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## **Mulla Sadra's Life and Philosophy**

Seyed G Safavi

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the life and philosophy of Mulla Sadra, one of the most important Muslim Iranian philosophers and founder of new school of Islamic philosophy, entitled Transcendent philosophy, in 5 sections: his life, what is the “Transcendent philosophy”, the 14 principles of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, Mulla Sadra's views on different schools of thought such as Ancient Metaphysicians, Greek and Muslim philosophers, and 'Urafa., and finally his writings. This is an original paper in the English language as it presents the most important aspects of Mulla Sadra's philosophy based directly on his various writings in Arabic language, such as *Asfar*, *al-Shawahid al-rububiyya*, *al-Mabda' wa l-Ma'ad*, *Arshiyah*, *al-Masha'ir* and *Mafatih al-Ghayb*.

**Keywords:** Islamic philosophy, Mulla Sadra, Transcendent philosophy, works of Mulla Sadra, Principality of Existence, Trans-Substantial Motion.

### **1. A Short Biography**

Sadreddin Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Qawami Shirazi, commonly known as Mulla Sadra, and also as Sadr al-Muta'alehin, was born in Shiraz in southern Iran in 979 A.H., 1572 C.E., and died in 1050

A.H., 1640 C.E.<sup>1</sup> He is buried in the shrine of Imam Ali (‘a) in Najaf.

He spent his youth in Shiraz where he studied some of the introductory Islamic sciences. Thereafter he moved to Isfahan to further pursue his Islamic studies. While in Isfahan he studied the intellectual and narrative sciences of Islam under two of the greatest Islamic scholars: namely, Sheikh Baha’ al-Din al-‘Amili (d.1031/1622) and Seyed Muhammad Baqir Astarabadi, also known as Mir Damad (d.1040/1631).

Due to his hard work, the high degree of his intelligence, his spiritual capacity, and the purity of his heart, Mulla Sadra became a master of the field of metaphysics, providing commentary on the Quran and the sciences of hadith. Due to Mulla Sadra’s exalted spiritual status, his deep understanding of the esoteric dimensions of Islam, and his promotion of this knowledge in a simple language understandable by the masses (in contrast to the complicated language of Mir Damad) he became a target of abuse by ignorant scholars of the exoteric sciences, in reference to whom Rumi says:

“He knows a hundred thousand superfluous matters connected with the (various) sciences,(but) that unjust man does not know his own soul.

He knows the special properties of every substance, (but) in elucidating his own substance (essence) he is (as ignorant) as an ass.

Saying “I know (what is) permissible and impermissible,” thou knowest not whether thou thyself are permissible or (impermissible as) an old woman.

Thou knowest this licit (thing) and that illicit (thing), but art thou licit or illicit? Consider well!

Thou knowest what is the value of every merchandise; (if) thou knowest not the value of thyself, ‘tis folly.

Thou has become acquainted with the fortunate and inauspicious stars; thou does not look to see whether thou art fortunate or unwashed (spiritually foul and ill-favored)

This, this, is the soul of all the sciences: that thou should know who thou shalt be on the Day of Judgment.”<sup>2</sup>

The abuse of the scholars of the exoteric sciences forced him to realize that he needed to go into *Khalwat* (isolation) in order to reach union with the Universal Intellect, so that his intellect may become Divine. There, the veils of the material world would be removed for him, helping him achieve the Divine intuitive knowledge he sought, as Imam Sadiq notes. So he isolated himself from society and spent his time sincerely worshipping his exalted Lord in a village near Qum.

As Mulla Sadra says:

“Indeed we spent our life in search of knowledge;  
However, the search did not earn us much but grievances.  
Our entire life was wasted in matters related to other than the Beloved;  
Excepting regret, we had no share therein  
O cup-bearer circulate among us the cup [of Divine gnosis]  
So that the time I lost is covered up.”<sup>3</sup>

He continues:

“Therefore when I found that the place was bereft of one who acknowledged the sanctity of the secrets and the sciences of the pure-hearted, and that gnosis and its mysteries have vanished and the truth and its light has been effaced...I abandoned the people of my time and concealed myself from them. Thus the tranquility of my perspicacity and the stillness of nature came to my rescue from the enmity of the age and the impotence of my rambles, until I isolated myself in a place by the outskirts of the

city and in a state of apathy and dejection hid myself; this happened while I experienced despair and broken-heartedness and while I engaged in compulsory acts of worship and struggled to cover up the excesses I had committed in the presence of Allah. In that particular state I neither taught nor engaged in writing; for writing on matters of gnosis, refuting the incorrect ideas, elucidating the objectives and removing the difficulties are among those things that require the lavation of one's intellect and purification of one's faculty of imagination from those things that result in restlessness and confusion... Thus I turned instinctively towards the Source of all the means, and naturally expressed my humbleness in front of the Simplifier of the difficulties; and when I remained in this particular state of concealment and isolation and obscurity and seclusion for a long time, my soul was enlightened through spiritual struggle and my heart was powerfully lit up through many austerities (*riyazat*). This made the celestial rays of light pour down into my spirit; and the mysteries of the realm of Divine Omnipotence (*jabarut*) were untangled for me; and the rays of unity touched my spirit and the Divine grace embraced it. Hence I came to learn of secrets I had not yet known, and mysteries that had not been clear through intellectual proof were now unraveled for me. I witnessed more details by way of vision and spiritual disclosure than I had known before through intellectual proof...”<sup>4</sup>

“And it is highly probable that this distinction, that this blessed servant, who hails from the blessed Islamic community, attained through the great Bestower, Who is Generous and Merciful, was only due to his frequent occupation in acquiring this lofty aim and his extreme perseverance in front of the ignorant and degenerate folk, and [because of] the inadequate concern of the people for him, and the absence of mutual understanding with him; to such an extent that he lived in the world in a state of grief and sorrow and neither occupied the lowest position from the seminarians in front of the people, nor in front of their scholars, most of whom were more wretched than the ignorant masses themselves; and this was due to the fact that apart from prattling they knew no other path of acquiring knowledge; and

because of their limited outlook on human perfection and development, which they thought could not be achieved save through the discussion of vanities.

When the Eternal Divine Mercy encompassed me, the radiations of Divine unity and the grace of the Self-subsistent Sovereignty (*al-Altāf al-Qayyumiyyah*) touched me, my soul experienced spiritual repose from their admissions and refutations and was freed from their inflictions and whisperings. Then Allah taught me the secrets and mysteries that I had not known and the realities pertaining to lordship and Divine gnosis were unraveled for me; realities that had not been thus unraveled by means of intellectual proof.”<sup>5</sup>

“And it is forbidden as a divine decree and impossible by Divine predestination that the knowledge of these four disciplines are comprehended, especially the gnosis of the Essence and the Hereafter, save by relinquishing the present world and seeking seclusion and abstaining from worldly fame; besides possessing a brilliant perspicacity, a critical bent of mind, extreme intelligence, a pure disposition and a very quick intellectual power of analysis.”<sup>6</sup>

“And verily I know -- praise be to Allah -- through visual certainty that this narrative and its like that have appeared in the Book of God and the narratives of the immaculate souls concerning the states of Resurrection and its horrors are true and correct. Therefore I have believed in it by witnessing, and by association with, intuitive knowledge and Divine vision...”<sup>7</sup>

In the year 1040 A.H., Mulla Sadra returned to Shiraz, where he taught until the last years of his life.

Mulla Sadra, in his introduction to the commentary of *Ayat al-Kursi*, clearly introduces himself as “an inhabitant of Qum.” In that text he also says, “Verily [I am] more than forty years of age”; and, taking into consideration his date of birth, that would have been in approximately the year 1022 A.H. Thus, most probably he lived in Qum between the years of 1023 A.H. and 1040 A.H. However, the

introduction of his *Asfar* indicates that he lived in Qum for years before his writings:

He says:

“Until the time I secluded myself in an area by the outskirts of the city, in a state of apathy and dejection I hid myself; this happened while I experienced despair and broken-heartedness and while I engaged in compulsory acts of worship and strove to cover up the excesses I had committed in the Presence of Allah. In that particular state I neither taught nor engaged in writing.”<sup>8</sup>

There is not much information concerning his family, but we know that he had a distinguished son, Mirza Ibrahim, who was a scholar of Islamic sciences. His grandson also named Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim was an eminent scholar as well.

### **His Tutors**

Mulla Sadra's main masters were Mir Damad and Sheikh Bahia. Mir Mohammad Baqer Asterabadi (d. 1631 or 1632), known also as Mir Damad, was an Iranian philosopher in the Islamic Peripatetic Neoplatonizing tradition of Ibn Sina. He was also the central founder of the School of Isfahan, which embraced a theosophical outlook known as *hikmat-i ilahi* (divine wisdom). He was known by his students and admirers as the Third Teacher (*mu'alim al-thalith*) after Aristotle and Farabi.

His major contribution to Islamic philosophy was his formulation of the gradations of time, and the emanations of the separate categories of time, as divine hypostases. He resolved the controversy of the createdness or uncreatedness of the world in time by proposing the notion of *huduth-e-dahri* (atemporal origination), an explanation that was grounded in, and yet transcended, Avicennian and Suhrawardian categories. In brief, he argued that with the exception of God, all things, including the earth and the heavenly bodies, have both eternal and temporal origins. He influenced the revival of *al-*

*falsafa al-yamani* (Philosophy of Yemen), a philosophy based on revelation and the sayings of the prophets, rather than on the rationalism of the Greeks.

Mir Damad's many treatises on Islamic philosophy include *Taqwim al-Iman* (Calendars of Faith), a treasured account of creation and divine knowledge, the *Kitab Qabasat al-Ilahiyah* (Book of the Divine Embers of Fiery Kindling), wherein he lays out his concept of atemporal origination, *Kitab al-Jadhawat* (Book of Spiritual Attractions) and *Sirat al-Mustaqim* (The Straight Path). He wrote poetry under the pseudonym *Ishraq* (Illumination); he also wrote books on mathematics, although these are of secondary importance. Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Āmilī (1547 – 1621), known also as Shaykh-i Bahā'ī, was a philosopher, architect, mathematician, astronomer and poet. He was one of the main founders of the Isfahan School of Islamic Philosophy. He was also a mystic. He had a distinct Sufi leaning for which he was criticized by Mohammad Baqer Majlesi. During his travels he dressed like a Dervish and frequented Sufi circles. He also appeared in the circles of both the Nurbakhshi and the Ni'matullāhī Sufi orders. In the work *Resāla fi'l-waḥda al-wojūdīya* (Exposition of the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* or Unity of Existences), he states that the Sufis are the true believers, calls for an unbiased assessment of their utterances, and refers to his own mystical experiences. His Persian poetry is also replete with mystical allusions and symbols. That said, Shaykh Baha' al-Din's texts call for strict adherence to the *Sharia* as a prerequisite for embarking on the *Tariqah*; he did not hold a high opinion view of antinomian mysticism. Shaykh Baha' al-Din contributed numerous works of philosophy, logic, astronomy and mathematics, including 88 articles, epistles and books. His outstanding works in the Iranian language are *Jame' Abbasi* and two *masnavis* known as *Shir wa Shikar* (Milk and Sugar) and *Nan wa Halwa* (Bread and Halva). His other work *Kashkool* includes stories, discussions of scientific topics, and Persian and Arabic proverbs. He wrote *Khulasat Al-Hisab* and *Tashrih Al-Aflak* in Arabic.

## **His Students**

Among his most popular students were his sons-in-law, Mulla Mohsen Fayz Kashani and Mulla ‘Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, whom he nicknamed Fayz and Fayyaz, respectively.

Of the two, Fayz was more inspired by Mulla Sadra. Fayz was also among the great narrators of tradition and was well-acquainted with the narrative sciences.

Fayyaz, known also as Mulla ‘Abd al-Razzaq bin Husayn Lahiji, was a scholar, philosopher, theologian and poet, and the author of *al-Shawariq*. He lived and studied in Qum, where he benefited from Mulla Sadra’s teachings, and was among his great students. Fayyaz is known to have been more penetrating in his analysis of issues than Fayz (however, Fayz’s knowledge of the different sciences was wider). Fayyaz opposed Mulla Sadra on some of his philosophical principles, the most popular of which was the principality of existence.

Another of Mulla Sadra’s notable students was Shaykh Husayn Tankabuni. A treatise which he wrote on the temporal createdness of the world was printed in the margins of Mulla Sadra’s *al-Mashahir*.

## **2. *Al-Hikmah* (Theosophy) and Transcendent Philosophy<sup>9</sup>**

*Hikmah* (theosophy) is the understanding of Existence by Divine intelligence. The knowledge of Almighty God is the most supreme of all kinds of knowledge, and concerns the best of what can be known. Ṭ-Sadr al-Muta’llihin believes that engaging oneself with other kinds of knowledge is to prefer the inferior to the superior. As long as there exist those who are capable of engaging themselves in particular sciences and worldly knowledge, which is the case in every place and in every epoch, it does not behoove an intellectual

to occupy himself with these matters, thus overlooking superior and sacred knowledge.

