

How Does Mulla Sadra Synthesize the Truth Claims of Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in his Philosophy?

Mulla Sadra wrote several comprehensive philosophical texts which are to a large extent, abridgements and summaries of his major work, the *Asfar*. Although these comprehensive texts have different emphases depending on their individual foci, they each provide the reader with an overview of Mulla Sadra's philosophy.¹ Mulla Sadra's philosophy which can be considered to be founded on the four fundamental principles discussed in the previous chapter, deals essentially with knowledge of the Origin (*al-mabda'*) and of the Return (*al-ma'ad*) or knowledge of Being and Becoming and knowledge of the soul and its ultimate destiny. In addition, these comprehensive philosophical texts like the *Asfar*, share the same intention of guiding the reader to the highest understanding of metaphysics and eschatology.

Al-Hikmah al-'arshiyyah is one of the comprehensive philosophical texts of Mulla Sadra. In the Prologue of the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states that the text which deals with two of the 'noblest of the true forms of knowledge through which man can become part of the host of "angels drawn near to God"', is written as a guide for 'discerning travellers' (*al-sullak al-nazirin*) on the spiritual path.² The *al-'Arshiyyah* is divided into two major parts or 'places of illumination' (*mashriq*). The first part or 'place of illumination' deals with 'knowledge' (*'ilm*) of God, His Attributes (*sifat*), His Names (*asma'*) and His Signs (*ayat*). It contains sixteen principles (*qawa'id*). The second part or 'place of illumination' is subdivided into three sections or 'illuminations'. The first section or 'illumination' deals with

‘the true inner meaning of the soul (*ma‘rifat al-nafs*)’, the second with ‘the true reality of the Return (*haqiqat al-ma‘ad*)’ and the manner of resurrection of the body (*hashr al-jasad*)’ and the third with ‘the states (*ahwal*) that occur in the other world (*al-akhirah*)’. The first ‘illumination’ contains eleven principles, the second, five principles and the third, seventeen principles.

The task of this chapter is to examine and analyse the method or manner in which Mulla Sadra works out his synthesis of the truth claims of revelation, intellectual intuition and reason as contained in his synoptic philosophical text, the *al-Hikmah al-‘arshiyyah*. Since Mulla Sadra’s comprehensive philosophical texts are essentially abridgements of his major work, the *Asfar* which is a testament of his transcendent philosophy or *al-hikmah al-muta‘aliyyah*, and they share a common concern; Mulla Sadra’s method of synthesizing the three sources of knowledge in the *al-‘Arshiyyah* can be regarded as an exemplification of his synthesizing method.

In conformity with Mulla Sadra’s division of the *al-‘Arshiyyah*, the following analysis of his method of synthesis will be divided into two parts. The first part deals with the Origin (*al-mabda’*) or metaphysics (*ilahiyat*) and the second with the Return or eschatology (*al-ma‘ad*). In order to demonstrate Mulla Sadra’s method of synthesis clearly and concretely, his treatment of specific principles, particularly the four fundamental principles, will be analysed. Excerpts of his discussion of specific principles in the *al-‘Arshiyyah* will be taken to illustrate his manner of approach of a particular subject or principle, method of reasoning and mode of expression.

Metaphysics

Similar to the *Asfar*, Mulla Sadra begins the *al-‘Arshiyyah* with a discussion of Being (*al-wujud*). For Mulla Sadra, Being or *al-wujud* is the proper subject matter of metaphysics (*al-‘ilm al-ilahi*). Metaphysics which is the highest form of knowledge constitutes the heart of *hikmah* or philosophy. Mulla Sadra’s

metaphysics as discussed earlier, has as its source, the immediate experience (*dhawq*) or intellectual intuition of Being. However, his intellectual intuition or immediate experience of Being is expressed in a rational mode, employing the intellectual categories of discursive philosophy, particularly that of the *Mashsha'i* school as developed by Ibn Sina. Both the intellectual illuminations and the philosophical exposition of these illuminations are carried out within the intellectual and spiritual parameters of the Islamic revelation: the Quran and *Hadith*. The Quran and *Hadith* provide the basis of much of the doctrinal content of Mulla Sadra's philosophy, as well as the method of spiritual and intellectual realization related to it.³

