥdat.

3 We have already discussed in detail in previous chapters the meaning of this term as used here, i.e., a combination of gnosticism, illuminantism and Peripatetic philosophy which is neither theology nor philosophy as currently understood but philosophical theology in the proper and original sense of the term and not in its present usurpation by various pseudo-philosophical groups.

4 The Ḥakim school which is one of the most beautiful edifices of the Sāfawī period had fallen into ruins for some years when about four years ago the Bureau of Archaeology of the Persian Government undertook the task of repairing it. It is now operating once again as a madrasa for traditional learning.

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1 In his criticisms of Ibn Sīnā for having spent his time composing works on other sciences like mathematics and medicine.

2 The story is told in most of the traditional sources mentioned above that Mulla Ṣadrā once asked Mīr Dīmāl why he was respected by all the religious authorities while Alīkhān, despite his powerful family, was mocked so much by some of the ‘ulamā’. Mīr Dīmāl answered that although they were both saying the same thing, he hid his ideas within so many difficult expressions that only the able would be able to understand them while Mulla Ṣadrā wrote so clearly that anyone with a knowledge of Arabic could detect the trend of his ideas.

3 See also Rashīd al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 19-22 where he mentions twenty-six metaphysical and philosophical and seventeen religious works some of which are of doubtful authenticity. Refer also to J. ‘Ali Yāqūt, op. cit., pp. 58-62, where twenty-six works are named.

4 The Ḥikmat al-Ḥiṣār dealing with a complete cycle of Ḥikmat, i.e., logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics, was composed by the seventh/thirteenth-century Persian author, Ḥāfiz al-Dīn Mardvāzī; and after some of the basic books of instruction in the madrasah. The tenth/twelfth-century commentary upon it by Kāshāl al-Dīn Mīḥbūlī was the last known before Mulla Ṣadrā composed his own commentary upon it.

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they all bear the fragrance of gnostic doctrines. Among writings which are of a more gnostic vein one may mention al-Shalakh al-Bukhārīyyah, al-Arghāb, Aṣīr al-Ājīb, and al-Warda’ al-Qalībiyyah, and among those which are presented in a more discursive language are the Ṣurah al-Adhān and the commentary upon the Shi‘ah.  

Without doubt the most important work of Mulla Ṣadrā is the Aṣīr al-Ārba‘ah. It is comparable in dimension and scope to the Shi‘ah and the Fatḥu’tah al-Makhtūbāyīn and in a way stands midway between the Peripatetic encyclopaedia of Ibn Sīnā and the compendium of esoteric sciences of Ibn ‘Arabī. The title of Aṣīr itself has been the cause of much difficulty to the few Orientalists who are acquainted with the book. The word aṣīr is the broken plural for aṣīr meaning journey as well as aṣīr meaning “book” from the Hebrew séfer. So it was that Gobineau considered the work to be a series of books on travel and E. G. Browne believed that the title meant simply “the four books.” Both views are, however, erroneous. Actually, aṣīr means journeys but the account of travels in the ordinary sense of the word as Gobineau understood it is to be. As Mulla Ṣadrā himself mentions in his introduction to the book, the Aṣīr consists of the following four stages or journeys of initiatic realization (salīlak): (i) the journey of the creature or creation (khayy) towards the Creator or the Truth (ḥaqiq), (ii) the journey in the Truth with the Truth, (iii) the journey from the Truth to creation with the Truth, and (iv) the journey from the creature to the universe. This monumen tal work is, therefore, an account of the stages of the journey of the gnostic, systematized in a logical dress. In content, the first book of the Aṣīr deals with Being and its various manifestations; the second with the simple substance, i.e., the intelligences, souls, and bodies and their accidents including, therefore, natural philosophy; the third with theodicy; and the fourth with the soul, its origin, becoming, and end. All these topics are treated in detail taking into account the views of previous sages and philosophers so that the work as a whole is quite voluminous. In a sense this vast opus is the culmination of a thousand years of contemplation and thought by Muslim sages as well as the foundation of a new and original intellectual perspective which issues forth from within the matrix of the Muslim tradition.

13 The Uṣūl al-Kitāb was also commented upon by Majūjī as we have mentioned in the previous chapter. The commentary of Mullā Ṣadrā on this is in fact the most important Shi‘ah works written in the Safavid period and is perhaps his most significant religious composition.  
14 This unpublished treatise is the manuscript of which exists in the Majūjī Library (MS. 103) in Tehran is the only known prose work of Mullā Ṣadrā in Persian, all the other above-mentioned writings being in Arabic.

15 The manuscript of the Shurah al-Adhān in the Majūjī Collection at Tehran University, MS. 254, is in Mullā Ṣadrā’s own handwriting; several quatrains appear in the opening pages which are without doubt his own.
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B

SOURCES OF MULLA SADRÃ€S DOCTRINES

According to Mulla Sadra, there are two forms of knowledge: that derived from formal instruction (al-din al-quirri) and that which comes from intellectual intuition (al-din al-laduni). The first is acquired in school with the aid of a teacher, and the second based upon a greater degree of certainty than the first, is the science possessed by the prophets and sainthood through the purification of the soul and the catabasis (tajrid) of the intellect. There are then, according to this view, two sources for Mulla Sadra's ideas, one formal and in a sense historical, i.e., manifested in history before him, and the other spiritual and invisible. Regarding this second source, which may be called his "guardian angel" or "hidden Imâm," the source of all inner illumination, we have little to say except to emphasize its importance in Mulla Sadra's view.

It is with the first category that we are primarily concerned here. There are five principal elements which are clearly detectable in the new synthesis brought about by Mulla Sadra; they are also found, though less explicitly, in the doctrines of the 7th-9th centuries before him. These elements include the philosophy of Aristotle and his successors, the doctrines of the Neo-Platonic sages, especially Plotinus whose Enneads the Muslims considered to be a work of Aristotle, the teachings of Ibn Sina, the gnostic doctrines of Ibn 'Arabi, and the principles of the Islamic revelation, especially the more ascetic teachings of the Prophet and the Shi'a Imams. Among these sources the last two are of particular importance. Mulla Sadra created a new school of Hikmat, on the one hand, by putting the intuitions of the gnostiics and especially of Ibn 'Arabi and his followers into a legal and mystical, and, on the other hand, by drawing out the philosophical and metaphysical implications of the teachings of the Imams especially as contained in the Najâ al-Balighah, creating thereby for the first time what may be called a distinctly Muslim school of Hikmat based especially upon the inspired doctrines which form the very basis of Shi'ism.

Mulla Sadra, like Suhrwardi, held in great esteem the pre-Socratic philosophers and sages of Greece, both historical and mythological, and regarded Thales, Anaximander, Agathodemos, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as the last group of sages in the ancient world to have possessed wisdom in its entirety. He, like many other Muslim Sufis, considered Greek philosophy not to have started with Aristotle but to have ended with him and believed all the later Greek sages to have been masters of various arts and sciences other than metaphysics. For Mulla Sadra, therefore, Greek philosophy was essentially the wisdom of the Hebrew prophets inherited, systematized, and later in part forgotten by the Greeks, a wisdom which was integrated into the Muslim intellectual perspective and brought to full fruition in the light of the Islamic revelation. That is why when Mulla Sadra wishes to reject some aspects of the teachings of either the Perfected and the Illuminationists he appeals so often first to the Qur'an and the Hadith and then to those fragmentary sayings of the pre-Socratic philosophers with which the Muslims were acquainted.