Therefore you will find that most of Mulla Sadra's books, not excepting *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*, were based on this kind of knowledge. Whenever he mentioned a matter pertaining to another discipline, he would usually alert the reader to the link between the two:

“And since I do not like a Divine personality to refer to one who is learned [merely] in the particular sciences, whether it be matters concerning natural sciences or otherwise... For this reason, I have not included the references in most of the places of the commentary of the present book, but have placed them as a part of the original text, as is my normal habit in my magnum opus called *Al-Asfar* which consists of four volumes, all of which pertain to metaphysics in its two parts: primary philosophy and the art of separate substances.”<sup>10</sup>

“It was a traditional norm to mention this issue in the discipline of natural sciences. However, we have included it here for the aforementioned reason and for the reason that the discussion on the quiddity of a thing, and the nature of its existence, is suitable in a discussion of the divine disciplines.”<sup>11</sup>

## **Transcendent Philosophy**

Transcendent philosophy focuses attention on spiritual vision and intuition and thus surpasses conventional theosophy. Mulla Sadra was of the opinion that gnosis can be attained in three ways:

- 1) Intellectual proof
- 2) Spiritual vision
- 3) Divine revelation.

The intellect finds itself incompetent in transcendent, divine discussions, because it knows of a realm beyond its own realm. Thus the path of success is that of spiritual vision, endorsed by

Revelation which is not inconsistent, nor contrary to reliable intellectual proof. This is the basis depended upon in the Transcendental philosophy, from which Mulla Sadra took the name for his *magnum opus*, *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah*. He adopts this method of understanding in most of his subtle discussions.

Avicenna was probably the first person to employ the term “transcendent theosophy,” when he said:

“Then, if what it implies is a kind of opinion that is hidden save to those well-rooted in the transcendent theosophy (al-Hikmat al-muta`liyah).”<sup>12</sup>

In his commentary on the *al-Isharat*, Muhaqiq Tusi says:

“Surely he only considered this issue to be one of transcendent theosophy because the Peripatetic philosophy is a mere discursive theosophy, while this issue and its likes are properly elucidated by means of discourse together with spiritual vision and intuition. Thus, the philosophy that includes these methods of understanding is relatively superior (*muta`liyah*) to the first kind of theosophy.”<sup>13</sup>

Qaysari, the commentator of *Fusus*, had also used this term:

“And the difference between the two is similar to the difference between the universal and its two particulars and not like the difference between two distinct realities, as those who have no knowledge of the transcendental theosophy surmise.”<sup>14</sup>

Some of the secrets of religion are of a level that is beyond intellectual thought, and can only be understood by the light of Sainthood and Prophethood. The relation between the realm of the intellect and its light, and the realm of Sainthood and its light, is analogous to the relation between the light of the senses and the light of the intellect. Thus there is not much benefit in the application of the intellect to this realm that is beyond its reach.

In the introduction to his commentary on Chapter *Al-Waqi'ah* of the Holy Qur'an, Mulla Sadra explains how he arrived at this path of understanding:

“And in the past I frequently engaged in discourse and reiteration and often occupied myself in studying the books of far-sighted philosophers, until I thought I had gained something. But when my inner vision opened a little and I looked at my own state, I found that, although I had attained knowledge of the disciplines of reality, matters pertaining to the Source of being, His transcendence over contingent and ephemeral attributes, and the Return of the human soul to Absolute Truth could not be comprehended save through intuition and spiritual experience. And these matters also exist in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah, e.g. the Gnosis of God, His Attributes and Names, etc. the reality of which cannot be known save through Allah's guidance, and cannot be unraveled save by the light of Prophethood and Sainthood.

And the difference between the knowledge of far-sighted intellectuals and the knowledge of those possessing insight is like the difference between knowing the definition of sweetness and [literally] tasting the same. Therefore I became convinced that these realities of faith could not be comprehended save by means of cleansing the heart of vain desires, purifying it of mundane motives, and isolating oneself from the masses, especially the clever among them; and by means of contemplating the Qur'anic verses and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and following the path of the virtuous for the rest of one's short life span: before us lies a long journey. Hence when I felt my weakness, I was sure that I had not yet attained anything. [Instead] I had satisfied myself with the shadow rather than the ray of light... My soul lit up powerfully in my extreme plight, and my heart burnt with the light of extreme restlessness. As a result, the Eternal and Abundant Mercy of God embraced it and Divine Grace turned towards it with flashes from the spiritual realm, and thereby graced it from His fathomless ocean of generosity with some of the mysteries

of existence. And the Revealer of the secrets and the Luminant of quiddities bestowed upon me some of the secrets of His signs and palpable divine visions.”<sup>15</sup>

“For surely I believe in the truth of all that our Prophet Muhammad (S) brought and the truth of the prophethood of prophet Musa (‘a) as well. And this is not due to the miracle of splitting the moon or transforming the rod into a serpent, but by divine indications and divine inspirations in the heart, which do not allow any speck of skepticism or doubt and are not afflicted by any stain of obscurity and defect. Nonetheless, they are measured and comprehended correctly by the balances of justice of the Day of Reckoning, a measure that Allah brought down from the Heaven of pure intelligence to the earthly human heart located below the heaven of the elevated intellect, and He commanded us to keep it upright, as the following verses of the Holy Qur’an manifest: ‘...and the heaven – He raised it up, and set the Balance, therefore weigh with justice, and skimp not in the balance. And the earth – He set it down for all beings.’” (Quran, 55:7-10). And indeed I kept this correct balance upright as Allah ordered to be done, and I measured all the divine matters. Rather, [I also measured] the states of the Return in the Hereafter and... I found all of them in conformity with what exists in this Qur’an. Also, I became convinced of the fact that all the authentic traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) are veracious and the truth.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Some pertinent issues on the relationship between the intellect and Revelation:**

1) Mulla Sadra does not invalidate intellectual judgment, nor does he oust it from the realm of gnosis. Rather he believes that:

“It is inadmissible for one to comprehend in the realm of spiritual vision what the intellect believes to be impossible. Nevertheless, it is possible for a thing that is beyond the intellectual grasp to appear in the realm of spiritual vision. In other words, the intellect is inadequate to comprehend it. One who cannot differentiate between that which the intellect

believes to be impossible and that which the intellect cannot comprehend is not eligible to be addressed. Hence he should be left alone with his ignorance.”<sup>17</sup>

2) The means of distinguishing what the intellect finds to be correct and not contradicting the truth is Revelation. Hence no impartial and correct kind of philosophy can transgress what it says. “*Indeed what else is beyond the truth save aberration*” (Holy Qur’an 10:32).

“And one whose religion is not that of the Prophets (‘a), that is not considered to be theosophy at all. And one who is not firmly rooted in the gnosis of realities is not considered to be from the theosophists.”<sup>18</sup>

However, in the manner of convincing intellectual proof, neither does the follower of the Prophet (s.a.w.) reject the judgment made by the intellect:

“And how can one who is merely satisfied in accepting the traditions with no proof, and who negates the methods of thought and intellection, attain guidance? Doesn’t he know that there is no reliable source for religion save the speech of the master of mankind, and the intellect that assents to the truth of what he reported? Also, how can one who merely adopts intellectual proof and satisfies himself thereby but has not yet been illuminated by the light of religion, be guided to the truth? I wish I knew how one may seek refuge in the intellect, when it is afflicted by incapacitation and limitation? Doesn’t he realize that the intellect is incapable of comprehending [some of] the realities until it is illuminated by the light of religion, and that its bounds are very narrow?”

“How far-fetched! How far-fetched! Surely one who does not harmonize religion and intellectual judgment in this manner is definitely lacking. For the example of the intellect is eyesight free from calamities and maladies and the example of the Holy Qur’an is a Sun whose light-rays are spread out. Therefore it is appropriate to consider that that seeker of guidance, who finds

himself satisfied with one instead of both of the sources of comprehension, is one of the unwise [and narrow-minded]. Similarly, he who shuns the intellect and limits himself to the light of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and his progeny ('a) is one who enjoys the presence of the light of the Sun and the Moon, but shuts his eyelids. Thus there is no difference between him and the blind. Therefore religion together with the intellect is light upon light."<sup>19</sup>

“And it is far-fetched for the laws of the true brilliant religion to contradict the definite teachings [comprehended by the intellect]. And may the philosophy whose laws are not in conformity with the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) be vanquished.”<sup>20</sup>

3) There is another path for attaining divine realities, which has no parallel. For that which is heard is not like that which is beheld in its entirety and that is veracious spiritual vision. Hence, even though the scholars reckon that they can attain the realities on this path, this is unlikely due to the arduousness of the path and the difficulty of the practice. The beholder is optimistic due to the loftiness of what he would attain and the composure he would experience thereby:

“And the reality of theosophy is only gotten from divinely gifted knowledge. And as long as the soul has not attained this station, he will not be a theosopher.”<sup>21</sup>

If prophetic intuition is intuition which has not a speck of doubt, then religion is the scale by which to measure other intuitions; and therefore that vision which does not conform to it has no weight:

“Surely I seek refuge with my Sublime Lord in all my statements, acts, beliefs and writings, from all that contradicts the truth of following the religion brought by the doyen of the Messengers of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets, upon whom and whose progeny be the best felicitations of the felicitators.”<sup>22</sup>

That which the Beholder comprehends through intuition cannot be elucidated and proved for any other than the beholder save by means of intellectual proof. Thus, the possessor of knowledge of transcendental theosophy comprehends intellectually and intuitively, and agrees with what the religion has to say.

“Our statements should not be considered to be merely the result of spiritual vision and intuition or assimilation of religion without understanding the intellectual proofs and observing its laws. For indeed mere intuition without intellectual ratification is insufficient for wayfaring, inasmuch as mere discourse without spiritual vision is a great defect in wayfaring...

We have repeatedly pointed out that theosophy does not contradict the veracious divine religions. Rather, the aim behind both is one and the same: the gnosis of the Foremost Truth, His Attributes and...His Acts. And these are sometimes attained through spiritual wayfaring and acquisition, and therefore such comprehension is known as theosophy and spiritual sanctity (*wilayah*). And only one who has no knowledge of how to harmonize religious addresses with intellectual proofs believes them to be in contradiction. And none can do that save one who is backed by Allah, perfect in intellectual disciplines, and aware of the prophetic mysteries. For verily there may be a person who is proficient in discursive theosophy, but has no share of the knowledge of the Book of God and religion, and conversely.”<sup>23</sup>

Mulla Sadra's ingenuity comes to the fore in this field, for, through his efforts, the travails of the theosophers, who had struggled to intellectually prove the gnosis, reached perfection through spiritual vision and intuition.

“And indeed we harmonized their intuitions with intellectual principles.”<sup>24</sup>

“And I suppose that, in spite of the fact that the words of the ancient scholars explained these issues, and in spite of the fact that the statements of the researchers meant to express them,

nevertheless, none had produced such intellectual proofs based on principles that had confused [even] the intellects of the far-sighted scholars.”<sup>25</sup>

Mulla Sadra believes that one who has no hope of traversing the spiritual path will not benefit by studying his books. He says:

“Therefore understand if you rank among those who can appreciate [the teachings]. If not, then stop reading this book and contemplating the abstruse issues of the knowledge of Qur’an. Instead, you should pursue the knowledge of anecdotes, reports, traditions and the science of history and genealogy, and get acquainted with Arabic and language and accept traditions without any in-depth understanding, and acquire the conclusions you make from all the aforesaid sciences that deal with controversial secondary issues.”<sup>26</sup>

“And it is prohibited for most people to start acquiring these abstruse disciplines, because those who are capable of comprehending them are extremely scarce. And the ability to comprehend them is bestowed by Allah, the Invincible and All-knowledgeable.”<sup>27</sup>

“And I had no intention in proving every issue save guiding the astute student and cleansing the pure mind, who will thereby attain the nearness of Allah and his exalted spiritual realm. Thus if this corresponds with the opinion of the people of discourse and scrutiny, it will be as we have indicated. But if it does not correspond with their opinion, then it is known that truth is not in compatible with the intellects of a people whose dispositions have been destroyed by inner maladies that the spiritual doctors have been unable to cure...And a Divine theosophist should not engage in any kind of conversation with those people, nor write for them nor call and address them.”<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Principles of Mulla Sadra's Transcendental Philosophy<sup>29</sup>

#### *1- Principality of Existence and Its Unity*<sup>30</sup>

We only perceive something as a single entity in the outside realm. However, the intellect divides it into quiddity (*mahiyyah*) and existence (*wujud*). But which of these is fundamental and principal in the outside realm?

This question had not been discussed with much clarity among the ancient philosophers. And as such, we may find areas in their works that sometimes reveal that existence is fundamental and, at other times, that quiddity is fundamental (*asil*). The belief in the fundamentality of quiddity was first introduced to us by Shaykh al-Ishraq and later garnered acceptance among some theosophers, such as Mir Damad.

At first, Mulla Sadra, too, adopted this notion, following in the footsteps of his teacher, Mir Damad. However, later when the reality was unraveled for him he started to believe in the fundamentality of existence, instead. He was so firmly confident in the idea that he made it the foremost principle, and the foundational stone, of nearly all of his philosophical proofs.

“And I used to highly support them in their belief that Existence is derivative (*i'tibari*) and that quiddities are fundamental (*asil*) until my Lord guided me and the opposite was clearly unraveled for me: that ‘existents’ are principal realities in the outside realm.”<sup>31</sup>

The notion of the fundamentality of existence was also well known among Islamic Gnostics even believed by some. However, it was not intellectually proven in the manner propounded in the transcendental theosophy.

After arguing for the principality of Existence, the intellects then propounded its singleness. This forms the second principle upon which nearly all other metaphysical issues depend.

The Gnostics, indeed, used to believe in the hypostatic unity (*wahdah shakhsiyyah*) of existence and, at times, even tried to prove it in order to counter the vehemence of its opponents. However, they lacked any real success in demonstrating firm intellectual proofs to back their claims. Their body of evidence, rather, was as limited as those of the theologians who were not immune to criticisms, imperfections and weaknesses themselves.