As indicated by its title, the first part or 'illumination' (*al-mashriq al-'auwal*) of the *al-Hikmah al-'arshiyyah* proposes to deal with the knowledge ('*ilm*') of God or Allah, His Attributes (*sifat*), His Names (*asma'*) and His Signs (*ayat*). In order to give a philosophical exposition of these topics, Mulla Sadra has divided the 'first illumination' into sixteen principles or *qawa'id*. Each principle discusses in a very compact manner, a specific matter related to the main subject or topic. It is pertinent to note that Mulla Sadra also specifies the source of some of these principles. For example, he stipulates that the very first principle on the division of existent (*taqsim al-mawjud*) and the establishment of the First Being or the Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*) is derived from proximity to God (*ladun Allah*), thus it is a '*qa'idah laduniyyah*' or a principle deriving from the proximity to God.⁴ The second principle on the simplicity of Being (*basit al-haqiqah*) is derived from the divine Throne (*al-'arsh*) and it is referred to by Mulla Sadra as a '*qa'idah 'arshiyyah*' or principle deriving from the divine Throne.⁵ Therefore, the source of some of the principles in the *al-'Arshiyyah* together with its division into two 'places of illumination' (*mashriq*), indicate in a very explicit manner the gnostic character of Mulla Sadra's philosophy which is profoundly related to both the Islamic revelation as demonstrated for example, by the use of the Quranic terms '*ladun Allah*' and '*al-'arsh*', as well as to Ibn Sina's Oriental Philosophy (*al-hikmah al-mashriqiyyah*) and Suhrawardi's Illuminationist

Theosophy (*al-hikmah al-ishraqiyyah*) by Mulla Sadra's usage of the key term '*mashriq*' or illumination. However, the formulation of these illuminations into principles (*qawa'id*) and consequences derived from them demonstrate Mulla Sadra's philosophical method.

In addition, it should be noted that Mulla Sadra's choice and arrangement of topics of the 'first illumination' into knowledge of God, His Attributes, Names and Signs adheres very closely to the classic theological framework and order of exposition of the subject. The hierarchic division of God's Essence (*al-dhat*), Names and Attributes (*asma' wa sifat*) and Signs (*ayat*) which was first formulated by the theologians (*mutakallimun*), is widely used and accepted by all Islamic thinkers and scholars whether they belong to the school of Islamic Theology (*kalam*), Philosophy (*falsafah*) or doctrinal Sufism. The terms *al-dhat* for the divine Essence, *asma' wa sifat* for God's Names and Attributes and *ayat*⁶ for His Signs are all Quranic in origin.

'The first place of illumination' is a philosophical examination of some of the most important issues or principles involved in the discussion of knowledge of God, His Names and Attributes, and His Signs. Mulla Sadra begins his philosophical investigation with the following statements:

That which exists (*inna al-mawjud*) is either the reality of Being (*haqiqat al-wujud*) or something else. By the reality of Being we mean That which is not mixed with anything but Being, whether a generality ('*umum*) or a particularity (*khusus*), a limit (*hadd*) or a bound (*nihayah*), a quiddity (*mahiyyah*), an imperfection (*naqs*), or non-existence ('*adam*) – and this is what is called the 'Necessary Being' (*wajib al-wujud*). Therefore, we say that if the reality of Being did not exist, then nothing at all would exist. But the consequence (of this conditional statement) is self-evidently false; therefore its premise is likewise false.⁷

From the above quotation, it can be observed very clearly, that Mulla Sadra's approach to the subject and mode of expression is philosophical. He begins his discussion on the knowledge of God by formulating it as a philosophical investigation into the

nature and reality of Being and he makes use of the relevant philosophical terms to express his ideas. For example, he uses the term *wajib al-wujud* or Necessary Being which is the philosophical term for God. The term and concept of the Necessary Being was first formulated by Ibn Sina based on his fundamental distinctions of necessity (*wujub*) and contingency (*imkan*); and being (*wujud*) and quiddity (*mahiyyah*).