C

MULLA SADRÃ€S METHOD AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS SCHOOL

The particular genius of Mulla Sadra was to synthesize and unify the three paths which lead to the Truth, viz., revelation, rational demonstration, and purification of the soul, which last in turn leads to illumination. For him gnosis, philosophy, and revealed religion were elements of a harmonious ensemble the harmony of which he sought to reveal in his own life as well as in his writings. He formulated a perspective in which rational demonstration or philosophy, although not necessarily limited to that of the Greeks, became closely tied to the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams, and these in turn became unified with the gnostic doctrines which result from the illuminations received by a purified soul. That is why Mulla Sadra's writings are a combination of logical and mystical traditions, tradi-

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14. See Astor, Tiberias, lithographed edition, 1282/1865, Book II, Section IV. Mulla Sadra writes that these pre-Socratic philosophers actually spoke in a symbolic language (rums) and implied by their theory that the world was composed of a single element, the doctrine of the unity of being or esdâl al-ummi which is the basis of the gnostic doctrines of Ibn 'Arabi. Mulla Sadra in fact identifies the source of Khalil's bâdât al-Balighah in the gnostic doctrines of the Prophet and the Imams, which is the basis of the Kâmil al-Balighah and the Book of the Compassionate which the Sufis consider to be the ultimate substance of the universe. Those early Imams who are considered by some today to be the founders of the modern quantitative sciences of nature appear to the Muslims in a different light as exponents of universal gnostiics and those who, as Mulla Sadra writes, "have adopted the light of Hikmat from the lamp of prophecy."

15. For an account of the relation of Mulla Sadra to Shi'ism and his success in unifying the three above-mentioned elements, see M. H. Thabitib, "Mulla Sadra, Usul: 'Allâmih Tabatabâ' is Profesor Henr Corbin dar Bâbî 'Ishâr," "Shi'ah: In: Kulturframt: Tidskrift, No. 2, 1339 Solar, pp. 61-64. This is one of the most important works written recently by a Shi'ah authority on the general perspective of Shi'ism and the various sciences developed by the Shi'ah, and is the result of a series of meetings between him and H. Corbin in which the latter posed several basic questions about the spiritual attitude of Shi'ism and the relation between Shi'ism and Sufism. The book was written in answer to H. Corbin's questions and contains a wealth of precious knowledge about the intellectual life of Shi'ism.
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interpretation of the sacred texts he demonstrated the gnostic quality of the esoteric meaning of revelation and through intellectual intuition he made rational and discursive thought subservient to the universal truths of gnostics. In this fashion he achieved that synthesis of science and revelation in the light of gnostics and in the general perspective of Islam towards which Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā—the latter particularly in his Qur’ānic commentaries—had aimed and which Ghazālī, Subhawardi, and the whole chain of sages extending from the Ṣaḥīḥ to the Ṣaḥīḥ period had sought to achieve from various points of view.26

In metaphysics or, more generally speaking, Kitābmat itself, Mulla Ṣadra is credited with founding the third major school of Muslim “philosophy,” the first two being the Peripatetic school, the greatest exponent of which in the Islamic world was Ibn Sīnā, and the Illuminatist or Ḥikmati school founded by Subhawardi Muqtil.22 Mulla Ṣadra adopted certain principles from each school as, for example, the hylochorism from the Peripatetic and the gradation of Being and the celestial archetypes from the Illuminatists. Moreover, he added certain principles drawn from the teachings of the Sufis like Ibn ‘Arabī such as the continual becoming of the substance of the world and unity of Being which had never appeared as principles of any school of Ḥikmat and were never systematized in the logical language of the Ḥikmat before Ḥikmat’s time. That is why Mulla Ṣadra is often credited with founding a new and original form of wisdom in the Muslim world which is usually called al-Ḫikmat al-Maʿṣūliyyah as distinguished from al-Ḫikmat al-Maṣḥūliyyah (Peripatetic philosophy) and al-Ḫikmat al-Iṣḥāqiyyah (Illuminatist theology).22

In the treatise Ḥikmat al-Arifuṣ, he outlines a somewhat more complete and in a way more original division of the sciences. According to this scheme, the sciences (“ʿilm”) are either of this world (dawāyif) or of the other (ṣuʿūda: the first is divided into three categories: the science of words (“ʿilm al-ʿaṣāl”), the science of acts (“ʿilm al-ʿaḥād”), and the science of states of contemplation or thought (“ʿilm al-abshur or ʿaṭār”). The science of words comprises the sciences of the alphabet, word-construction, syntax, prosody, poetry, and the meanings of terms in logic. The science of acts consists of what belongs to various material objects from which the arts of weaving, agriculture, and architecture come into being; what is of a higher degree such as the art of writing, the science of mechanics, alchemy, etc.; what belongs to providing a living for the individual and the society from which the sciences of family, law, politics, and the Ṣaḥāb are created; and, finally, what belongs to the acquisition of spiritual and moral virtues and the casting away of evil from which the “science of the path” (“ʿilm al-ʿaṭār”), i.e., Sufism, comes into being. As for the science of states of thought, it consists of the sciences of logical demonstration, the science of arithmetic, the science of geometry including astronomy and astrology, and the sciences of nature including medicine and the various sciences dealing with minerals, plants, and animals.

The sciences of the other world which are not accessible to the ordinary intelligence of men and are not destroyed with the death of the body include the knowledge of angels and intellectual substances, the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet (fasād al-mahājir), and the knowledge of the Exalted Pen (al-qaṣṣam al-ʿaʿlā), i.e., of the divine decrees and of the first determination of the divine essence which Mulla Ṣadra, following the earlier Sufis, calls also by the name of the reality of Muhammad (al-baqāʾ al-Muḥṣammadīyyah). These sciences also include the knowledge of death, resurrection, and all that pertains to life hereafter.27

26 It may at first seem surprising that Mulla Ṣadra wrote a treatise against those who called themselves Ṣufis. But if we consider the social and political conditions of the later Ṣaḥīḥ period in which Sufism was greatly discredited by political authorities and much of it had become a body without a soul, we can perhaps understand some of the motifs for Mulla Ṣadra’s attack on it. However, the “Ṣufis” whom Mulla Ṣadra attacked were not the Ṣufis proper but those who were seeking to destroy the esoteric truths and bring about social anarchy in the name of an esotericism that they themselves did not possess. Otherwise there is not the least doubt of Mulla Ṣadra’s connection with Ṣufism—although he preferred to use the name gnostic (“ṭarīq”) rather than Ṣufi—not even one doubt in any way the gnostic quality of his doctrine.

27 See the chapter on Subhawardi Muqtil.

28 If we have translated Ḥikmat as philosophy in one case and as theology in the other, it is because the meaning of this term includes both the wisdom belonging to the rational and mental planes or philosophy and the wisdom which transcends the level of the ordinary human mind and which, properly speaking, belongs to the angelic order and cannot be called philosophy as that term is currently understood in European languages.
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Among all the pursuits which man can occupy himself in this life, none stands in as exalted a position as Hijmat, the divinities of which we have outlined above. And among its branches none is as important and principal as metaphysics or the science of the principle of things, so that this branch of knowledge alone is often considered worthy of being called Hijmat. Mulla Ṣadrā defines this science as "coming to know the state of the essence of beings as they are, to the extent of human capacity" or "a man's becoming an intellectual world (microcosm) corresponding to the objective world (macrocosm)," or, to quote still another definition, "the comprehension of universals and catharism from the world of matter." 38

The above definitions imply that Hijmat is a purely intellectual form of knowledge in which the knower himself undergoes a certain transformation in the process of knowing and his soul becomes a mirror in which the cosmic hierarchy is reflected. With such a conception then it is no wonder that Mulla Ṣadrā spent so much of his life in teaching and writing about Hijmat only and regarded all the other sciences as its subsidiaries.