We must be alert of the fact that Mulla Sadra first propounded the particular unity of existence and its gradational characteristic, providing the establishment upon which the solution to other problems depended. Then, he arrived at a deeper understanding, which is the belief in the hypostatic unity of existence supported by the mystics. It is apparent in many of his works that he supports their opinion.

After realizing that his claims found disapproval among the masses and started arousing opposition, he propounded the idea of the particular unity of existence and walked on its path, breaking the vehemence of those opponents and safeguarding himself from the condemnation of the ignorant and the pseudo-philosophers. Alluding to the truth and the more subtle opinion he espoused, he made the following point:

“Indeed, it is understood from the statements of the intellectual who possesses the power of intuition (ʿaql) what we are in the process of ratifying when its time comes. And that is the fact that all contingent existents and suspended copulative entities (*al-inniyyat al-irtibatiyyah al-taʿalluqiyyah*) are manifestations of the Necessary Existent and the rays and shadows of the light of ontic Sovereignty... Therefore, the reality is One and the rest are none, save for its manifestations, the rays of its light, the shadows of its rays, and the manifestations of its Essence.

And by Allah's grace and support, I have demonstrated a brilliant proof for this lofty and sacred contention, written in a separate treatise on this subject called, "*Tarhu'l Kawnayn*" – a proof that is subtle, desired, and invaluable. And God-Willing, we shall place it in its respective area of discussion as we promised."<sup>32</sup>

"And this principle is of the principles that establish what we are in the process of ratifying; and that is the fact that all the [contingent] entities in view of their nature of existence are the overflows, emanations, and flakes of the Divine Existence – they are the manifestations and theophanies of the Infinite Truth."<sup>33</sup>

He fulfills his promise to demonstrate the proof in his first book ("*safar*" literally meaning "journey"), where he proves the transcendent hypostatic unity of existence after relating effect-hood (*ma'luliyah*) to trait-hood (*tasha'un*). Then, in a state of joy, he says:

And the proof for this principle is of the wisdom that my Lord bestowed on me by His Eternal Grace and made it my share of knowledge by the bestowal of the Grace of His Existence. Thus, through this principle I tried to perfect philosophy and complete theosophy.

And since this principle is subtle, abstruse, and has shown to be difficult to follow and comprehend – and particularly because its ascertainment is far-reaching – most theosophers overlooked it and the feet of many students slipped in negligence, not to mention that of their followers, imitators, and associates.

And in the manner that my Lord enabled me through His Grace and Mercy to comprehend the perpetual annihilation and eternal extinction of the contingent quiddities, He guided me through a brilliant proof to the straight path of truth: the fact that existence is confined to one hypostatic reality, which has no partner in the

reality of existence and where there is no second to it in essence.”<sup>34</sup>

Hence, there is a difference in the way of understanding between the seer who beholds the universe as a collection of different quiddities, each of which is independent of the other, and a philosopher who through deep insight comprehends it to be harmonious, interrelated, and one in which Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.

## 2- *Trans-Substantial Motion*

All the theosophers believed in the occurrence of trans-substantial motion in some of the accidental categories (*maqulat al-‘araḳiyyih*), but due to difficulties (primarily the obscurity of the discontinuity of the subject) they were reluctant in accepting such motion in the category of substance (*maqulat al-jawhar*).

“And the later theosophists, such as Abu ‘Alḳ and his likes, were extremely persistent in denying this substantial transformation. And that is why they were unable to prove many true concepts...”<sup>35</sup>

The most distinctive notion that Mulla Sadra introduced is the belief in trans-substantial motion and the responses of the obscurities that it is confronted with. Although this principle was inspired by the belief of the mystics in the renewal of *amthal*, the difference in the two ideas is apparent. Furthermore, the belief in *amthal* was not intellectually proven by Gnostics.

He is the first to consider and support the idea of trans-substantial motion. In addition, he relied on it to solve a number of other issues.

“And that which we have gotten through power from the exalted celestial realm (and not by studying the heritage of the theosophers) is that motion takes place in substance and the

nature of specific bodies are perpetually in a state of renewal and change in their essence...<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, it is impossible to harmonize between theosophy and religion in the temporal genesis of the world and understand the fact that it has no beginning, except through this principle. And 'Allamah Tabatabaei in his gloss on the Asfar says:

“And the truth is that the belief in the occurrence of movement in the category of substance necessitates its occurrence in all the [other] categories. And although the author stressed its occurrence in the category of substance and tried to explain and prove the same in his books, he did not present a complete discussion by minding to include the branches of this important issue that transform divine philosophy into a new invaluable basis. In spite of this, he has done a great favor to the philosophers of this issue.”<sup>37</sup>

### *3- Temporal Createdness of The Material World*

Ever since the olden times, this matter was under question among theosophers and theologians. The theosophers, relying on the Emanation of the Necessary Being and the impossibility of the occurrence of change in His Essence, prefer to believe that He possesses Eternal Emanation. Contrarily, the theologians for fear that this notion could lead to the belief that the world does not need a cause and that it would itself transform into a Necessary Being – negate this belief and consider it to be infidelity and heresy. Furthermore, they allege that all the monotheistic nations are unanimous in its opposition.

Perhaps hearing the words, “eternal” (*al-qadim*) and “continual” (*al-dawam*) with regards to that other than the Necessary Existent is what provokes such contestation. Thus, the following passage, taken from a section of “*Mafatih al-Ghayb*,” can be regarded as controversial. In it, Mulla Sadra states:

“A section dealing with the fact that motion, in view of its temporal genesis, manifests continual and endless movement. And proving this is of the things that provoke a group of insane proponents of folklore because its apparent import manifests the pre-eternity of the world... However, we are in the process of proving temporal created-ness.”<sup>38</sup>

Some have attempted to harmonize the two above mentioned statements, including Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra’s teacher in metaphysics, who introduced him to the idea of “atemporal created-ness” (*al-huduth al-dahri*) and on the same subject wrote a book entitled, “*Al-Qabasat*.” He also wrote a treatise on the “temporal created-ness of the world.” Nevertheless, Mulla Sadra, his student, utilizing a belief in trans-substantial motion, propounded another view and proved as fact that the material world is perpetually contingent and “coming into being” and, therefore, can never be eternal and necessary. For this very reason, he wrote a separate treatise on the temporal created-ness of the world, which he mentions and gives reference to in most of his books.

“Indeed we taught and guided you to the celestial path which none of the theosophers – well-known for their skillful ability to prove the temporality of the material world, including all that it embraces of the heavens and the earth – had done before...

Know the fact that this is from the greatest issues of belief and gnosis, and all the prophetic religions have unanimously agreed on its establishment, while its comprehension eludes the bewildered intellects of the theosophers. And surely, Allah has inspired us to understand this issue by the virtue of his Beneficence and has thereby preferred us over many of his other creations.”<sup>39</sup>

And he is extremely happy in having solved this issue when he says:

“Know the fact that the elucidation of this aspiration and the realization of this statement – which echoes the successive and

famously narrated tradition of the Prophet (S) that says, "Allah Existed while there was nothing with Him" – is of those abstruse matters, the particular information of which neither I, at sixty five years of age, nor anyone else on the face of this earth, have found within a lifetime. Also, I did not find proof on this matter that cures the sick and satiates the thirsty in books of the ancient and succeeding scholars. Surely, Allah advantaged me through His Mercy and Grace, and opened the door of comprehending its truth in my heart. As a result, I placed this sublime issue, along with unique and magnificent pearls of wisdom, in some of my books and treatises."<sup>40</sup>

This shows that the matter was controversial among the thinkers of his time and the treatises written on the issue by his contemporaries explains why Sadr al-Muta'allihin laid importance on it. There exists a hand written manuscript of the treatise which Mulla Sadra wrote and sent to Shams al-Jilani.

#### *4- Union Of The Intelligent And The Intelligible*

This notion was well known from ancient scholars and perfect Gnostics. However, its expurgation and exposition in the form of a specific intellectual proof was first introduced by Mulla Sadra:

"Surely, the notion of the soul comprehending the forms of intelligible entities is of the most abstruse problems of theosophy that none among the Islamic scholars has expurgated and propounded immaculately until today. We found the difficult nature of this issue and contemplated the problem of the knowledge of substance being itself a substance and an accident. We also did not find in the books of the philosophers (not excepting their president Ibn Sina, such as al-Shifa, al-Najat, al-Isharat, and 'Uyun al-Hikmah and others) that which cures the sick and satiates the thirsty. Rather, we found that he and all those at his level, his likes, his followers, such as his student, Bahmanyar, and the master of the followers of the stoics, and Muhaqqiq al-Tusi Nasir al-Din, and other posterior philosophers, failed to bring something dependable... Thus, we

naturally turned to the Cause of All the Means and expressed our intrinsic humiliation to the Simplifier of difficulties and asked Him to open the door of understanding the reality of this matter... Thus, during the hour in which I was engaged in writing this section, He Bestowed on us new knowledge from the treasury of His Knowledge.”<sup>41</sup>

It is well known that Ibn Sina negated this notion and refuted it with numerous drawbacks. And in his book, *al-Isharat, namat* ninth, after mentioning the refutations, he reproachfully says:

“And among them was a person known as Propyry who had written a book on intellect and intelligible entities, which the Peripatetic philosophers praised when it was entirely unsubstantial! And they themselves know that neither them, nor Propyry himself understands it...”

Thereupon Mulla Sadra replies to his refutations and expounds the unsubstantial areas of his statements, utilizing this principle in expounding many issues.

“Surely, it is my unique finding based on principles that I have established. For verily, it is the final word whose understanding the laymen cannot attain, since it is an elevated cliff and a sacred aspiration, and to understand it requires a second, or rather a third, disposition.”<sup>42</sup>

##### 5- *Knowledge of Allah*<sup>43</sup>

Of the intricate issues concerning Divine Unity is the Knowledge of God about that other than Himself. Mulla Sadra in his *al-Asfar al-Arba‘ah* mentions seven opinions concerning this issue and, thereafter, refutes all of them comprehensively. He proves the knowledge of Allah through the principle that says: “the Truth in its simplicity contains all things” (*basit al-haqaqah kull al-ashya*). He says:

“Therefore this is the zenith of research on this issue. And perhaps there is no book that has proved this matter before this one. Then O you who are contemplating over it, understand its priceless value and join this precious gem with its likes that are scattered.”<sup>44</sup>

Although he attributed the path that he adapted to the ancient well-rooted theosophers, and it nearly tallies with what the perfect Gnostics believed, this exposition was not known before him as he clearly states after expounding the method of the Gnostics:

“However, due to their complete attention towards what they practiced in terms of spiritual austerities, and their inexperience in rational demonstrations and intellectual arguments, perhaps they could not express their ideas and establish their spiritual disclosures in the form of teaching.”<sup>45</sup>

In his commentary on the *al-Kafi* he says:

“And this issue is exactly like that of existence; each of them is like the other. Moreover, neither did I find anyone on the face of the earth who had knowledge of any of these matters, nor did I come across [even] one statement that proved and accurately demonstrated this issue in any of the books of the theosophers and scholars...”<sup>46</sup>

Some scholars were of the opinion that this notion was not yet perfectly established in his view when he wrote his book, “*al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*” because he had not expounded it as usual. However, what seems more plausible is that which he alluded to in his “*al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*,” where he says:

“The object of His perfect knowledge about contingent beings is neither what the Peripatetic philosophers believed... nor is it what Plato held... nor is it what was held to be true in the hearts of the posterior philosophers. Rather, it is how Allah taught me through a specific way different from the aforementioned ways;

and I do not see any benefit in quoting the same due to its intricacy and the difficulty for many minds to comprehend it.”<sup>47</sup>

#### 6- *Truth in Its Simplicity Contains All Things*

Although this principle was inherited from the ancient scholars, its exposition and application in solving various issues concerning monotheism, especially the issue of the knowledge of the Necessary Existent, is of the inventions of Mulla Sadra.

“Truly the reality of the Necessary Being is extremely Simple. And every reality that is Simple is, thus, all the things. Therefore, the Necessary Being is all things and none of the things is beyond His Existence...”<sup>48</sup>

“This is among the abstruse Divine issues, the comprehension of which is difficult, save for one whom Allah has endowed with knowledge and wisdom. Nevertheless, there exists intellectual proof for the fact that every simple reality is equal to all existent entities, save for that which is related to imperfections and nonentities...”<sup>49</sup>

#### 7- *Platonic Ideas*

Platonic ideas (*muthul*) or archetypes (*arbab al-anwa'*) had been controversial among the scholars since olden times. Plato was the first person to believe in this idea, while Aristotle did not accept it. This notion is considered to be the agent of separation between the two philosophers. Thereafter, peripatetic philosophers from the followers of Aristotle persisted in its negation and Ibn Sina in his *al-Shifa'* (*Shifa, Ilahiyyat*, article 7, sections 2&3) propounded his own refutation against it. . Shaykh al-Ishraq, however, adopted it, and in his *Hikmat al-Ishraq* said:

“The writer was a firm supporter of the path of the peripatetic philosophers in negating these things. And were he not to

comprehend the proof of his Lord, he would be persistent in his support of this notion...”<sup>50</sup>

Mulla Sadra agreed with Plato's notion and said:

“And surely, we have proved this great notion and supported his grand teachers in a manner that does not accept contradictions and refutations.”<sup>51</sup>

Mulla Sadra believes that:

“It was not easy for any philosopher that came after the ancient epoch to prove this notion and expurgate it from invectives and doubts, save for one from this blessed nation.”<sup>52</sup>

“And I do not know if anyone who came after a great personality of his likes throughout these lengthy ages has attained, through intellectual conviction, the understanding of what he meant, save for one unknown and isolated destitute.”<sup>53</sup>

Concerning this issue Mulla Sadra believes that:

“Surely, for every material species there exists a perfect and complete example in the world of Divine Command, which is the root and the origin. And the rest of the species are its offshoots and effects. The reason for this is its completeness and perfection, and the fact that it does not need matter or place. Contrarily, the material species, due to its feebleness and imperfection, needs matter in its essence or action.”<sup>54</sup>

#### *8- Soul Is Materially Temporal And Spiritually Subsistent*<sup>55</sup>

This subject of how the soul came into existence has been under discussion since olden times. Two popular opinions are:

- One was that of Plato who believed in its pre-eternity
- Other was that of Aristotle who believed in its temporal genesis.

Every philosophical school of thought accepted one of the two notions.

The refutations that confronted the first opinion kept the intellectuals from accepting it. On the other hand, there were numerous traditions on the creation of souls prior to bodies that prevented one from accepting the second opinion, also. Furthermore, there is another difficult question that must be answered and that is the manner in which the body influences the soul in spite of the latter being immaterial in nature.

Extensive struggle on this issue was met with no success until Mulla Sadra came and propounded his famous opinion that the soul is materially temporal and spiritually subsistent, and that the fact that the cause in its existential degree includes the existence of the effect removes the contradiction of the pre-eternal existence of the soul together with its temporal genesis.

“However, those firmly rooted in knowledge who harmonize intellectual proof and spiritual vision believe that the soul possesses numerous degrees of existence and, in spite of its simplicity, has existential modes some of which are above the world of matter, some together with the world of matter, and others beyond the world of matter. And they found that the human souls exist prior to their bodies according to the perfect nature of its cause and means. And a perfect means necessitates an effect together. Thus, the soul exists together with its cause; this is because its cause possesses a perfect Essence and is complete in its advantage, and that which is so does not separate from its effect. Nevertheless, its influence in the body depends on a certain ability and specific conditions. And it is known that the soul comes into being on the body attaining complete preparedness and is subsistent with the body when it perfects.”<sup>56</sup>

### *9- Soul In Its Unity Is All Of Its Faculties*

Here also there are two opinions that have been narrated from the philosophers:

“Some were of the opinion that the soul is a single unit ... It performs its acts all by itself, but through different means from each of which issues a specific action. This is the opinion of Ibn Sina and those of his level. Some others, however, hold that, ‘Surely the soul is not one, but [made up of] numerous [parts], some of which are sensory, some intellectual, some sensual, and others wrathful.’”<sup>57</sup>

“And you shall soon come to know that for each of our bodies there is only one soul and that the rest of the faculties are its effects and offshoots in the parts of the bodies. This view was popular among the later authoritative theosophies. However, what we believe is that the soul is all its faculties, meaning that it is a unit that embraces all of the faculties and is their cause and end.”<sup>58</sup>

“This refutation is of the matters I propounded for many of the contemporary scholars of my time, and none was able to solve its problem, until Allah enlightened my heart and guided me to the straight path...And that is that I beheld my soul and found it to be simple egoity (*inniyyah sirfah*).”<sup>59</sup>

### *10- Intermediate Immateriality Of The Faculty Of Imagination*

*Asfar* writes:

“And although this matter is contrary to what the rest of the theosophers believe, including Shaykh and his ilk, that which is to be followed is intellectual proof. And the truth is not known save through intellectual proof. It is not known by looking at the personalities.”<sup>60</sup>

“I did not find from the books of philosophers any research on this matter. Nor did I find any research on the notion of the immateriality of imagination, or on the difference between its

abstraction from this material world and the abstraction of the intellect... the knowledge of this is from the things that Allah favored me with and guided me towards. I extremely thank Him and praise Him for this great blessing.”<sup>61</sup>

From there, Asfar deduced the issue of the immateriality of the animal soul. He writes:

“Surely Allah inspired us by His Grace and Beneficence an Oriental proof on the immateriality of the animal soul that possesses the faculty of imagination from this world and its accidental properties.”<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, Asfar interprets “*ajab al-dhanb*,” which refers to the remaining elements of the body after death, as the faculty of imagination.

“And the scholars differ in its meaning. It has been said that it stands for the material intellect (*al-‘aql al-hayulani*). Others believe that it rather is ‘matter’ itself. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali says: ‘Surely it is the soul, and the higher realm of the Hereafter originates upon its basis. And Abu Yazid Waqwaqi holds that it is a remnant substance of this world which does not change’. Shaykh al-‘Arabi in his *Futuhāt* says that it is a substantive reality (*‘ayn al-thabit*) belonging to humans. The theologians believe that ‘they are essential parts of the human being.’ We, however, believe that it is the faculty of imagination, for it is the last entity acquired in man from material faculties.”<sup>63</sup>

### *11- Invalidity Of Reincarnation*

All Islamic metaphysicians and theologians reject the idea of ‘reincarnation’ as indicating ‘a transfer of the spirit from the body it resides in to another body and its control over the latter. They have given several reasons why reincarnation should be considered invalid. Mulla Sadra did not find their arguments to be complete and perfect, and therefore presented another proof based on his discovery of the trans-substantial motion.

“The reason for Invalidity of reincarnation (*tanasukh*) is that the soul is essentially connected to the body and both are harmoniously and naturally united together and the fact that each of the two together with the other possesses an essential trans-substantial motion.”<sup>64</sup>

“Hence the path to disprove the evil of reincarnation (*tanasukh*) is that which we mentioned before and singly expounded, and whose elucidation Allah made our share of the transcendent theosophy and religious knowledge, as He did so with relation to other such examples, that Allah inspired us with by the Grace of His Effusion and Beneficence.”<sup>65</sup>

### *12- Possibility Of The Inferior*

Of the well-known philosophical principles introduced by Aristotle is the principle of the possibility of the superior (*qa'idat al-imkan al-ashraf*). According to this principle, any entity cannot descend to a lower plane of existence unless it has crossed the higher planes. Mulla Sadra introduced a similar principle that refines this one: the 'principle of the possibility of the inferior' (*qa'idat al-imkan al-akhass*). According to this principle, existence cannot attain a more sacred level of contingent existence in the arc of ascent unless it has passed through all the lower levels in this arc.

### *13- Bodily Resurrection*

The belief in resurrection is a doctrinal principle accepted by all the Divine religions and is among the roots of the Islamic religion. That which is inferred from the apparent contents of the Book of God and traditions of the Holy Prophet and his infallible progeny indicates that resurrection transpires both spiritually as well as materially.

The theologians were unable to prove the material dimension of this principle, and simply relied on what the Divine Revelation had brought. Avicenna says:

“It is imperative to know that from among the kinds of Return (Ma‘ad) there is that which has been presented by the religion, and which we have no way of proving save through accepting the religion and adopting the tradition of the Prophet (A). And that is the Return of the body at Resurrection (ba‘th)”.<sup>66</sup>

However Mulla Sadra claims that he was able to prove the Bodily Resurrection and considers that to be one of the most distinctive features of his transcendent theosophy. And very few of the outstanding divine theosophers have researched on the knowledge of the Bodily Return (*al-Ma‘ad al-jismani*) from the intellectual dimension.

"And our belief - that corresponds to the reality - concerning the Resurrection of the bodies on the day of Retribution is that the bodies shall be raised from their graves in such a way that if you were to see any one of them, you would be able to distinguish him and say ‘this person is so and so.’ They would not take the form of the people’s *muthul* and *ashbah*. The verses of the Book and various faiths and religions tell us that what returns at the time of the Return is the soul together with body, and not just the soul. And it is not necessary for every human being to be raised with a body from the bodies. Rather, those who are perfect in the knowledge of Divine matters are only raised in front of Allah while they are totally separated from their bodies”.<sup>67</sup>

Since matters pertaining to the Hereafter are beyond the realm of this world, the intellect cannot comprehend their realities.

“Beware lest you try to understand these matters by means other than traditions and belief in the Hidden, for if you try to understand them by means of your defective intellect and spurious guide you would resemble a blind man who wants to

perceive colors by means of his sense of taste, smell, hearing, or touching. And this is a literal denial and refusal of the existence of color. Likewise, the covetousness to understand the states of the Hereafter through the process of reasoning and theology meets a literal denial and refusal thereof....”<sup>68</sup>

#### *14- Transformation of the Human Being into Different Realities Depending on His Inner Self*

This discussion follows his statement on the fact that the Human spirit is materially contingent (*jismaniyyat al-huduth*) and spiritually subsistent (*ruhaniyyat al-baa*).

“Surely, the human soul is the final and best material form, the first spiritual entity and the lowest of them, for the reason that it is materially contingent, as well as spiritually subsistent. And surely, it comes into being through the potential in the body, while its essence continues changing by means of firmly fixed spiritual habits, from potentiality into actuality... And as Allah created different species (*anw'a*) of animals in this world – among them domestic and predatory animals such as wild beasts, snakes and scorpions – he created different species of man from the spiritual matter in the Hereafter... The human being is one such species in this world... And very soon it will transform into many species that will have numerous and different genres. And there are numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an that manifest what we have mentioned here, serving as our intellectual proof – and this is of what Allah has specifically inspired me from among the people of authority. And I have not found the same in anyone else's speech, from the Divine sages or others.”<sup>69</sup>

“And this is the opinion that human souls in their primal genesis are from one species, but in their second makeup they transform into many species and their [respective] genres. Although this view was not even one of the metaphysicians, it was what Allah had inspired us and lead us towards the proof of.”<sup>70</sup>

#### **4. Mulla Sadra's Viewpoints on Different Schools of Thought**

Mulla Sadra criticised the most important schools of thought, including Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Porphyry of Tyre, as well as Farabi, Ibn Sina, Suhrewardi, Nasir al-Din Tussi, Mir Damad, and Ikhwan al-Safa among the Muslim philosophers. He also criticised theologians such as Ash'rites, Mu'tazlites, Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din Razi, and Gnostics such as Ibn Arabi, Sadr al-Din Qunawi, along with Literalist scholars.

##### *A- The Ancient Metaphysician*

Mulla Sadra was of the opinion that the ancient metaphysicians acquired their beliefs from the Prophets and the saints, and that the source of the differences seen in their opinions were the symbolic allusions contained in their statements, which acted to safeguard theosophy from those who were incapable of appreciating the realities.

“And these obedient servants (*fūqara*) have attained conviction of the fact that the school of thought of those high-ranking mystics, who had attained the stations of the firmly rooted saints and who sought their lights from the lamp of the perfect prophets – is the school of thought of those people of truth and conviction.”<sup>71</sup>

“...by virtue of their adoption of the path of the Prophets, the ancient scholars hardly made any mistakes when it came to espousing the significant roots and fundamentals of faith. That which is popularly attributed to them – that they believed in the pre-eternity of the world, God's ignorance and lack of power over particular substances (*al-juz'iyyāt*), and the denial of Bodily Resurrection – is [sheer] allegation against them, and a great lie.”<sup>72</sup>

“...Then, it is very well known that the habit of the ancient theosophers, in assimilating the path of the Prophets, was to explain their beliefs by way of indications (*rumuz*) and metaphors due to a wisdom they perceived or a benefit they observed, so that they could be in harmony with the feeble intellects and be merciful to them; and also, in order to be wary of the misled transgressive souls and their misunderstandings...”<sup>73</sup>

“And in short: the ancient philosophers possess allusions and secrets; and most of those who came after them denied the literal import of their statements and allusions, either because of ignorance or the negligence of their station, or perhaps due to their intense love of ruling over the creation.”<sup>74</sup>

The extent of Mulla Sadra's belief in the ancient philosophers is apparent in his discussion on the temporal genesis of the material world. He quotes different opinions from them at the beginning of his discussion, and then tries to synthesize and justify their statements. He then says:

“...I hereby address them and turn to their souls, saying: ‘O men of wisdom, how eloquent is your demonstration! O guardians of gnosis, how clear is your exposition! Not a thing I heard from you was unworthy of my highest praise and honor. . Indeed, you have described the world in a manner overwhelming and Divine, and acknowledged the blessings of Allah in an intellectual and sacred level. You intelligently demonstrated the order of the heavens and the earth, and exhibited the arrangement of the realities in a wise and genuine manner. May Allah bestow on you the best of rewards for all that. How excellent is the power of the intellect that penetrated you, kept you steadfast, safeguarded you, and protected you from mistakes and lapses; and that also removed from you calamities and imperfections, and sickness and maladies.’”<sup>75</sup>

Those of them whom he mentioned by name and whose views he quoted were Empedocles, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Plato, Pythagoras, Zeno, Porphyry and Socrates.

Since he had no books other than those written by Aristotle and Plato, he quoted their statements from the later scholars such as Avicenna and Fakhr al-Razi, and mainly from *al-Milal wa al-Nahl* of Shahrastani, *al-Amad 'alal abad* of 'Amiri and *Ta'rikh al-hukama* of Shahrzuri.

## *B- Greek philosophers*

### **1- Plato**

Mulla Sadra considers Plato to be among the greatest of the ancient theosophers.<sup>76</sup> Platonic Ideas (*al-muthul*) became popular through him in Islamic Philosophy. Mulla Sadra, after expurgating the Ideas and repelling the refutations presented against it, remarks:

“And I do not think that anyone ... all along these lengthy epochs attained, through intellectual conviction, an understanding of what [Plato] meant, save one unknown and isolated destitute [reference to himself].”<sup>77</sup>

That is why he tries to correct those popular views of Plato that contradict his own opinions, and interprets them according to his own beliefs. An example of this pattern can be found in Mulla Sadra's explanation of the soul's pre-existing relationship to the body.