E

PRINCIPLES OF MULLA ṢADRĀ'S DOCTRINES

In discussing the basic principles of Hijmat as understood and expounded by Mulla Ṣadrā, we have chosen to mention those major principles of his thought which distinguish him from his predecessors and which are the characteristic elements of his metaphysics. The doctrines of the Peripatetic and Illuminativistic schools as well as the ideas of the Ḥarāb and his followers form the common background for the metaphysics of Mulla Ṣadrā.

There are four topics in each of which Mulla Ṣadrā has departed from earlier philosophical perspectives and which form the principles of his whole intellectual vision. These four subjects concern (1) Being and its various polarizations, (2) substantial motion or the becoming and change of the substance of the world, (3) knowledge and the relation between the knower and the known, and (4) the soul, its faculties, generation, perfection, and final resurrection. We shall consider these questions in the above-mentioned order, emphasizing in each case the particular complexion given to these subjects by Mulla Ṣadrā.

1. Unity and Polarization of Being.—The cornerstone of Mulla Ṣadrā's doctrine is the principleality and the unity and gradation of Being. As we have already mentioned, 37 one of the major points of contention among Muslim philosophers and theologians concerned the question whether Being or the quiddities (mālikiyat) of things are principal. We saw that the Muslim Peripatetics like the Sufis believed in the principality of Being, i.e., the objective reality of Being independent of mental abstractions, and considered the quiddities to be nothing but accidents, while the Illuminativists beginning with Suhrawardi Maqtūl and followed by Mulla Ṣadrā's own teacher, Mir Dāmmī, developed a "metaphysics of essences" and held the opposite view that existence is an accident and that the essences are principal. In this debate Mulla Ṣadrā sided definitely with the Peripatetics and Sufis in accepting the principality of Being, and opposed the Illuminativists.

On the question of the unity and gradation of Being, however, Mulla Ṣadrā departed from Peripatetic teachings completely. In the view of the Muslim Peripatetics the being of each thing is in essence different and distinct from other beings while it is principal with respect to its own quiddity. According to Ḥākīn, however, Being is the same reality in all realms of existence; it is a single reality but with gradations and degrees of intensity. Just as we say the light of the sun, the light of a lamp, or the light of a glowworm, and mean the same subject, i.e., light, but with different predicates, i.e., under different conditions of manifestation, so in the case of Being, the being of God, a man, of a tree, or of a heap of earth are all one Being or one reality but in various degrees of intensity of manifestation. 38 Moreover, Being, no matter where it manifests itself, always appears with its attributes or names (wakīlat), as they are traditionally called, such as knowledge, will, power, etc. 39 A stone, because it exists, is a manifestation of Being and, therefore, has knowledge, will, power, and intelligence like men or angels. However, since at the level of a stone the manifestation of Being is very weak, these attributes are hidden and not perceptible. 40

The various beings in the world of manifestation are all limitations of the one reality or Being. These limitations are abstracted by the mind and become the forms of quiddities (mālikiyat) of things, and when transposed into the principal domain, they become the Platonic ideas or archetypes. Unlike Being which is objectively real and in fact is the reality of the cosmos, the mālikiyat

37 See Chapter XIX on Suhrawardi Maqtūl.
38 Mulla Ṣadrā regards light as a perfect and intelligible example of the unity and gradation of Being and praises the Illuminativists on this point. See the first chapter of the Akhlāq.
40 The doctrine of the unity and gradation of Being in Mulla Ṣadrā is not new; it was expressed clearly five centuries before him by the Ḥarāb. Mulla Ṣadrā, however, was the first person to give it a logical dress and introduce it as a principle of Hijmat as distinct from pure gnostic which does not concern itself with various logical distinctions.
are accidents of Being abstracted by the mind without having a reality independent of Being. Even the archetypes (al-‘ayn al-‘asbūh) possess a form of Being which in this case is God’s knowledge of them.

What distinguishes the earthly manifestation of things from their celestial archetypes is not a gradation of the mahāyogī from mere sub to more gross modes of existence, as certain followers of the Illuminationalist school believe. Rather, it is the intensity of Being which determines the level of existence of each creature. If the light of Being shines upon the form or quiddity of a man with a greater intensity than now, he will become the man of the intermediate world (barzakh) and if the intensity is greater still he will become the celestial man identified with his heavenly archetype.

Absolute Being itself, which is the proper subject for metaphysics, is above all limitations and, therefore, above all forms. Being is, above all substances and accidents. It is the “Form of forms” and the Agent of all acts. By manifesting itself longitudinally (‘alī), it brings into being the various orders of Being from the archangels to terrestrial creatures and by manifesting itself transversally (‘ardj) it creates the various members of each order of Being. Being is the reality of all things so that the knowledge of anything is ultimately the knowledge of Its being and, therefore, of Being itself. Likewise, the archetypes exist eternally through God’s knowledge of them; their being is in fact this very knowledge without which they would have no share whatsoever in Being.

Since Being is unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity, it partakes of logical distinctions and divisions while remaining in essence indivisible and above all polarizations. Mulla Ṣadr goes into great detail about the various divisions and categories of Being and in fact most of the first book of the Asfar is concerned with them. We mention here a few of the divisions which Abūnā discusses with great rigour in his various writings, especially in the monumental Asfar.

One division of Being is into connective being (al-wujūd al-‘alāhij) and self-subsistent being (al-wujūd al-nasī), Connective being is that which connects a subject with a predicate in the statement: “Man is a rational animal.” Self-subsistent being is one which stands independently by itself and

is not simply the means of connecting two terms. This category of being which exists in itself is in turn divided into three kinds: that which in objective existence is not the quality of something else and is called substance (jauhar), that which is the quality of something else and is called accident (‘ardj), and, finally, that which has need of no cause outside of itself, i.e., the Being of God. From another point of view Mulla Ṣadr considers the being of all things other than God to be the connective being (wujūd al-‘alāhij) and only the Being of God to be Being per se.33 Another division of Being adopted by Mulla Ṣadr is that of the necessary (wujūḥ), possible (mamākin), and impossible (mamšan) beings which nearly all the Muslim philosophers and many theologians coming after Ibn Sina and, following his example, have accepted.34 If the intellect considers a being and finds that the meaning of being is essential to it, i.e., lies in its essence, and that there are no causes outside it which have brought it into being, that being is called the Necessary Being. If it has need of a cause outside itself it is called possible being. Moreover, the attribute of possibility pertains to its quiddity as well as to its being. The possibility of its quiddity concerns its relation to its particular being, and the possibility of its being pertains to its relation to the Necessary Being. The being or existence of each object, therefore, depends upon the being of God and the knowledge of anything upon the knowledge of the root or principle of its own being. Since the root or basis of the Necessary Being is unknowable, the knowledge of the being of things remains also unknowable to us and it is only the quiddities or mahāyogī which we can know.

These quiddities, as already mentioned, are the limitations placed upon being and abstracted by the mind. The intellect in perceiving any object immediately analyses it into being and quiddity, the latter consisting of the limit or determination of the former. It is only in the case of the Divine Being that such an analysis cannot be made because Absolute Being has no mahāyogī. One can say that It is without mahāyogī or that Its Being and mahāyogī are identical.