An explanation of Mulla Sadra's position on the soul's relationship to the body will present in the chapter on soul.

## 2- Aristotle

Mulla Sadra greeted Aristotle's philosophy with admiration and praise. He said:

“Most of the statements of this very high-ranking philosopher reveal the power of his spiritual intuition and the light of his inner being, and manifest his proximity to Allah and the fact that he ranked among the perfect saints. And perhaps his engagement in the matters of the world, and his control of the affairs of the creation, including the reformation of the people and the renovation of the city, followed those austerities and inner struggles, and transpired after he had [already] gained control over his self and attained perfection in his essence. In that state, he became one who could not be distracted. He wanted to engage in both kinds of dominion and perfection in both the worlds. Hence he occupied himself in teaching and purifying the creatures and leading them to the path of guidance, for the sake of attaining proximity to the Lord of the creatures.”<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, Mulla Sadra's final judgment about Aristotle is confronted with a difficulty from the ancient scholars. And that is the attribution of *Theologia* to him and the clear contradiction between what is contained in that book and what is contained in his other writings. Mulla Sadra has tried, at times, to harmonise these contradictions:

“...that incapacitated the intellectuals who came after him to comprehend these luminary ideas (*al-muthul al-nuriyyah*) in its exact reality and affirm its existence, save for the First Teacher. Perhaps he supported it (luminary ideas) in some of his books and negated the same in most of his works. And it is as if he deemed it advisable to negate it.”<sup>79</sup>

“Surely ... it has been proven and become clear from the statements of this high-ranking philosopher ... that he believed in the contingency of this world and its perdition...Hence that which the scholars understand and which has become popularly

known among them is that he believed in the pre-eternity of the world. Perhaps what he meant by this is the pre-eternity of all that is beyond the material realm and material entities.<sup>80</sup>

“And if you were to say: ‘You have contradicted the First Teacher, since he opposed this belief,’ I would respond saying that the truth is more worthy to be followed. Besides, comprehending opposition from his side may have been a result of the (incorrect) understanding of the scholars who (merely) beheld the literal statements of Plato and the ancient theosophers. These thinkers were accustomed to communicating in the form of symbolic allusions and figurative expressions, especially in this type of discussion, where the eloquent can become tongue-tied and minds can become weary. ...Alternatively, scholars may be reacting to the taint of [Aristotle’s] love for ruling over creation according to the Divine laws that necessitates socialization with the creation and mixing with kings and rulers. Otherwise his book popularly known as “Theology” is a witness to the fact that his belief corresponds to the school of thought of his teacher in the section of the existence of intellectual forms of species and immaterial archetypes (*al-suwar al-mujarradah al-nuriyyah*).”<sup>81</sup>

Mulla Sadra’s philosophy is against some of the most important doctrines of Aristotle’s philosophy, such as: Necessity Being, God’s knowledge, createdness or eternity of the world, existence, perception, substantial motion, intellect, creation, and soul-body relation.<sup>82</sup>

### **3- Porphyry**

Porphyry made famous the notion of the unity of the intelligent and the intelligible and the unity of the soul with the active intellect. Mulla Sadra lauds him and considers him one of the most accomplished students of Aristotle.

“One of the high-ranking Divine theosophers who was firmly rooted in knowledge and Divine Unity is Porphyry, a companion

of the Peripatetics and the author of Isagogic. To me he is one of the most high-ranking companions of the First Teacher, the most learned of the scholars in terms of the kernels of his ideas, and the most guided in his allusions and opinions on ... the spirit and the Lord. He is also the most learned theosopher to address the nature of Resurrection and the return of the soul to the realm of the Truth and the abode of blessings.”<sup>83</sup>

### *C- Muslim Philosophers*

#### **1- Farabi**

Mulla Sadra calls Farabi “The Second Teacher” in recognition of his strong reputation as a follower of Aristotle and a Peripatetic philosopher. Sadra praises Farabi highly and often cites his statements as evidence. But on occasion Sadra does refute and reject Farabi’s ideas.<sup>84</sup>

“As for the last opinion that al-Shaykh Abu Nasr held in synthesizing the two opinions and what Shaykh al-Maqtul preferred in the “*Hikmat al-Ishraq*”, then indeed we have invalidated it, as it was mentioned before.”<sup>85</sup>

#### **2- Ibn Sina**

Mulla Sadra refers to Ibn Sina as, “The Shaykh of Islamic Philosophers” and “The eminent among the philosophers”. Sadra frequently refers to Ibn Sina’s works and propounds his opinions in all discussions. This tendency is manifested in his comprehensive gloss on the section on Divine matters (*ilahiyat*) of his book “*al-Shifa*”. This gloss is known to rank among the best works of Mulla Sadra.

Ibn Sina also had a profound and undeniable effect on the construction of the transcendent theosophy. Prior to Mulla Sadra and Shaykh al-Ishraq, Sina struggled to prove mystical issues by means of rational demonstration, especially in the last two sections

of his book *al-Isharat*. His efforts helped to simplify this difficult path for the theosophers who were to come after him.

In spite of his high praise for Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra opposes him at various significant points and finds Sina unable to attain the truth of the matter. In his book *Asfar* he says that:

“And it is surprising to know that whenever his discussion reaches the point of proving the existential ipseities (*al-huwiyyat al-wujudiyyah*) before discussing Universal matters and all-embracing rules, his intellect gets clouded and he expresses his inability. And this is true in many instances.”<sup>86</sup>

It is clear that Mulla Sadra was certain of Shaykh's ingenuity and radiant mind. Nevertheless Sadra expresses regret that this extreme astuteness is spent on matters that distract him from the primary search for Divine knowledge.

“It is not right for a theologian who is concerned with these matters to discuss at length on the *Isagogue* (Five universals) ...and then, when he reaches the exalted matters and the realities of the secrets and the lights that represent the ultimate objective and firmest support, he shortens his discussion and leaves [off without] explaining many important issues, while also making mistakes in some of the subjects and Chapters...”<sup>87</sup>

### **3-The Master of Illumination, Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi**

Shahāb ad-Dīn" Yahya Suhrawardī was a Iranian, philosopher, a Sufi and founder of the Illuminationist philosophy or "Oriental Theosophy", an important school in Islamic philosophy and mysticism. He is sometimes given the honorific title *Shaikh al-Ishraq* or "Master of Illumination" and sometimes is called *Shaykh al-Maqtul*, the "Murdered Sheikh", referring to his execution for heresy.

It was not possible to move from Peripatetic philosophy to transcendent theosophy without the appearance of illuminationist philosophy. And, Shaykh al-Ishraq, in introducing spiritual vision and disclosure into philosophy – and ceasing the method of pure rational demonstration – established a bridge that enabled Mulla Sadra to cross over and establish his specific philosophy, and the amalgamation of gnosis and philosophy.

Suhrawardi, in the introduction to his book, "*Hikmat al-Ishraq*," after stating the method he has adopted in the rest of his works, says:

“And this is another course and a nearer method than that; it is more orderly, precise, and entails less difficulty in understanding; and I did not attain it at the onset through intellection. Rather, it first was attained in another way, and then I sought for its proof; so that if I was to overlook its proof, no skeptic would make me dubious about it...”<sup>88</sup>

He also says:

“And if the astronomical observations of one or two people are relied upon on issues pertaining to the heavenly bodies, how can the findings of the masters of theosophy and prophethood – on something they witnessed in their spiritual paths – not be relied upon?”<sup>89</sup>

And you find Mulla Sadra starts arguing by using his statement and adding to it the comments of the commentator of the Shaykh's book, Qutb al-Din Shirazi. He says in Asfar:

“And if they accepted the states of the stars and the numbers of the heavenly bodies according to the way of Epicures (*abarkhas*) or of others together with him through sense perception, which is vulnerable to falsity and disbelief, one would think they would consider – and, indeed, it would be more appropriate to do so –

the findings of the masters of theosophy that depend on rigorous intellectual methods that allow for no mistakes.”<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, he ventured in this field to a more extensive and distant scope, and criticized the path of those who claim to comprehend matters pertaining to elevated knowledge (*al-‘ilmu’l ’a’ala*) through mere discourse and intellection without seeking any help from spiritual vision (*kashf*). Indeed, he depreciated their approach and intensely reproached them, some of them which we have already mentioned.

Ishraqi’s influence on Sadra is not limited to this particular matter. Rather, there is a semblance between many of their fundamental notions, as Sadra’s transcendent theosophy itself is based on important aspects of the former. And this is why we find him revering the Shaykh as, ‘*the Possessor of an elevated spirit and very experienced in rational demonstrations*’ and ‘*the Grand Shaykh*.’<sup>91</sup> He does not pass up the opportunity to venerate him, even when he observes something extremely baseless in his work:

“And this response is extremely ridiculous; and its issuance from a wise philosopher is extremely astonishing.”<sup>92</sup>

Likewise, the extent of his attention to Illuminationist Philosophy is apparent from his comprehensive glosses on the “*Hikmat al-Ishraq*,” which is filled with research and criticisms. It is considered to be one of the excellent writings of Mulla Sadra.

#### **4- Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi**

Tusi was known by a number of different names during his lifetime such as Muhaqqiq-i Tusi, Khwaja-yi Tusi and Khwaja Nasir. According to Mulla Sadra, Muhaqqiq Tusi is among the greatest Islamic philosophers, both in rank and intellect. He calls him, ‘the most distinguished of the posterior scholars,’ ‘the proof of the Islamic theosophers,’ ‘the Lord of the researchers, the Bearer of the

throne of theosophy and realization, Nasir al-Din Tusi, may his most holy spirit be sanctified.’<sup>93</sup>

His veneration for Tusi is attributed to the latter's efforts in approximating peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophy, and eventually for his struggle to construct the transcendent theosophy. It is also due to his steadfast confrontation against the attacks of the theologians such as Fakhr Razi, Ghazali and Shahristani; his refutation of their oppositions; and his response to the doubts they had created.

Muhaqqiq Tusi, in writing his “*Tajrid al-'Itiqad*,” presented speculative theology (*'ilm al-kalam*) in a correct and philosophical style, and expurgated it from futile elaborate discussions and senseless jabber, the collection and presentation of which some theologians preceding him laid importance on. Besides, we are not aware of anyone among the scholars who succeeds him in his combination of ministerial duties within an oppressive and sinful government, carrying out in-depth research on intellectual issues, and being extensively aware of narrative, as well as natural and mathematical disciplines.

## 5- Mir Damad

Mir Burhan al-Din Muhammad Baqir Damad, whose poetic *nom de plume* was '*Ishraq*' and who was also referred to as 'the Third Master' (after Aristotle and Farabi) is one of the most important tutors of Mulla Sadra. He derived the greatest benefit from him in his education of the intellectual sciences, which is why Sadra bestows such great honor on him in many areas of his works:

“My master, supporter and tutor in the fundamentals of religion and Divine matters, and the gnosis of realities and the principles of certainty, the most grand and luminous Seyyed. The most pure and holy Seyyed, the Divine theosopher and jurist, the master of his age, and the chosen one of his time; the great commander, the illuminative moon, the most learned of his age,

the marvel of the time, known as Muhammad – and nicknamed as Baqar al-Damad al-Husayni – may Allah sanctify his intellect with Divine light...”<sup>94</sup>

Mulla Sadra learned most of the intellectual issues from this great teacher and was influenced by his distinct opinions. However, he also contradicted a number of his teacher’s views and opposed him with regards to the extremely vital issue of the principality of existence, which became the basis of the transcendent theosophy and its foundational stone. Nonetheless, evidence of his coming under the influence of his tutor is apparent from a number of issues. Mir Damad laid importance on solving the issue of the temporal created-ness of the world and presented, in this context, the view of a temporal created-ness of the world, writing his well-known “*Al-Qabasat*” (The Firebands) to prove just that. Sadr al-Muta’allihin, however, did not find the work to be correct, and hence took up the challenge of solving the difficulties that he had found with it, writing his own treatise on the temporal genesis of the world, which he was proud of and goes on to mention in many of his books. And surely, Mir Damad had already alluded to the path that Mulla Sadra had adopted in solving the problem.

“Indeed, temporal creation (*huduth*) and annihilation in the world of the extension of time cannot be feasible, except through an oscillatory entity, the nature of whose substance undergoes a continual process of renewal and annihilation, and a flow of continual becoming and extinction, without attributing the cessation and lapse to a cause outside its essence.”<sup>95</sup>

And it seems that this praise and faith was mutual as indicated by a couplet that Mir Damad recited in praise of his distinguished student:

“Your prestige and post, O Sadra, is paid tribute to by the heavens,  
Plato also pays tribute to your excellence and knowledge,  
On the chair of research, none has emerged like you”!<sup>96</sup>

## 6- The Brethren Of Purity<sup>97</sup>

The Ikhwan al-Safa' (The Brethren of Purity) was written by brothers from the Isma'eli sect who lived in the fourth century A.H. (10th century CE), and consisted of a set of epistles that formed an encyclopedia of the disciplines of their time. In it the authors explained the path they adopted, their beliefs, and methods of attaining felicity in both the worlds.

The organisation of this mysterious society and the identities of its participants have never been clear. Their esoteric teachings and philosophy are expounded in an epistolary style in the *Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity (Rasa'il Ikhwan al-safa')*, a giant collection of 52 epistles that would significantly impact later encyclopaedias. A good deal of Muslim and Western scholarship has been spent on just pinning down the identities of the Brethren and the century in which they were active.

These epistles profoundly influenced later thinkers, including Sadra, who referred to them in his own writings.

Some of Sadra's statements indicate that he considered the authors of the epistles to be one person:

‘And the author of Ikhwan al-Safa was of that opinion,’

(Mulla Sadra. Tafsir, 3/78)

‘...and that which many scholars believed, amongst who was the author of the Ikhwan al-Safa’.

(Mulla Sadra, Asfar, vol8, p139)

Sadr's veneration of the authors of the *Ikhwan al-Safa* is revealed to the reader through his overt support for some of his/their ideas. However Sadra also opposes them in some places and refutes their opinions.

## 7- THE LATER PHILOSOPHERS

Sadr al-Mutallihin was aware of the opinions of the later philosophers and read their works painstakingly, with a focus on those who were near to his time, such as Jalal al-Din Dawwani (1426-1502), Seyyed Ghiyath al-Din Dashtaki, al-Khafri and others. But he was rarely influenced by them in a direct way. He sometimes quoted their ideas and refuted them, but rarely gave them his full support.

#### *D- The Theologians*

When the author speaks of the theologians, he mostly aims at the Ash‘arites, the Mu‘tazilites and other corrupt sects. He considers their opinions to be futile and refutes them:

“Surely they are the people of innovations (*bid‘ah*) and deviation (*al-dalal*) and leaders of the ignorant and depraved folk. All their evils are aimed at the religious and God-wary society and their inflictions at the ‘*ulama*; and they are extremely antagonistic towards the believing Divine theosophers. This argumentative and antagonistic society who delve in intellectual matters while they are [even] oblivious of the sensibilities...”<sup>98</sup>

“And I wish they limited themselves with the religion of the old people and satisfied themselves with unconditional following (*taqlid*); and I wish they would not decline saying the phrase ‘we do not know...’”<sup>99</sup>

“The habit of most of these theologians is to argue without insight or conviction, presenting baseless premises coupled with many mistakes and confusing, faulty reasoning. Their work is filled with opinions which mislead the masses, so that even astute people may begin to think that the roots of religion can rest on such frail statements.”<sup>100</sup>

“It is surprising that people of their ilk are regarded as authoritative by the masses. We apologize for presenting some

of their excesses in this book. For an intellectual does not waste his time in enumerating and refuting thoughtless statements.”<sup>101</sup>

## 1- Ghazali

Ghazali was a bridge between the theologians and the gnostics. For this reason, whenever he tries to oppose the theosophers and presents frail opinions, Sadr al-Muta'lihin condemns him as:

“One who took upon himself to be inimical towards the men of truth by way of opposition and disputation and who portrayed himself as spiritual while merely citing quotations. [In this sense he is] similar to one who fights against heroic figures and confronts the manly folk by merely carrying weighty items and weapons of war. He says in his work which he named “*Tahafut al-Falasafah*” (the Incoherence of the Philosophers)...”<sup>102</sup>

But when Ghazali showed his inclination towards *'irfan* and gnosis, Sadra praised and lauded him.

“We only introduced the statements of this billowing sea who was called Imam and *Hujjat al-Islam* [the proof of Islam] by the people, so that it may soften the hearts of the wayfarers of the path of the men of conviction.”<sup>103</sup>

“Furthermore, these findings and interpretations on the Qur'anic secrets and the treasures of the All-embracing Divine Mercy form a short allusion of the simple descriptions of *Hujjat al-Islam* and a brief summary of the sieved catches out of this magnanimous sea. They are a product for the salvation of souls and a cure of the spirits and a summary of the path of guidance and felicity. For he is a vast sea from whose oysters the pearls of Qur'an are taken, and a blazing fire from whose torch the lights of eloquence are obtained; his brilliant mind is a rarity from where the alchemy of ultimate salvation is taken; his penetrating mind derives pearls of meanings from the seas of root words...”<sup>104</sup>

Mulla Sadra justifies the apparent contradiction in his different views of Ghazali by saying that:

“The attestable truth is that al-Ghazali, in most of the religious principles and roots of faith, followed the theosophers. He has taken most of his beliefs from them, finding their views on the Chapter of the Origin and the Return (*al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*) to be intellectually perfect, pure of the taints of obscurity and doubt, and ... farther from contrariety and contradiction than the statements of others.

However, the denial, rejection, refutation and disapproval that appear in his books may have been based in part on a religious desire to protect the beliefs of the Muslims from dissipation and loss of what they heard from the theosophers without understanding and perspicacity. [He may have wanted to] repel the rejection of their meanings and to protect their religion, so that their feet did not waver as a result of hearing from deficient folk and pseudo-philosophers that ‘...acquiring theosophy makes one independent of the Islamic Law...’. [Alternatively, his rejections may be read] as dissimulation (*al-taqiyyah*) and as resulting from the fear of being rejected by the literalists (*zahiriyyin*) among the jurists of his time. It is well-known that one of his contemporaries charged him with disbelief and wrote a treatise on his disbelief and deviation. [Ghazali's refutations may also be explicable as an early phase in his thinking], prior to his proficiency and perfection in gnosis. Early on, he thought that they [the theosophers] negated the Almighty's Power and Knowledge of particular entities and rejected the bodily resurrection. Later, after contemplating their statements and appreciating the fact that they believe in the three aforementioned ideas in a subtle sense .... he returned in repentance and held their opinions and beliefs.”<sup>105</sup>

He did not consider Ghazali's belief in Shi'ism to be far-fetched, and he frequently referred to Ghazali's books. One example of this pattern finds Sadra invoking Ghazali's views on the evils of analogic reasoning:

“And al-Ghazali considered it [judicial reasoning by analogy] to be invalid and regarded it to be from the yardsticks of Satan, for he said, ‘As for the measure of analogical reasoning, God forbid that it is held onto; and whosoever of my contemporaries reckon it to be a measure of knowledge, then I pray to Allah to save the religion from his evil, for he is an ignorant friend, who is more evil than an intellectual enemy. His statements end over here, and they give off the scent of Shi‘ism.’”<sup>106</sup>

## 2- Fakhr al-Din al-Razi

Perhaps one who views the books of Mulla Sadra would think that there is a contradiction between his reliance on the books of the Leader of the *mushakkikin* (Skeptics) and the numerous quotations from him in most of his works, not excepting his “*al-Mabahith al-Mashriqiyyah*” and his criticism and defamation of his opinions and condemnation of his writings.

“Surely whatsoever this distinguished personality, famous for leadership and knowledge amongst the laity, has alluded to does not pertain to the Holy Quran at all. Nor has he become, by cognizance of it, one of the upholders of the Holy Qur’an and among those exclusively well versed with it, as it has been narrated that ‘The people of Qur’an are people of God and His chosen ones’. Rather all he has mentioned and alluded to of the many matters that have filled his books pertaining to speculative theology and jurisprudence, are either what has been heard from men or sheer imitation. [This is true of] most matters pertaining to Resurrection, and some issues concerning the Origin. His theological opinions and unstable principles cannot be relied upon to attain conviction and faith. Rather, it is only what a braggart would armor himself with [for use] in controversies and arguments... In short, none of these copious issues with which he brags is from the sciences of the Quran and that which concerns the men of God.”<sup>107</sup>

Mulla Sadra looks at Razi from two angles, alternately praising and condemning him. He finds him to possess perspicacity, distinction and diligence in discussing and searching for opinions and beliefs, and notes his excellent disposition in portraying and narrating them. Hence he praises him and quotes the opinions from his books. On the other hand, Sadra faults him for rashness and hastiness, noting his tendency to contradict others without careful contemplation. Charging him with a lack of insight and an unwillingness to follow the leaders of truth, Mulla Sadra finally condemns and defames him:

“This man who is well known for distinction and perspicacity hastily opposes a personality like Ibn Sina prior to contemplation and research, due to his hasty disposition and rashness.”<sup>108</sup>

“Far from imperfection is Allah. Has anyone like him been found in this world who has attained his level in excessive discussion and research and authoring several works and engaging in contemplation and then getting distant from the truth in such a manner, and becoming veiled from it in this way?”<sup>109</sup>

Razi's contribution and influence in the advancement of philosophy and speculative theology is beyond doubt. He excelled at raising numerous doubts and questions about every issue and performed a service by compelling thinkers to respond to and refute his arguments. However his influence is ultimately limited by an absence of penetrating views or correct opinions.

#### *E- The Gnostics*

Sadr al-Muta'llihin considered the Mystics (*'Urafa'*) to be the true theosophers, the people of truth and possessors of insight. For he was of the opinion that:

“Certainly the edifice of their views and the foundation of their opinions are based on radiant inspirations and sacred beams that are neither overcome by any taint of doubt and skepticism, nor any stain of deficiency and imperfection. They are not based on mere opinions of intellectual proof so that the doubts may quickly play with those who are fond of and depend upon them.”<sup>110</sup>

Mulla Sadra's genius was in presenting intellectual proof of beliefs attained through spiritual disclosure and mystical findings.

The difference between him and them is:

“Surely among the habits of the Sufis is to suffice themselves with sheer spiritual vision and conscience in their beliefs. We, however, do not completely rely on that which has no convincing proof, nor do we mention it in our theosophical works.”<sup>111</sup>

For example, “It became clear to them through a kind of conscientious apprehension and by searching through the lights of the Book and the Sunnah that everything possesses life and speech, and that everything remembers Allah, sanctifies Him, and prostrates for Him...And we knew that by the Grace of Allah, through intellectual reasoning and spiritual apprehension. And this is a quality with which, by the Grace and support of Allah, we are privileged.”<sup>112</sup>

### **1- Muhyi al-Din bin al-‘Arabi**

Mulla Sadra rarely venerates anyone as completely as he does Ibn al-‘Arabi. He believes him to be “The prototype of those who experience spiritual intuitions.”<sup>113</sup> “We believe that he is among the men who experience spiritual disclosure.”<sup>114</sup>

From what is apparent in his writings, Sadra also regarded him to be an Imamite (Shi'a). In his commentary to the *Usul al-Kafi*, after quoting statements of Ibn al-'Arabi on the Awaited Imam ('a), he says:

“Know first of all that most of what we quoted of his statements are present in the texts of tradition: some have been narrated by traditionalists from our bent, while others [have been told] through other chains of narrators. Then behold, O brothers, the ideas - hidden in the midst of his statements - that reveal his belief! For example his statement: ‘Indeed Allah has a vicegerent,’ and: ‘the people of Kufa would be most helpful to him,’ and his statement: ‘his enemies would be the followers of the people of *ijtihad* among the *'ulama*,’ and: ‘Surely this is out of deviation,’ and his statement: ‘Because they believe that the people of *ijtihad* and its age are terminated,’ ...until the end of his statement.”<sup>115</sup>

He rarely contradicts Ibn 'Arabi or declines to justify his statements. In short, the influence of Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts on the primary issues of Mulla Sadra's philosophy is undeniably clear.

## **2- Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi**

A student of Ibn al-'Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi gathered all the dispersed statements of Ibn 'Arabi in his books, and transferred them into a didactic style. This helps to explain why Sadra was so inspired by his writings. The most vivid example of this is seen in his Commentary to the Chapter of *al-Fatiha*, where he quotes whole paragraphs from the book '*I'jaz al-Qur'an*' of Qunawi.

Sadra's inspiration by him and praise for him is mainly due to Qunawi's commentary of the statements of his teacher and the transcription thereof, as is also the case with the rest of his followers.

### 3- Other '*Urafa*

'Ayn al-Quzat al-Hamadani is another gnostic from whose books sadr al-Muta'jllihin narrates. In his book '*Zubdat al-Hagha'iq*' he elucidates matters that concern spiritual intuition in the language of the people of intellectual demonstration. [what does this mean? Who are the people of intellectual demonstration?] That is why his name has been recorded in the history of the formation of the transcendent theosophy.

Among other gnostics are 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnani and Suhrawardi,-the author of 'Awarif al-Ma'rif, Khwja 'Abdullah al-Ansari, Jalal al-Din Rumi, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani and others.

### *F- Al-Mutusawwifah*

*Al-Mutusawwifah* refers to those men who call the people towards the truth and consider themselves to possess the station of Directorship and the Spiritual Pole (*qutbiyyah*), but who actually deceive the lay men in the process. Because they do not demand any purification of the soul from their followers - due to the fact that they themselves lack the same - the lay men, who naturally and innately love to possess the gnosis of God, choose to follow them. However, it is difficult for them to engage in the religious austerities. Therefore these ignorant leaders remove this hurdle from their path, and subsequently, the people get inclined to them. And in this way they acquire wealth, status and fame in the city.

They became affluent and gained acceptance by the government because they safeguarded the interests of the rulers and authorities. This resulted in still greater fame and enabled them to remain at ease in the city:

“This group is oblivious of the remembrance of God; how [then] can they be of the people of the spiritual heart? If an atom's

weight of gnosis would shine in their hearts, how would they consider the door of the oppressors and people of the world as their *qibla*?”<sup>116</sup>

And when he mentions their interpretations of religious texts, he says:

“And this is how the Esoterics (*Batiniyyah*) sought to vanquish the entire religion by interpreting its apparent imports and subjecting them to their personal opinions. Hence to [avoid] getting duped by their ruse is essential, for their evil influence on religion is worse than that of the Satans. This is because the Satans, through their help, defend themselves when fighting to remove religiousness from the hearts of the Muslims.”<sup>117</sup>

#### **K- The Literalists (*Al-'Ulama' al-Zhiriyyun*)**

According to Mulla Sadra point of view the formalists must know their limitations, and they must know that “above every possessor of knowledge, there is a Knower.” The esoterics must safeguard the exoteric form and abstain from unveiling secrets to those who cannot bear to understand them. Indeed, the Almighty, relating what the virtuous servant told Moses (‘a), says: “Assuredly you will not be able to bear with me patiently. And how should you bear patiently that which you have never encompassed in your knowledge” (Holy Quran 18:67-68).