The quiddities in themselves are only mental concepts without a separate objective existence so that the effects produced by things come from their being and not from their quiddity. Likewise, cause and effect are categories of being which in one case become the cause and in the other the effect of things. The mahāyogī are either particular or universal; the latter either exist before particulars or are abstracted by the intellect from particulars.35 The universals

32 In dividing the hierarchies of universal existence into longitudinal and lateral orders Mulla Ṣadr follows the scheme of ṣūfra terminology, which was discussed in the chapter on Suhrawardi’s Masāʾil.
33 Abūnā distinguishes the gnosia from the ṣulūk in this subject is that the former formulate the illuminations they receive which differ depending upon the degree of their inner realization. One gnosia in a certain state of contemplation (‘alī) may have been aware of only the creatures or multiplicity as a reflection of unity, another of only God or Unity, and a third of unity in multiplicity. The Ṣulūk, however, from a theoretical and more logical point of view, do not take particular perspective of the traveller upon the path (‘alī) into consideration and have even extirpated sense of the gnosia for considering multiplicity to be completely unreal.
34 By this latter distinction, Mulla Ṣadr implies the difference which exists, or at least used to exist, in European languages between Being and existence. All creatures exist but only in the case of God can one, properly speaking, say that He “is.” See Seyed Hossein Nasr, “The Polarization of Being,” op. cit., pp. 8–13.
36 The feature which distinguishes particulars from one another and determines all other qualities in them, according to Mulla Ṣadr, their degree of being.
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which exist independently of all particulars are the archetypes of Platonic ideas upon the reality of which Subrahwari Maqtil had insisted against the view of the Peripatetics. Mulla Sadra likewise criticizes Aristotle and Ibn Sina for considering the Platonic ideas to be nothing but the forms of things impressed upon the divine intellect. He insists upon the reality of the archetypes in a spiritual world that is completely independent of the world of particulars as well as of all mental images formed in the human mind.\textsuperscript{44} Al-Ghurînî praises Subrahwari Maqtil and accepts fully the reasons he had given for the existence of the Platonic ideas or "masters of the species" (arbâb al-anwâl). There is a spiritual man in the spiritual world who is the real cause for the activities and ontological qualities of the terrestrial man; likewise in the case of other species each has an intelligible idea or archetype which governs all the activities and life of that species on earth.

The archetype is in essence one with its particulars but differs from them in characteristics which arise from the substance or "master" of the particulars. The archetype appears different in each stage (fear) of manifestation while in the realm of reality it is one and the same truth. The beings of this world are the reflections and shadows of the archetypes so that they are like them and share in their reality and at the same time are different from them in being less real and further removed from the source of Being.

One of the principles for which Al-Ghurînî is famous is called "mâkin al-aqâbî" or "the possibility of that which is superior." According to this principle, just as each being in treading the path of perfection passes through various stages from the lowest to the highest, so it is necessary that for each imperfect being in this world there be degrees of being in the higher stages of the cosmic hierarchy, since each being has descended from the divine Principle through intermediate states of being. For example, the being of man on earth in his present state of imperfection necessitates the being of man in the intermediary world of souls, and the latter the being of the spiritual man in the intelligible world. According to this principle, therefore, the very existence of quiddities in their earthly state of being necessitates the existence of these forms in the intermediate world of souls or the world of inverted or reflected forms (al-amghil al-nâ'mâlkâ) and these in turn necessitate their existence in the spiritual world of simple intellectual substances.

After showing that the mâjîyâbî is in reality limitations of being, Mulla Sadra goes on to assert that the logical distinction made by Aristotle and all the later philosophers between substance and the accidents which together form the ten categories concerns only the mâjîyâbî; Being, properly speaking, is neither substance nor accident but above both. When we say of a thing that it is such and such a substance or that its particular quality and quantity are its accidents we refer only to its mâjîyâbî and not to its being.

The relation of cause and effect, however, contrary to that of substance and accidents, concerns only the being of things.\textsuperscript{45} All things in the universe have a cause and an effect and since everything is a manifestation of Being, every effect is but an aspect of its cause and cannot in essence differ from it. That is why the well-known principle that from unity only unity can issue forth, or uno non est nisi unus, must be true. From the divine essence which is simple and one, only a simple being can issue forth. Mulla Sadra calls this first manifestation of the divine essence extended being (wujûd al-musânâ), the first intellect, the sacred effusion (fasîd al-musâmidâs) or the Truth of truths (batîq al-bâiq al-qâ), which he considers to be one in essence but partaking of degrees and stages of manifestation.\textsuperscript{46}

He divides reality into three categories: of the divine essence, of "Absolute Being" which he identifies with extended being, and of relative being which is that of the creatures.\textsuperscript{47} The cause of all things, therefore, is extended being which in turn is the first determination of the divine essence. God is, thus, the Cause of causes and the Ultimate Source of all effects to be seen in the universe, because all causes and effects arise from the beings of things and all beings are in reality the stages of the One Being.

To terminate our discussion of the polarizations of Being in cosmic existence we must also consider the question of form and matter. On this question Mulla Sadra sides with the Peripatetics and is against the Illuminists in accepting the theory of hylomorphism. In his view, however, matter is not limited to the corporeal domain. Rather, it is the aspect of potentiality which manifests itself in all the realms of existence according to the conditions of that particular realm. Bodies have a matter belonging to the corporeal world, and souls (mîzâbî), a matter conformable to the subtle world of the psyche; moreover, in each world matter is a lower degree of being of the form with which it is united and for that reason accompanies it in all realms of existence until the highest realm which is the world of pure intelligences.

\textsuperscript{44} Mulla Sadra writes that it was Hermes who learnt about the truth of the "Platonic idea" when he became illuminated by the light of the intelligible world and separated from the world of the senses. In this state Hermes met an illuminated figure in the spiritual world who taught him all the sciences and when he asked the figure who he was, the figure answered, "I am thy perfect nature (ana tela'tukna al-tamî)," Asârî, p. 121. For a study of the rich symbolism of "perfect nature," which means the celestial or angelic part of the human soul, see H. Corbin, "Le rûn d'initiation et l'hermétisme sur l'Irak," Erato Jahrbuch, Vol. 17, 1949, pp. 121-88.

\textsuperscript{45} For the general discussion on cause and effect, see J. Mûfîlî, op. cit., pp. 85ff.

\textsuperscript{46} It is this "simple being" or the supreme intellect which the Sûfis before Mulla Sadra identified with the reality of Muhammad, see Ibn "Arabî, La sagesse des prophètes, tr. T. Burckhardt, Albin Michel, Paris, 1956, pp. 181ff.

\textsuperscript{47} According to a principle—which is another of the well-known doctrines formulated by Mulla Sadra and is called batîq al-bâiq al-qâ al-aqâbî, i.e., "Truth in its state of simplicity contains all things—the divine essence in its state of simplicity and "construction" contains all realities within itself. This is indeed a direct consequence of the principle of the unity of Being; if there is but one Being and the whole universe is nothing but Being, the universe and all its realities are contained in a state of "construction" in that One Being.
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(Sinjarat). That is why, as Aḥkāmī expresses it, matter has love for form which forever compels it to seek union with it (form). Only in the intelligible world, which is also called the 'ulum al-jābarīt, are the spiritual realities completely separated from and free of all species of matter, even the most subtle.

2. Substantial Motion. The question of potentiality leads to that of motion because motion, as Aristotle said, is becoming actual of that which is potential. Mulla Ṣadrā rejects the possibility of sudden change from one substance to another which the Peripatetic accepted along with gradual change. Rather, he considers all change to be a form of motion and introduces the idea of substantial motion (al-baradāt al-jābarīyāt), which is another of the well-known principles associated with him. This viewpoint is based on the assumption that God's outlook from which he goes on to prove the creation of the world in time, bodily resurrection, and many other doctrines that will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

It is well known that the Muslim Peripatetics, following Aristotle, limited motion to only four of the ten categories, i.e., quantity (kāmi'), quality (bāyi'), place (mabān), and substance, but the understanding only in the sense of generation and corruption. Ibn Sīna rejected completely substantial motion in any sense other than instantaneous coming into being and passing away and argued that since the essence of a thing depends upon its substance, if that substance were to change, its essence would also change and lose its identity.

43 See J. Mūshi, op. cit., p. 100. This distinction may seem to differ from what was said previously. But it must be remembered that the divine essence cannot be limited to Being, which is its first determination as well as the principle of universal manifestation. It is this distinction to which Aḥkāmī is referring here.

44 Mulla Ṣadrā placed so much emphasis upon this point that he discussed it not only in the First Book of the Asfār but in many other chapters of the work and in nearly all of his other books as well. See also H. A. Bāqī, Daw Fīqāh i Ṣadr (Ṭabāk), Dar Fīrāq, 1334 Solar, pp. 10ff., and J. Mūshi, op. cit., pp. 18ff. Mulla Ṣadrā in the Second Book of the Asfār and other places insist that he is not the first among the Islamic to have introduced this idea but that the pre-Socratics philosophers had indicated although not explicitly the existence of substantial motion. Moreover, he gives the Qurʾān verses such as “Do you create it, or are we the Creator? We made out death among you, and We are not to be outwitted, that We may transfigure you and make you what you know not” (lv. 59–61, Fīqāhā’s translation) in support of his view.

45 See Ibn Sīna, Ṣadrā’s Nāma i ‘Anā’, (Ṭabāk), University Press, Tehran, 1333/1912, pp. 3ff. Aristotle also in De Generatione et Corruptione (319b; 320a, 2) divides motion into the four categories of quantity, quality, place, and substance, and speaks of substantial change as one of the processes which characterize the sublunary region. But by substantial change Aristotle means only generation and corruption and for that reason later Muslim philosophers did not even apply the term “motion” to it and considered motion to be only to the categories of quantity, quality, location, and posture.

Mulla Ṣadrā, however, considers substantial motion to be an inner transformation of things somewhat in the alchemical sense in which there is not simply a coming into being and a passing away but a process through which a new state of being follows. The Sufis, Mulla Ṣadrā considered the world to be like a stream of water which is flowing continually and believes motion to be nothing but the continuous regeneration and re-creation of the world at every instance. According to him, it is not only the accidents but the substance of the universe itself that partakes of motion and becoming, i.e., continuous re-creation and rebirth.

In order to prove this assertion, Aḥkāmī makes use of several arguments. For example, he writes that it is an accepted fact that accidents have need of a substance upon which they depend for their being and properties. Their subsistence depends upon the subsistence of their substance and their creation and regeneration upon its creation and regeneration. Therefore, every change which takes place in the accidents of a body must be accompanied by a corresponding change in the substance; otherwise the being of the former would not follow the being of the latter. Or, in other words, since the effect must be the same as its cause, the cause or substance of a changing accident must itself be changing.

In addition, it is known that all beings in the universe are seeking perfection and are in the process of becoming and change in order to overcome their imperfections. Since divine manifestation never repeats itself, God creates new theophanies at every moment in order to remove imperfections and bring new perfections to things. The matter of each being, therefore, is continuously in the process of wearing a new dress, i.e., being well to a new form, without, however, casting away its older dress. It is only the rapacity of this change that makes it imperceptible and guarantees the continuity and identifiability of a particular being through the stages of substantial motion. According to Mulla Ṣadrā, each body consists of matter and two forms: one, the form of the body which gives matter dimensions and the possibility of accepting other forms, and the other the form of the species (ṣūra nā’swā’) which determines the species and identity of the body. Each of these is reached. Moreover, substantial change for the Aristotelians is sudden and instantaneous while for Aḥkāmī it is gradual like other forms of motion. Also, substantial change in the Aristotelian sense is limited to the sublunary region, while for Mulla Ṣadrā the whole of gross and subtle manifestation partakes of substantial motion. Aḥkāmī’s conception of substantial change, therefore, cannot be identified with that of Aristotle and should not be confused with it because of similarity in terminology.


46 The idea that God sanctifies and re-creates the world at every moment in one that is shared by the majority of the Sufis. Ṣadrā’s Rūzūn expresses it:

“Every moment the world is being renewed, and we are unaware of its perpetual change. Life is ever pouring in fresh, though in the body it has the semblance of continuity.”

two forms is at every instant changing, and matter is taking on new forms at every moment. Moreover, at each stage of substantial change the totality of a being which itself consists of form and matter may be considered to be the master of the aspect of potentiality for the next stage the actualized aspect of which then becomes the form.

The power or force which motivates this change is nature which is a force hidden within the cosmic existence. In fact, since Being comes before nothingness, motion in this world comes before rest through the force immanent in the cosmos. Needless to say, this motion is limited to the degrees of cosmic existence in which matter is present, i.e., to corporeal and subtle manifestation, and does not extend to the world of pure intelligences or archetypes which are beyond all change.

Substantial motion itself has also the two aspects of change and permanence. Each form has two faces, one in the world of archetypes and the other in nature, the first permanent and the second in a state of continuous renewal. The substance of the world itself is, therefore, the intermediary between permanence and change; it possesses two aspects, one which is continuously in motion and the other, which Mulla Shārūd identifies with the intelligences, above all change.

Time, for ʿAbḥāzīd as for Aristotle, is the quantity of motion, which, in a world of continuous substantial motion, becomes an inherent feature of cosmic existence. In fact, in all change the measure of their rotation as held by the Peripatetics. The heavens, according to Mulla Shārūd, are in continuous contemplation of the perfection of their beloveds, i.e., the universal intellects which at every instant cause a new form to be projected upon the essence of the universal souls. The cause of celestial motion is, therefore, the desire to reaching perfection, a goal which, because of its limitlessness, makes celestial motion endless. The heavens are in continuous creative worship, their motion being a sign of their contemplation of the divine by means of the intelligences, and their causing generation and growth in nature through their illumination being a sign of their act of creation. The whole world, therefore, both in its gross and subtle domains, partakes of substantial motion, and time is the measure of this motion as it occurs in the heavens where it is most regular as well as regulatory.

3. Divine and Human Knowledge.—From what we have already said, it is clear that for Mulla Shārūd knowledge forms the very substance of cosmic manifestation itself and is moreover the gate to and means of salvation for the soul. Like all other notions ʿAbḥāzīd considers knowledge and being, or, from

44. Substantial motion is essentially a rebirth because it always means the attainment of a new state of Being.

45. From what we have said above it is clear that in Mulla Shārūd’s view motion is principal, for it is an inherent characteristic of corporeal and even subtle existence, and time is subordinated to it contrary to the view of many previous philosophers who considered motion to be subordinated to time. Mulla Shārūd’s conception of time as the quantity of substantial motion, which is itself the renewal of cosmic existence, bears much resemblance to the doctrine of ʿAbhāzīd al-Bārākṭī al-ʿBaghdīdī for whom also time is the measure or dimension of existence. See S. Fines, Nouvelles études sur Aḥvāz al-Zamān Abūʿl Barakāt al-ʿBaghdīdī, Librairie Duret, Paris, 1905, Chap. 11.