“Scholars are of three kinds: ‘One kind knows Allah, but is ignorant of His Command...and one kind knows the command of Allah, but is ignorant of Allah (this kind of scholar knows that which is lawful and prohibited, and is aware of the intricacies of the Divine Law, but is ignorant of the secrets of Allah’s Majesty); and then there is one who knows [both] Allah and His Command”<sup>118</sup>

We believe in all of the above; and we know that the formalists must not become attached to the world and its adornments, that they

must not follow the rulers and authorities in their vain desires, and that they must not join the ranks of the evil scholars:

“The greatest of the calamities that prevent one from beholding the secrets of religion and from witnessing the lights of conviction...is the belief that the literalists and the worldly scholars, who yearn after evanescent and fleeting pleasures, are the guides of creation and the presidents of religion, and that the scholars of personal opinion in juridical matters seek the Hereafter and the Final Return. And this is the greatest sedition in religion and the greatest obstacle in the path of the believers, for these are the highway robbers of truth and certainty. And isn't this similar to considering a sick ignoramus to be an expert doctor, or reckoning a spendthrift robber to be trustworthy? 'They know the covert dimension of the world and are oblivious of the Hereafter' (30:7)”<sup>119</sup>

## **5- Mulla Sadra's writings**

### **His Writings in Chronological Order**

Mulla Sadra's philosophy matured gradually over his lifetime. He reached his zenith of perfection during the final years of his life. A look at his writings in chronological order is of the utmost importance. We must also remember that he was engaged in writing his magnum opus *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah* throughout his blessed life.

Here is the list of his works, both those that have been definitively attributed to him, and those speculated to be his:

1. *Al-Mabda' wa'l Ma'ad*
2. *Sharh al-Hidayah*
3. *Tafsir Surah al-Hadid*
4. *Tafsir Surah al-'A'la*
5. *Tafsir Ayah al-Kursi*, after 1020 AH.
6. *Tafsir Ayah al-Nur*, after 1030 AH.
7. *Tafsir Surah al-Tariq*, after 1030 AH.
8. *Tafsir Surah al-sajdah*

9. *Tafsir Surah Yasin*, after 1030 AH.
10. *Tafsir Surah al-Waqi'ah*
11. *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*
12. *Tafsir Surah al-Zilzal*
13. *Risalah al-huduth*
14. *Ta'liqat Hikmah al-Ishraq*, after 1041 AH.
15. *Kasr Asnam al-Jahiliyyah*
16. *Tafsir Surah al-Jumu'ah*
17. *Mafitih al-Ghaib*
18. *Tafsir Surah al-Hamd*
19. *Tafsir Surah al-Baqarah*
20. *Mutashabihat al-Quran*
21. *Asrar al-Ayat*
22. *Al-Hikmah al-'arshiyyah*
23. *Ta'liqat al-Shifa'*
24. *Ajwibah al-masail al-nasiriyyah*
25. *Sharh al-Usul min al-Kafi*, 1044 AH.

### **Mulla Sadra's Works:**

His well-known books that 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 begin with the issues of being and quiddity, and continue with the issues of motion, time, perception, substance, and accident. One part is devoted to proving the existence of God and His attributes; this book ends with a discussion of man's soul, and the subjects of death and resurrection. Interestingly, the themes considered in this interesting and important book are organized according to the four stages of gnostic spiritual and mystic journeys, with each stage considered as one journey. Thus the book begins with Existence and continues with the Hereafter, God, and the mustered people; this reflects the first stage of a gnostic's journey, in which he travels from himself and

his people towards God. In the second and third stages the gnostic moves from God to God (from His Essence to His Attributes and Acts), and, in the fourth stage, the Gnostic moves from God to people. The original book is in four large volumes, which have been published in nine small volumes, several times.

In fact, this book is a philosophical encyclopedia, a collection of important issues discussed in Islamic philosophy, enriched by the ideas of earlier philosophers, from Pythagoras to Mulla Sadra's contemporaries. It contains responses based on strong new arguments. All of these features have made it the book of choice for teaching higher levels of philosophical education in scientific and religious centers.

The composition of the book began around 1015 AH (1605 AD); it was completed sometime after 1040 AH (1630 AD).

## **2. *Al-Tafsir* (Commentary on the Qur'an)**

During his life, Mulla Sadra interpreted some of the chapters (*Surahs*) of the Qur'an. In the last decade of his life, he began to compile all his interpretations into a complete work (beginning with the early chapters of the Holy Book), but death did not allow him to finish this task. The names of the chapters he interpreted, in approximate chronological order, are as follows:

1. Chapter *al-Hadid*, 2. *Commentary on Ayat al-kursi* 3. Chapter *Sajdah*, 4. Chapter *al-Zilzal*, 5. Verses *al-Nur*, *al-Yasin*, *al-Tariq*, 6. Chapter *al-A'la*, 7. Chapter: *al-Waqi'ah*, 8. Chapter: *al-Fatihah*, 9. Chapter: *al-Jumu'ah*, and 10. Chapter: *al-Baqarah*.

In bibliographies of Mulla Sadra's works, each of the above appears independently, but we have cited them all under the title, *Commentary on the Qur'an*. Mulla Sadra also wrote two other books on the Qur'an, called *Mafatih al-qayb* and *Asrar al-ayat*,

which are considered 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 was written on the basis of Peripatetic philosophy, and was previously used to provide students with a preliminary introduction to philosophy. However, it is rarely used today.

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

Also called *al-Hikmat al-muta'aliyyah*, this book is a summary of the second half of *Asfar*. It does not include any of the discussions that Mulla Sadra viewed as useless and unnecessary. He called this book *The Beginning and the End* due to his belief that philosophy means knowledge of the Origin, and knowledge of the Return. This book is mainly dedicated to issues related to theology and eschatology, and is considered one of Mulla Sadra's most important books.

### **5. *al-Mazahir***

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

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

For many philosophers, the origin of the world is a complicated and debatable problem. In this book, in addition to quoting the theories of pre- and post-Socratic philosophers, and those of some Muslim philosophers, Mulla Sadra proves his account of the origin of the world, using the theory of trans-substantial motion.

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

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

### **8. *Al-Hashr***

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

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

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

### **10. *Al-Waridat al-qalbiyyah***

In this book, Mulla Sadra presents a brief account of important philosophical problems. It seems to be an inventory of the Divine inspirations and illuminations he had received throughout his life.

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

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

### **12. *Al-Masa'il al-qudsiyyah***

This booklet deals mainly with issues such as existence in mind and epistemology. Here, Mulla Sadra combines epistemology and ontology.

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

Also called *al-Hikmat al-'arshiyyah*, this is another guide to Mulla Sadra's philosophy. As in *al-Mazahir*, he tries to demonstrate *he* Beginning and the End concisely but precisely. Professor James Winston Maurice has translated this book into English, and has written an informative introduction to it.

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

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

### **15. *Sharh-i shifa***

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

### **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 on Qutb al-Din Shirazi's commentary on that text.

### **17. *Ittihad al-'aql 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, prior to Mulla Sadra, no-one had been able to prove and rationalize.

**18. *Ajwabah al-masa'il***

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

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

This monographic treatise deals with the problem of existence and its relation to quiddities.

**20. *Al-Tashakhkhush***

In this book, Mulla Sadra explains the problem of individuation, and clarifies its relation to existence and its principality (this is one of the most fundamental principles propounded by him).

**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. *Limmiyyah 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 tries to demonstrate resurrection and the Hereafter using a philosophical approach.

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

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

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

Mulla Sadra wrote 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 that have secret and complicated meanings. It is considered to be one of the chapters of *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 rewards in Paradise and punishment 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 explains Satan's seven paradoxes and provides appropriate answers.

**33. *Sih Asl***

This is Mulla Sadra's only book in Persian. Here, by resorting to the three main moral principles, he deals with moral and educational subjects related to scientists, and advises 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-Tanqih***

In this book, Mulla Sadra deals concisely with formal logic. It is a good book to use for instruction.

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

This treatise deals with issues of the philosophy of logic, and enquires into concepts and judgment.

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

Mulla Sadra wrote a number of scholarly and mystic poems in Persian, which are compiled in this book.

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

In his youth, Mulla Sadra studied many philosophical and gnostic books; he was also interested in the work of various poets. This book is a precious collection of juvenilia, and includes some short pieces of his own poetry, the statements of philosophers and gnostics, and discussions of scientific issues. 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; 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 remains of their correspondence. These letters are included at the beginning of the three-volume book of Mulla Sadra's *Life, Character and School*, written in Persian. This book has also been translated into English.

If we consider the 39 books listed above, his 12-volume books of interpretation (which we referred to as *Tafasir* [number 2]), *Mafatih al-qayb* and *Asrar al-ayat*, we have cited more than 50 of his works so far. Some other books have also been attributed to him. However, we will not refer to their names; they have either been

discussed in other, more comprehensive books, or Mulla Sadra's authorship of them seems unlikely.

There have been many debates around the place and time of composition of Mulla Sadra's books. Most of his books carry no date of composition, which requires the reader to refer to documents and other evidence in order to make estimates. For example, the composition dates of some of his books are implied in his *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*, *al-Hashr* and in his interpretations of some of the *Surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an.

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

In order to determine their place of composition, we must take into consideration that Mulla Sadra travelled to Qum and its suburbs from Shiraz, or somewhere else, before 1015 AH (1605 AD), and then moved from Qum to Shiraz in about 1040 AH (1630 AD). Therefore, the books that he wrote before 1040 AH must have been written in Qum or somewhere in its vicinity, unless he wrote some of these books and treatises on his long journeys.

The last and most complete edition of this book, along with some critical corrections, has been published by Mulla Sadra Publications Foundation, Tehran, Iran."<sup>120</sup>

**40.** *The Complete Philosophical Treatises of Mulla Sadra*, ed., Hamid Naji Isfahani, Tehran: Hekmat Publication House, 1996. This book includes 15 short Resaleh, or papers, by him, which were not published or identified until 1996. The papers are titled: *Itihad 'Aqil wa Ma'qul*, *Ajwabah Masail Mulla Shamsa Gilani*, *Ajwabih*

*Masil Mulla Muzafar Hussein Kashani, Ajwabih Masail Nasyriih, Risalih Asalat Ja'l Wujud, Risalih Tanqih dar Mantiq, Risalih Hashryyeh, Risalih Khalsih, Dibajih 'Arsh al-Taqdis, Risalih Khalq al-A'amal, Risalih Shawahid al-Rububyyih, Fawaid (Rad Shubahat Iblisyyih, Sharh Hadith Kuntu Kanzan Makhfya, Dar Bayan Kayfat Tarkib, Madih wa Surat, Zei Ayeh Amanat wa Mawad Thalath), Risalih Lemyyah Dar Ikhtisas Falak, Risalih Mizaj, Tafsir Surih Tawhid (1), Tafsir Surih Tawhid(2), Risalih Wujud, Risalih Hall Shubhiyyh Jazr Asam.*

**41.** *Mathnawi Mulla Sadra*, ed. Mustafa Fayzi, Qum, 1376.

### *The Style of His Writings*

On the whole, Sadr al-Muta'llihIn's books can be classified into two categories:

- a. Written with the aim of explaining a subject under study and examining the results of its proofs, but without mention of any differences of opinions on the subject or the proofs thereof.
- b. Written with the aim of logically providing proofs and expounding on subjects that have inspired debate, and from which different views have emerged, E.g. *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah* and the *Sharh al-Usul min al-Kafi*.

The aim of the second category is to enable the reader to attain the desired goal; the author adopts a practical approach and conducts the reader step by step to the intended goal. Hence, in the beginning he introduces a subject the way it is discussed in the popular texts, mentions the variety of opinions and views on the subject, and then discusses the proofs provided by its proponents and opponents. Afterwards, he criticizes them and exposes the fallacies in their arguments, but first warns that engaging in such a pursuit is not necessary.

"It is not the norm for the seekers of truth to bother with the views of those who lack intuition and insight into the realities of the cosmos – these misguided individuals, like the majority of theologians, linguists and rhetoricians. But there is no harm in mentioning their views, elucidating the meaning of their words, and defining the limits of their concepts, from which we can derive underlying principles and extract the truth of the matter."<sup>121</sup>

Finally, he discloses his specialist view and proceeds to elaborate and prove it.