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another point of view, the knower and the known, to be essentially the same and identifies the being of things with God's knowledge of them. God knows His own essence and His essence is none other than His Being, and since His Being and essence are the same, He is at once the knower, the knowledge, and the known.

In the case of the pure intellects or forms that are completely divorced from matter also, the intellect and the intelligible are the same, the difference in the two instances being that, although knowledge of the intelligents is identical with their being, it is not identical with their quiddities, since their being surpasses their quiddities, whereas in the case of God knowledge is identical both with being and quiddity, since God's essence is His Being.

Mulla Šadrja rejects the Peripatetic notion that God's knowledge of things is the projection of their forms upon His essence as well as the idea followed by many Illuminists that God's knowledge is the presence of the very forms of things in His essence. Rather, he uses the generic symbol of a mirror which God sees the forms or essences of all things and in fact, through the contemplation of those forms or archetypes in the mirror of His own essence, He brings all things into being. Moreover, since the forms of all creatures, universal as well as particular, are reflected in His essence, God has knowledge of every particle of the universe.

Mulla Šadrja divides knowledge ('ilm) into acquired (hašf) knowledge and innate (bašf) knowledge and, like the Illuminists, divides the

36 The world of change here as in the case of Suhrawardi Mašši means the whole visible universe and not only the subliminary region of the Aristotelians. According to Mulla Šadrja, the difference between the subliminary region composed of the four elements and the heavens composed of ether lies only in that the matter of the heavens is more subtle than the gross matter of the terrestrial environment and is governed by pure souls that are free from the passions of earthly souls.

37 The principle that the intellect, intelligence, and the intelligible are one (šahād al-'ilm al-maš Ş) is another point in which Mulla Šadrja opposed the previous Muslim philosophers. This principle, which was accepted by the Neo-Platonists, was rejected by Ibn Sīna (see Lšlšši, Hasdrjī Press, Tehran, 1321/1942, Vol. III, pp. 322-35) and other Peripatetics. Aḥmad, while acknowledging his debt to Porphyry and earlier Greek philosophers (see his Rašdī'ī, p. 319), considered himself the first among Muslims to have reintroduced this principle which is made a cornerstone of his intellectual edifice. Actually Aḥmad al-Din Kāshānī and before him Abu al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad ibn Rāsūl al-Faqīh al-Mašši of Arba'īyah had accepted this principle (see M. Mīnīsī, "As Khādījī-ī Turōkīyāt," Revue de la Faculté des Lettres, Université de Tehran, Vol. IV, Nos. 3, 5, March 1957, p. 59), but it was Mulla Šadrja who first systematized this principle and demonstrated it clearly.

For a discussion of the principle of the union of the intellect and the intelligible, see Ašārī, pp. 1971 ff.

36 "God's knowledge of things is identical with their being" (Mulla Šadrja, al-Sanūsī al-Rudābī, Tehran, Lithographed edition, 1336/1926, p. 86).


More recently, other philosophers have expanded the idea of the union of the intellect and the intelligible to include the idea of the union of the knower and the known, the idea of the union of the self and the object of knowledge, and the idea of the union of the subject and the object of knowledge. This development has been called "neomarxism" by some philosophers.

42 See his Rašdī'ī, p. 240, where he quotes the Qur'ānic statement that "not a particle of dust in the heavens and earth is hidden from God's knowledge" as a support and consequence of his conception of divine knowledge.

43 Aḥmad adds that in the case of prophets and saints, the creative power of the soul becomes so great that like God Himself it can even create objective and external forms.

44 Šadr al-Dīn Iṣḥāqī (Mulla Šadrja)
appears as the body (fi‘m) and then through substantial motion and an inner transformation becomes the vegetative soul, then the animal soul, and finally the human soul. This development occurs from within the substance of the original body without there being any effusion from the heavenly souls or the active intellect.14 The substance of the human sperm is as first potentially a plant; then as it grows in the womb it becomes actually a plant and potentially an animal. At birth, it is actually an animal and potentially human, and finally at the age of adolescence it is actually human and potentially either an angel or a disciple of the devil.15 All of these stages lie hidden within the first substance or germ which through substantial motion traverses the degrees of being until it becomes completely divorced from all matter and potentiality and enjoys immortality in the world of pure intelligences.16 The soul is, therefore, brought into being with the body but it has spiritual substance independent of the body.17 Or, to be more precise, the soul at the beginning “is” the body which through inner transformation passes through various stages until it becomes absolutely free from matter and change.

The soul in each stage of its journey acquires a new faculty or set of faculties. As a mineral it has the faculty of preserving its form and as a plant, the faculties of feeding, growth, and the transformation of foreign substances into its own form. As an animal the faculties of motion and various forms of desire are acquired, and as a higher animal it develops in addition to the external senses the inner faculties of memory and imagination.18 Finally, in man the five inner faculties: sensa communis (his al-mudhkin) which perceives forms, apprehension (nuhsh) which perceives meanings, fantasy (khayal) which preserves forms, memory (dhikr) which preserves meanings and the double faculty of imagination (ismah khayal), and thought (musta‘khlak) which in the first case governs the sensible and in the second the intelligible domains, are also acquired.19 Throughout its development it is the same.

14 The whole of the fourth book of the Šāfī’ī is devoted to the science of the soul where the soul taken on a meaning totally different from the quasi-material substance of the Aristotelians.

Mulla Śadržā often speaks of the complete science of things as ma‘ād ‘al-ma‘ād, the origin and end, and has even a book by this name. He identifies the science of ma‘ād with theology and metaphysics and that of ma‘ād with psychology and ontology.

15 The view of Mulla Śadržā regarding the growth and perfection of the soul resembles the alchemical view in which the power to reach perfection is considered to lie within matter itself and not outside it.

16 Mulla Śadržā, al-Sha‘bānī al-Rūhānī, pp. 152 ff.

17 That is why Aḥ šārūn writes that “the first need of the universe was the intellect and the last stage of the intellect which is the fruit of that same tree” (ibid., p. 105).

18 This principle which in Arabic is called iṣnāda ni‘mat al-wujūd al-‘aṣiṣ (al-baqūt) is another of the doctrines for which Mulla Śadržā is famous.

We have not enumerated these faculties in detail because Mulla Śadržā follows the earlier Muslim authors especially Ibn Sīnā on this point. See Chapter LXVI on “Natural History” regarding the various faculties.

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Ṣadr al-Dīn Šadržā (Mulla Śadržā) single soul which in one case appears as sight, in another as memory, and in yet another as desire. The faculties are not something added to the soul but it is the soul itself or, in a more esoteric sense, Being itself which appears in various forms in each case.20 The soul passes through this stream of becoming—this world—and the parts of its course are marked by the archetypes or Platonic ideas that distinguish one species from another. It wears a new dress and a new guise at each point of the stream but the traveller is through-out one and the same.21

Although the enumeration of the inner faculties by Mulla Śadržā is essentially the same as that made by previous Muslim authors borrowing it from Aristotle, there is one point in which Mulla Śadržā departs from the Peripatetics completely. It is well known that Aristotle considered only the universal intellect to be immortal and the Muslim Peripatetics like Ibn Sīnā accorded immortality only to the intellectual part of the human soul. Mulla Šadržā, following certain Sufi and Hermetic teachings, asserts that the faculty of imagination enjoys also a form of immortality or at least existence independent of the body. He considers the universe to consist of three domains: the intelligible world, the sensible world, and an intermediate world (barzakh) of imagination which is macrocosmic as well as microcosmic. The faculty of imagination in man as well as in some of the higher animals is, according to Aḥ šārūn, a microscopic counterpart of the cosmic imagination and has the power of creating forms. Upon the death of the body, this faculty, like the intellectual part of the soul, enjoys a form of life of its own and may in fact lead the soul to the intermediate world if it is the dominant element in the soul.

Mulla Šadržā, like other Sufis, compares the soul to the cosmos on the one hand and to the Qur’ān on the other, identifying the higher states of being of the soul with the esoteric meanings of the Qur’ān.22 There are seven degrees of existence for the soul as there are seven heavens and seven levels of interpretation of the Qur’ān. These degrees he enumerates as nature (fā‘ah), soul (ma‘ād), intellect (‘aql), spirit (rūḥ), secret (sirr), hidden secret (khuf).

20 Al-Sha‘bānī al-Rūhānī, pp. 134 ff.

21 By emphasizing the immanent aspect of the development of the soul, Mulla Šadržā does not forget the transcendental factor, for in the treatise al-Hārī al-Šāfī he writes that the archangel Isrā’īl blows life into the body and gives it the power of sensation and motion, that Isrā’īl enables the body to assimilate food and sends it its maintenance, that Jibrīl gives it instruction regarding the revelation and acts of worship and finally that Isrā’īl enables the soul to abstract forms from matter and to separate itself from the body. Baṣrā’ī, pp. 505-97.


As for the unity of the soul which from the gnostic point of view is identified with the divine essence or self, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, “On the One and Only Transcendent,” Journal of the American Oriental Society, June 1944, No. 3, pp. 19-43.
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and the most hidden state (akhlaq) which is that of perfect union with God. Each corresponds to a state of being, the totality extending from the life of nature or the senses to the divine life of union with God.

According Mulla Sadra from another point of view the soul has two faculties the practical (‘unsal) and the theoretical (‘ilm al-iqar), which latter at first is dependent upon the former but later becomes completely independent. The practical faculty consists of four stages: making use of the Law (Shari‘ah) of various religious sent to guide mankind, purifying the soul from evil qualities, illuminating the soul with spiritual virtues and the sciences, and finally annihilating the soul in God, beginning with the journey to God and then in God and finally with God.41

As for the theorectical faculty it too is divided into four stages: the potential or material intellect (‘ilm al-haylāt) which has only the capability of accepting forms, habitual intellect (‘ilm al-mula‘ah) which knows only simple and preliminary truths such as the truth that the whole is greater than its parts, the active intellect (‘ilm bi’l-fīr) which no longer has need of matter and concerns itself solely with intellectual demonstrations and is either acquired or bestowed as a divine gift and finally the acquired intellect (‘ilm al-mustashfi) which is the active intellect that has been united with the divine origin of all existence and is the highest degree attainable by man and the purpose of cosmic existence. These stages are also road-marks upon the path trodden by the soul without implying any form of multiplicity; the soul remains the one traveller traversing all these stages on the road to perfection, the fruit and end of which is union with God.

Mulla Sadra deals with eschatology in great detail in many of his works and departs completely from the usual philosophical language in the treatment of this subject. His language is primarily that of the Qur‘an and the Sunna and of the gnostics. According to Akhund, the relation of this world to the next is like that of the mother’s womb to this world. While the child is in his mother’s womb he is actually in this world as well, but being separated from this world does not know of its existence. Likewise, man, while in this world is also in the next but the majority of men are unaware of the invisible world. Only the gnostics “see” the other world while they are here on earth and that is because for them terrestrial existence has become transparent. Akhund divides cosmic beings into five classes each of which has a destiny and an end proper to its nature: the pure intelligences separated from all

41 According to a famous hadith of the Prophet, accepted by the Sufis and the Sufis alike, the Qur‘an has seven levels of meaning the last known only to God. It is from the esoteric interpretation of the revealed book that Mulla Sadra and Sufis before him have drawn the gnostic doctrines inherent and hidden in the Islamic revelation as they are in all other revelations.
42 Feta‘ al-‘Arifin, Rasul‘il, p. 286. This terminology is a very old one in Islam; it was adopted by the early Sufis from the traditions of the Prophet and Imams.
43 Al-Shaw毕业后 al-Radd al-Maghūq, p. 140.

şadr al-Din Ǧarrātī (Mulla şadr) potentiality; the intelligences which govern the heavens; the various psychic entities belonging to the world of the imagination such as the jins and certain parts of the human soul, animal and vegetable souls; and, finally, minerals and elements. The separated intelligences subsist forever in the divine essence and are never separated from it. As for the rational soul (al-nafs al-nūriyyah), it is either perfect, as the souls of the heavens and of some men, and, in both cases, returns to God, or else it is imperfect. In the latter case it is either devoid of all desire for perfection as in the animals and those human beings who have committed much evil in this life, or it is desirous of perfection like many persons who, having chosen the wrong path, realize their mistake and wish to be guided towards the Truth. In the former case the soul, like other psychic entities belonging to the intermediary world, after separation from the body becomes united with the forms of the intermediary world of imagina-

As for man’s bodily resurrection on the Last Day, Mulla Şadr considers it to be one of the great mysteries of metaphysics revealed only to those who have reached the highest stage.43 He accepts bodily resurrection which he interprets in a particular fashion. It is known that man’s individuality and distinguishing characteristics come from his soul and not from his body because the substance of the body changes every few years without in any way destroying the unity of the human beings. Of the faculties of the soul, however, intellect and imagination are innate to it, while the vegetative and animal faculties such as the external senses and passions are received by it through the body. According to Akhund, in the next world all souls will receive the power to create external forms as prophets and saints do here in this world. For example, each soul can create the pleasure received through sight from within itself without the need of what appears to us here as an external organ. In other words, the organs of the body which appear as “external” to the soul are created from within the soul in the next world so that the resurrection of the soul is really complete with the body according to all the meanings we can give to the word “body.”

43 In the case of animals, after death they join the matters of their species (rabb al-nas) or archetypes except the higher animals who have the faculty of imagination developed in them. They have an independent existence in the world of cosmic imagination without however being distinct individually as in the case of men.
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Difference between paradise and hell lies in that the souls in paradise have the power to bring into being all the forms that are beautiful and pleasant, all the flowers and kowari of paradise, while the impure souls in hell have only the power to bring into being ugly and unpleasant forms and are in fact forced to suffer by the very forms they will have created. Mulla Šadr다 adds, however, that ultimately the pains suffered in the inferno will come to an end and, as Ibn Arabi had said, the fires of hell will freeze and all will return to the divine origin of things.19

SIGNIFICANCE OF MULLA ŠADRÁ AND HIS INFLUENCE

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the importance of Mulla Šadrá lies not only in rekindling the lamp of learning and reviving the intellectual sciences fully for the first time in the Muslim world after the Mongol invasion, but also for unifying and harmonizing revelation, gnosis, and philosophy together. Some authors have criticized Mulla Šadrá for taking certain principles from Ibn Arabi, Fārski, and Suhrawardi Maqtil and have, therefore, refused to accept his "originality." But as Aristotle has said so justifiably, there is nothing new under the sun. One cannot create a metaphysics of one's own as if metaphysics were a mechanical invention. The principles have always been and will always be the same. What determines the originality of an author in a traditional civilization like that of Islam is his ability to reinterpret and reformulate the eternal verities in a new light and thereby create a new intellectual perspective.