"So let us mention the criticism that is leveled against it by the opponents of Forms. We will point out those aspects which are familiar to the researching minds, and then we shall return to what God has shown us of its proofs, disclosing to our psyches and opening to our hearts the door of His Mercy and Pleasure. Thus, we shall reveal a portion of it and not shy away from expressing the truth, even though it may disagree with the popular view."<sup>122</sup>

In a letter to his teacher, Mir Damad, he writes:

"There are many profound issues and subtle realities which have been unveiled for this humble soul and defective intellect, most of which are extremely unfamiliar to the popular contemporary thinking. Though we have established clear logical proofs for them and they are not beyond the scope of the discursive method, they are unknown to the temperaments of the majority of the theology students and intellectuals; hence, we have not explicitly stated them in our writings. Thus, we have made passing remarks regarding some of the views, while others we have scattered and presented in between detailed discussions wherein we exposed them to purified minds and sharp intellects. However, what is embedded deep in our thoughts has not been written."<sup>123</sup>

"Those familiar with subtleties have more to say but cannot express it explicitly, since ordinary minds will fail to comprehend it and the degenerate will stand in opposition."<sup>124</sup>

"Let us hold back ourselves from elaboration. In fact, the reins of control over speech have been loosened and what has been mentioned is beyond the comprehension of ordinary minds and intellects."<sup>125</sup>

It has been difficult for the educated to distinguish his views from other opinions. One cannot comprehend them until one studies his works more generally (especially those written in the last years of his honorable life), scrutinizes them, and delves into their depths. On occasion, he quotes others' views and arguments on a subject without explicitly stating his own unique view:

"And we have discussed in detail, but there still remain some hidden aspects in the corners of our heart – to elaborate on the issue and elucidate the matter – which we have foregone since space does not permit ... There is a strong dissuading factor present, while a powerful persuasive factor is absent; namely, the inability to comprehend these issues by the ordinary student and the abomination of the degenerate ones – the latter being slothful and ignorant in their approach."<sup>126</sup>

"And the philosopher does not bother about the popular views and is not concerned about the majority's opinions if he has attained the truth. And in every topic he does not focus on who says what, but rather on what is said."<sup>127</sup>

Another of Sadra's tendencies is to quote the views and opinions of his predecessors without specifying his sources. This style of presentation has made him the target of criticism by narrow-minded opponents who accuse him of plagiarism without taking note of his published views on the issue of attribution:

"This is all that the author of *al-Mutaharat* has mentioned from the ancient scholars. We have quoted [it] verbatim, because I

found no benefit in altering the phrases, since the purpose is to convey the meaning with whatever words"<sup>128</sup>

"This is all that we intended to mention in this key (*Miftah*). We have preferred to merely quote what other scholars of Islam have mentioned on this issue, avoiding spending more time searching for better words and forms, since the purpose was to express similar ideas and meanings."<sup>129</sup>

At times he employs the tactic of quoting supporting evidence for his views from the writings of the ancient philosophers, while interpreting their views to conform to his own:

"We have, in dealing with this important issue, relied not only on the views of the ancient scholars but also on logical proofs; though if their views are seen to conform with ours, the heart is more satisfied."<sup>130</sup>

### **His Poetry**

Mulla Sadra is not really a poet, but he has composed some poetry.

The only known poetry of Sadr al-Muta'lihin is "Muntakhab al-Mathnavi" which was printed as an appendix to his treatise *Sih Asl* along with his quartets. However he also quotes some of his poetry in between his writings. He writes in the introduction to Surah al-Sajdah:

"I had composed some poetry in Persian in praise of the Holy Quran and its status as spiritual sustenance whose consumption is exclusive to human souls steeped in divine love. I have mentioned some of those here..."<sup>131</sup>

Also:

"I had composed some poetry on this theme when I experienced an expansiveness in my heart and disclosure in my soul..."<sup>132</sup>

And in the commentary on Ayah al-Nur he writes:

"And there is a garden from the gardens of Paradise within you, inasmuch as there is a pit from the pits of the Hell-fire within you. As I have mentioned in the Mathnavi: Darooni buwad rawzai az behesht..."<sup>133</sup>

Recently his *Matnawi*, which consists of 2150 verses in *bahr raml* style, like Rumi's *Mathnawi*, was edited by Mustafa Fayzi and published by Ketabkhanih Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi in Qum, 1376.

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## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> There is a difference of opinion about Mulla Sadra's year of death. All his biographers mention it as 1050 A.H./1640 C.E., notes from his grandson, Allamah 'Alam al-Huda – who quotes from the notes of his own father, Mulla Muhammad Mushin Faiz Kashani – indicate that the year of his death was actually 1045 A.H. One thing we can be sure about is that he lived up to 1037 A.H., as indicated in the introduction to his treatise entitled "The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations" (*Al-Masha'ir*), in which he writes: "It (*this book*) has been completed on Friday afternoon, the 7th of Jamadi al-Awwal 1037 A.H. This is while the writer has passed 58 years of his life." It appears the two dates can be reconciled with the explanation that Mulla Sadra died in 1045 A.H. in Basra but his remains were transferred to Najaf in 1050 A.H., since 'Alam al-Huda quotes his father that he, Faiz Kashani, visited the grave of his teacher in the right chamber of the holy shrine of Imam Ali ('a).

<sup>2</sup> Rumi, Book III of *Mathnawi*, Verses 2648-2654.

<sup>3</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Montakhab Mathnawi, enzemam resaleh sih asl*.

- <sup>4</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol 1, p. 6.
- <sup>5</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Mabda wa al- M'aad*, p. 382.
- <sup>6</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir ayat al-kursi*: p. 60.
- <sup>7</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asrar al-ayat*: p. 181.
- <sup>8</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 6.
- <sup>9</sup> See: "What is the Transcendent Philosophy?", in *The Fundamental Principles of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, Akbaryan, Reza, pp. 41-83.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibn Sina, Glosses on *al-Shifa'*, p 256.
- <sup>11</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 5/320.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Isharat*, Namat.10, fasl. 9, p.468.
- <sup>13</sup> Suhrawardi, Commentary on *al-Isharat*. 7, 3, 401.
- <sup>14</sup> Qaysary, *The Epistles of Qaysari*, p.15.
- <sup>15</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir sureh Waqiah*, tarjemeh wa tashih, Khawjawi.p. 9.
- <sup>16</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir sureh al-Baqarah* 3, 376.
- <sup>17</sup> Mulla Sadra, Rasail Mulla Sadra, *Sarayan al-Wujud*, p. 138.
- <sup>18</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 5/205.
- <sup>19</sup> Kulainy, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, Introduction to Kitab al-Hujja, p. 438.
- <sup>20</sup> *Mulla Sadra, Asfar*, 8/303).
- <sup>21</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-Ghaib*, p. 41.
- <sup>22</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-'Arshiyah*, p. 285.
- <sup>23</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 7/326.
- <sup>24</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 6/263.
- <sup>25</sup> Kulainy, *Sharh Usul Kafi, hadith no.1, Bab al nawadir, Kitab Tawhid*.
- <sup>26</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 1/152.
- <sup>27</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 3/446.
- <sup>28</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 6/6.
- <sup>29</sup> See: Akbarian, Reza, 2009, *The Fundamental Principles of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, Philadelphia.
- <sup>30</sup> See: Akbarian, Reza, 2009, *Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra and the quest of Being*, Philadelphia.
- <sup>31</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 1/49.
- <sup>32</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, 1/47.
- <sup>33</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol.1, p.380.
- <sup>34</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol.2, p. 292.
- <sup>35</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asrar al-Ayat*, P 146.
- <sup>36</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Taliqat al Hikmat Ishraq*, p 239.
- <sup>37</sup> *Asfar*, vol 3, p 78.
- <sup>38</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-Gyaib*, p 364.
- <sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p 387.
- <sup>40</sup> Kulainy, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi, bab al-Kun wa al-Makan, Seventh hadith*, p. 243.
- <sup>41</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 3, p 312.
- <sup>42</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, p 93.

- <sup>43</sup> See: Safavi, S. G., 2002, "God in Greek and Islamic Philosophy" in *A Comparative Study On Islamic Philosophy and Western Philosophy*, pp. 7-46.
- <sup>44</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 4, p 280.
- <sup>45</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 6, p284.
- <sup>46</sup> Mulla Sadra, al-Kafi, Section 11, commentary on First Hadith, *Bab Jawami' al Tahid*, p 337).
- <sup>47</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, P 39.
- <sup>48</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 2, p 49.
- <sup>49</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 6, p 110.
- <sup>50</sup> Suhrawardi, *Collected works of Shaikh Ishraq*, v 2, p 156.
- <sup>51</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 1, p 307.
- <sup>52</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Arshiyeh*, p 241.
- <sup>53</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 3, p 507.
- <sup>54</sup> *Asfar*, v 2, p 62.
- <sup>55</sup> See: Safavi, Seyed G, 2011, Soul From the Perspective Mulla Sadra's Philosophy; "Philosophical comparison between the perspective of Mulla Sadra and Descartes on Soul", Safavi, Seyed G. *Transcendent Philosophy: An International Journal for Comparative Philosophy and Mysticism*, Vol. 1, Number 11, (December 2010), pp. 5-20.; Daftari, Abdulaziz, 2011, *Mulla Sadra and Mind-Body Problem*.
- <sup>56</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, v 8, p 346.
- <sup>57</sup> *Asfar*, v 7, p 57.
- <sup>58</sup> *Asfar*, v 8, p 51.
- <sup>59</sup> *Asfar*, v 7, p 255.
- <sup>60</sup> *Asfar*, v3, p475.
- <sup>61</sup> *Asfar*, v3, p 479.
- <sup>62</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 509.
- <sup>63</sup> *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 605, *Asfar*, vol 9, p.221.
- <sup>64</sup> *Asfar*, vol 9, p.2.
- <sup>65</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, p379.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa*, al-ilahiyat, Article 9, section seven.
- <sup>67</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir sureh Sajdah*, p.73.
- <sup>68</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir Sureh Yasin*, p. 150.
- <sup>69</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asrar al-Ayat*, p. 142.
- <sup>70</sup> *Asfar*, vol.9, p.20.
- <sup>71</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Resaleh Huduth al-'alam*, p.186.
- <sup>72</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol 6, p.5.
- <sup>73</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol.8, p.364.
- <sup>74</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol.1, p.211.
- <sup>75</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Resleh al-huduth al-'alam*, p.321-322.
- <sup>76</sup> See Mulla Sadra point of view on Platonic Spirit at: Khamenei, Seyyed Muhammad, "Mulla Sadra's Philosophy of Platonic Spirit", at :

[http://www.mullasadra.org/new\\_site/english/](http://www.mullasadra.org/new_site/english/).

<sup>77</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol3, p507.

<sup>78</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol9, p109.

<sup>79</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol5, p216.

<sup>80</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol5, p23.)

<sup>81</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol2, p64.

<sup>82</sup> See: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, "The Quran and Hadith as source and inspiration of Islamic philosophy", in *History of Islamic philosophy* (ed), Nasr and Leaman.

<sup>83</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol5, p242.

<sup>84</sup> See: "Knowledge as the Unity of the Intellect and the Object of Intellection in Islamic Philosophy: A Historical Survey from Plato to Mulla Sadra", Ibrahim Kalin. *Transcendent Philosophy: An International Journal for Comparative Philosophy and Mysticism*, Vol. 1, Number 1, (June 2000), pp. 73-91.

<sup>85</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol9, p192.

<sup>86</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol9, p109.

<sup>87</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Taliqat Shifa*: 176.

<sup>88</sup> Suhrawardi, *Musanefat*, vol.2, p.10.

<sup>89</sup> Suhrawardi, *Musanefat*, vol.2, p.156.

<sup>90</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol.1, p.307.

<sup>91</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol 5, p 98; vol 6, p 253.

<sup>92</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol.7, p.315.

<sup>93</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol2, 149; al-Mabda wa al-M'ad, p 240.

<sup>94</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Sharh Usul min al-Kafi*, al-Hadith al-awal, p.16.

<sup>95</sup> Mir Damad, *al-Qabasat*: 305.

<sup>96</sup> Mir Dmad, *Divan*.

<sup>97</sup> See: El-Bizri, Nader (2008). *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. Ikhwan al-Safa' and their Rasa'il* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

<sup>98</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol1, p.363.

<sup>99</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol9, p.201.

<sup>100</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Shawahid*, p.271.

<sup>101</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol1, p78.

<sup>102</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol1, p.227.

<sup>103</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol2, p.326.

<sup>104</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-ghayb*, p. 97.

<sup>105</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Mabda wa al-ma'ad*, p.403.

<sup>106</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Sharh al-usul al-Kafi: bab nahi an al-qul bighayr 'ilm, al-hadith al-tase*:169.

<sup>107</sup> Milla Sadra, *Sharh al-usul min al-Kafi, bab al-rad ila al-ketab wa al-Suna, al-Hadith al-awal*, p.199.

<sup>108</sup> Mulla Sadra, *T'aliqat al-Shifa*, p.238.

<sup>109</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol2, p. 207.

<sup>110</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol1, p.307.

- <sup>111</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol9, p234.  
<sup>112</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol7, p.153.  
<sup>113</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol9, p.45.  
<sup>114</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir*, vol3, p.49.  
<sup>115</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Sharh usul al-kafi*, al-hadith 21 min kitab al-‘aql wa al-jahl, p.111.  
<sup>116</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Sih Asl*, p.18.  
<sup>117</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Kasr Asnam al-jahilih*, p.30.  
<sup>118</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir Sureh Hadid*, p.214.  
<sup>119</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir Sureh Yasin*, 142.  
<sup>120</sup> [http://www.mullasadra.org/new\\_site/english/mullasadra/works.htm](http://www.mullasadra.org/new_site/english/mullasadra/works.htm)  
<sup>121</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-Ghaib*, p. 99.  
<sup>122</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol1, p.85.  
<sup>123</sup> *Farhang Iran Zamin*, vol 13, p 94.  
<sup>124</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Tafsir*, vol2, p 173.  
<sup>125</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 351.  
<sup>126</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir Sureh Yasin*, p. 256.  
<sup>127</sup> (Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol6, p.6.  
<sup>128</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol5, p.174.  
<sup>129</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 317.  
<sup>130</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, vol5, p.300.  
<sup>131</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Surah al-Sajdah*, p. 9.  
<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.  
<sup>133</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Tafsir Ayah al-Nur*, p. 408.