Regarded in this way, Mulla Šadrá must certainly be considered to be one of the most significant figures in the intellectual life of šahrā' Islam. Coming at a moment when the intellectual sciences had become weakened, he succeeded in reviving them by co-ordinating philosophy as inherited from the Greeks and interpreted by the Peripatetics and Illuminists before him with the teachings of Islam in its exoteric and esoteric aspects. He succeeded in putting the gnostic doctrines of Ibn Arabi in a logical dress. He made purification of the soul a necessary basis and complement of the study of Ḥašṣā, thereby bestowing upon philosophy the practice of ritual and spiritual virtues which it had lost in the period of decadence of classical civilization. Finally, he succeeded in correlating the wisdom of the ancient Greek and Muslim sages and philosophers as interpreted esoterically with the inner meaning of the Qur'ān. In all these matters he represents the final stage of effort by several 19 See Mulla Šadrá, al-Muhādīr u-al-Mašrid, Tehran, lithographed edition, 1314/1896, pp. 721ff.

He criticizes both the materialists who deny the existence of the soul after death and the Peripatetics who accept only the resurrection of the soul but not of the body.

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generations of Muslim sages and may be considered to be the person in whom the streams, which had been approaching one another for some centuries before, finally united.13 More specifically, Mulla Šadrá was able to harmonize his doctrinal formulation with the teachings of Islam in such a way as to overcome all the major difficulties which the Peripatetic philosophers met in the face of the teachings of the Qur'ān and for which al-Ghazālī criticized them so severely.24 Of particular significance was his divorcing metaphysics to a large extent both from Polemical astronomy and Aristotelian physics. While in Europe Galileo, Kepler, and Newton were destroying the homogeneity of Aristotelian cosmology and physics and in this way weakening the medieval Christian world-view which was closely linked with it, Mulla Šadrá, through his doctrine of substantial motion and through considering the science of the soul to be independent of physics, separated metaphysics to a large extent from medieval natural philosophy. This separation, although perhaps not of immediate significance in the eleventh/seventeenth-century Persia, which was still immune from European ideas, became of great importance in the later centuries. As the modern scientific world-view became more and more accepted in Persia during the Qājār period, the separation brought about by ʿAbd al-Qādir between metaphysics and natural philosophy helped to preserve the traditional wisdom in the face of attacks by modernists whose only weapon was modern scientific theories connected with the world of matter. In this way also, ʿAbd al-Qādir rendered great service to the Muslim intellectual sciences and helped their preservation until today.

There is no doubt that nearly the whole of the intellectual life of Persia during the past three centuries and a half has centred around Mulla Šadrá. Of his immediate students, Mulla Mahmūd Fażl, ʿAbd al-Razzāq Labij, and Qājār ʿAbd al-Qānim, all of whom are among the leading figures of šahrā' Islam, we need say little here for they have already been discussed in a previous chapter.25 It need only be added that these men in turn produced a generation

13 This exoteric view expressed in his commentary upon the Uṣūl al-K̄fāf as well as in the Ḥašṣā was one most attacked by the exoteric "islam." The religious perspective which appeals essentially to the sentimental or passionate aspect of human nature must insist upon "eternal" punishment and reward in order to have its laws accepted in human society. Only the exoteric view can be the main and appealing to the contemplative aspect of man, can take into consideration the relevancy of heaven and hell with respect to the divine essence without in any way denying the reality or "eternity" of reward and punishment in the life hereafter with respect to human existence here.

14 For the background leading to Mulla Šadrá, see Chapter XLVII of "The School of Ighanī" in this work. See also Mulla Mahmūd Fażl, al-Maḥājat al-Ṭalīfi, Vol. 1, Islāmīyāt Press, Tehran, 1379/1960, introduction by Seyyed Muḥammad Miḥālī, pp. 10-23, in which the background leading to Mulla Šadrá as well as the distinguishing principles of his own doctrines is discussed.

15 It will be remembered that al-Ghazālī in his al-Manẓūr al-Dalāl considered the philosophers to be fikrāh on three points: their rejection of the ressources.
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of students who extended the teachings of Aḥmad far and wide.5 In the Qajar period, after a short interim of anarchy caused by the Afghan invasion, the school of Mulla Šadr was once again revived, the most famous of its members being Hājī Mulla Ḥabīl Šabānī, Mulla 'Ali Nuri, author of one of the most important commentaries upon the Aṣāfī, Shākiḥ Ahmad Aḥsan, founder of the Šabānī movement and the commentator upon Mulla Šadr’s Nāma-yi Aṣāfī, Mulla 'Ali Muḥammad Ṭūnūzī, author of a significant work Bādī’i al-Ḫidam in Persian and gloses upon the Aṣāfī, and Muhammad Ḥabīl, also the author of a commentary upon the Aṣāfī.6 The influence of Aḥmad is to be met with wherever the traditional school of Ḥidmat is preserved and taught in Persia.7 All the adherents of this school have regarded Mulla Šadr as their master and it is no exaggeration to say that Aḥmad stands along with Šabānī, Ibn Sinā, a small group of the Aḥsanis, and Ṭūnūzī al-Dīn Ṭūnūzī, the mainstay of the philosophic school of the thirteenth century, as the chief means of the spiritual progress of the Persians, the most important and at least one of the key figures, which has watered the intellectual soil of Persia during the past four centuries; his teachings are as alive today as they were at the time of their formulation.

5 Mulla Šadr’s teachings were especially influential in India to which country one of his disciples by the name of Muhammad Shāhī Ḥabīl migrated—after reaching a wild state of ecstasy during one of Mulla Šadr’s lectures—and where he attracted many disciples. The works of Mulla Šadr have continued to be taught in the Islamic schools of the Indian sub-continent, especially his Bādī’i al-Ḫidam which came to be known by the author’s name as Šadr. Many gloses have been written on it by various philosophers and scholars in India such as Muhammad Aḥmad al-Madīrī (d. 1140/1727), Mulla ʿAbd al-Latīf (d. 1198/1783), Muhammad Aḥmad al-Ṣibāhī (d. 1250/1834), and Aḥmad al-Dīn al-Šīrāzī, who wrote in the thirteenth/nineteenth century. Numerous manuscripts of these and other gloses on the Bādī’i al-Ḵhidam are to be found in such libraries as the Faṣāḥ Library of Rāʾī, the Khūṭa Bahkš Library in Patna (see the Catalogue of Arabic and Persian Manuscripts in the Oriental Library at Blackburn, Vol. II [Arabic MSS.], Bihar and Orissa, 1930, MS. No. 2531, 2368, 2731-74).

6 See Chapter XLI on “The School of Ḥabīl.”

7 For a list of the names of Mulla Šadr’s disciples in the Qajar period, see Raḥmat al-Ḥabīb and Goharib, op. cit., pp. 103 ff.

8 Iqbal’s statement that, “It is, moreover, the Philosophy of Šadr which is the source of the metaphysics of early Bābīn’” (Development of Metaphysics in Early Bābīn: Persia, London, 1908, p. 178) is true only in a negative sense in the same way as the doctrine of the Ruhmāw mystics might be considered to be the source of the Protestant revolt during the Renaissance.