The terms *naqs* for imperfection, '*adam* for non-existence, *umum* for generality, *khusus* for particularity, *hadd* for limit, *nihayah* for boundary and *mahiyyah* for quiddity are all philosophical terms.⁸ The term *naqs* which means imperfection is always juxtaposed to *kamal* or perfection. Metaphysically, perfection or *kamal* belongs only to God and *naqs* or imperfection is characteristic of all created beings. Perfection is a function of God's absoluteness and all contingent beings are imperfect to one degree or another. The term '*adam* which means non-existence or nothingness is always juxtaposed to *wujud* or being or existence. In the above quotation, Mulla Sadra states that Being is not mixed with '*adam* or non-existence. In other words, Being is pure Being or absolute Being. Furthermore, Mulla Sadra argues, Being is not mixed with *mahiyyah* or quiddity. Quiddity, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a limitation or a mode of being which is abstracted by the human mind. Since Being has no limit (*hadd*) or boundary (*nihayah*) therefore, Being has no quiddity or *mahiyyah*. Limitation (*hadd*), imperfection (*naqs*) and non-existence ('*adam*) pertain to *mahiyyah* or quiddity and not to Being or *wujud*.

Having asserted that Being is nothing but Itself or Pure Being, Mulla Sadra argues for the reality of Being or more specifically the Necessary Being. Mulla Sadra does this by making use of the conditional statement and the logical relation between the antecedent and consequent. Mulla Sadra argues: If Being does not exist, then no beings exist. However, since the consequent is false because beings do exist, then the antecedent: Being does not exist, is also false. Implicit in this argument is the metaphysical premise or principle that all existents derive their existence from Being.⁹ The principle of the ontological dependency of all

existents on Being is reminiscent of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* or the transcendent unity of being.¹⁰

Since the reality of Being (*haqiqat al-wujud*) is beyond limitation (*hadd*) and boundary (*nihayyah*), it cannot be defined. To define something is precisely to determine its limits and boundaries. In the *al-‘Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states:

... the Source of existence of everything that exists is this Pure Reality of Being, unmixed with anything other than Being. This Reality is not restricted by any definition, limitation, imperfection, contingent potentiality or quiddity; nor is It mixed with any generality, whether of genus, species or differentia, nor with any accident whether specific or general. For Being is prior to all these descriptions that apply to quiddities, and That which has no quiddity other than Being is not bound by any generality or specificity. It has no specific difference and no particularity apart from Its own Essence; It has no form, nor has It any agent or end.¹¹

Here, in order to demonstrate the indefinable nature of Being, Mulla Sadra enumerates specifically all the various philosophical categories which are used to define something, such as the famous Aristotelian categories of genus (*jins*), specie (*naw‘*) and specific difference (*fasl*). According to Mulla Sadra, none of these categories pertain to Being, they relate only to quiddity. In addition, the reality of Being is beyond substance (*jawhar*) and accident (*‘arad*), both general (*‘arad al-‘amm*) and specific (*‘arad al-khass*); beyond form (*surah*) and the four Aristotelian causes.

Having argued at length in a philosophical manner for the indefinable nature of the reality of Being, Mulla Sadra concludes his discussion of the issue with the following statements:

No one can define (*ma‘ruf*) Him (God or the Necessary Being) or reveal (*ashfa*) Him but He Himself, and there is no demonstration (*burhan*) of Him except His own Essence (*al-Dhat*). Therefore, He gave witness (*shahada*) through His Self to Himself and to the Unity (*wahdaniyyah*) of His Self when He said: ‘God (Allah) gives witness that there is no god but He’ (Q.3:18).¹²

Unlike, the previous quotations which demonstrate Mulla Sadra's philosophical approach and mode of expression, the above quotation reveals the gnostic character of his philosophy and more poetic form of expression. His language is heavily drawn from and influenced by the Quran. Since God is the sole and absolute reality, only He can bear witness or testifies to His Existence. No other existent can bear witness to God's existence since all existents are ontologically dependent on God. Here, it is clear that Mulla Sadra shares the gnostic view that all philosophical proofs of the existence of God are fundamentally inadequate and ultimately, only God is His own proof.¹³ It is only God who can truly bear witness to Himself as testified eloquently by the Quranic verse quoted by Mulla Sadra.

Immediately following the gnostic statements and verse of the Quran that God is His own proof, Mulla Sadra gives a philosophical explanation of the central Islamic doctrine of God's Unity which is the subject of much debate and meditation through out Islamic history. Mulla Sadra asserts:

For His (God's) Unity (*wahdah*) is not the particular (*shakh-siyyah*) unity that is found in an individual (*fard*) of a (particular) nature; nor is It the generic (*jinsiyyah*) or specific (*naw'iyah*) unity that is found in any general notion (*ma'na*) or any quiddity (*mahiyyah*). Neither is It the conjunctive (*ijma'iyyah*) unity that is found when a number of things become assembled or unified into a single thing; nor is It the unity of contiguity (*ittisaliyyah*) found in quantities and measurable things. Nor, as you will learn, is It any of the other relative (*nisbiyyah*) unities, such as unity of resemblance (*tamathul*), homogeneity (*tajanus*), analogy (*tashabuh*), correspondence (*tatabuq*), reduplication (*tadayuf*) – although (certain) philosophers have allowed that – congruence, or any of the other kinds of unity that are not the True Unity. Rather, His Unity is other (than these relative ones), unknowable (*majhulah*) in Its innermost root (*kunh*), like His essence – May He be exalted! – except that His Unity is the Source (*asl*) of all (these other) unities (*wahdat*) just as His Being is the Source of all (particular) beings. Hence 'He has no second' (Q.112:4).¹⁴

Mulla Sadra's philosophical examination of the concept of the Unity of God is quite remarkable. He puts forth all the various concepts of unity that man has and removes them from the concept of God's Unity. According to Mulla Sadra none of these concepts of unity pertain to God. God's Unity is not the unity of the individual (*shakhsiyyah*) or the unity of the genus (*jins*) or of the specie (*naw'*) or of a general concept (*ma'na*) or of a quiddity (*mahiyyah*). Furthermore, neither the logical concepts of conjunctive (*ijtima'iyyah*) unity nor contiguous (*ittisaliyyah*) unity nor the various kinds of unity which are based on the relations (*nisbiyyah*) of resemblance (*tamathul*) or homogeneity (*tajanus*) or analogy (*tashabuh*) or correspondence (*tatabuq*) apply to God's Unity. In Mulla Sadra's perspective, since none of the human concepts of unity apply to God's Unity, His Unity like His Essence, is ultimately unknowable. Although the Unity of God eludes human comprehension, it is however, the source of all forms of unity which man can conceive and perceive. No unity will exist if God's Unity does not exist. It is the Unity of God (*wahdat al-dhat*) which makes all forms of unity (*wahadat*) possible.

Mulla Sadra's treatment of the concept of God's Unity is similar to the mode of reasoning of the *Shahadah* or the Testimony of Faith: '*La ilaha illa Allah*' ('There is no god but Allah'). Like the *Shahadah* which consists of two parts: one, the negation (*al-nafy*) and two, the affirmation (*al-ithbat*); Mulla Sadra begins by negating all the various concepts of unity that man has from the understanding of God's unity, in order to affirm the uniqueness of His Unity which bears no relation or resemblance to these various forms of unity. All the various concepts of unity that man possesses relate to the world of relativity and consequently, they do not pertain to the Absolute. The Absolute as asserted by the Quran 'has no second'. The doctrine of *al-tawhid* is ultimately unfathomable and only God knows His own Essence and can bear witness to His Self and His Unity.

In the discussion of the reality of Being, mention has been made of the metaphysical principle of the ontological dependency of all beings on the Absolute Being. In the second

principle of the 'first place of illumination', Mulla Sadra gives a philosophical demonstration of the above metaphysical principle. He begins his demonstration of this principle with the following assertion:

All that which is Simple in Its essential Reality (*basit al-haqiqah*) is, by virtue of Its (absolute) Unity, all things (*kull al-ashya*'). It is deprived of none of those things, except what is in the order of imperfections (*naqa*'is), privations (*a'dam*) and contingencies (*imkanat*).¹⁵

The above assertion made by Mulla Sadra formulates in a very succinct manner of what has become one of the most important metaphysical principles in later Islamic Philosophy. There are two important aspects to Mulla Sadra's assertion: one, the Supreme Unity which he identifies with the divine Essence is absolutely simple in Its reality and two, the absolutely Simple Being contains all things or existents.

In the world of multiplicity, there is no single being which can encompass everything. Every being to the extent it is a composite (*murakkab*) of existence (*wujud*) and quiddity (*mahiyyah*) is limited and therefore, cannot be all things. However, the absolutely Simple Being which is without composition and is pure Being or pure *wujud*, encompasses all beings. All existents to the extent they exist, issue from Being. The Absolute Being by virtue of Its simplicity contains all beings.

In order to demonstrate the cogency of his assertion that the Simple Being contains all things, Mulla Sadra provides the following argument:

Take any particular being 'A', suppose you say 'A is not B': now if that with respect to which A is (itself A) were exactly the same as that with respect to which A is not-B, so that A in itself would of its very essence be the criterion for this negation – (if this were so), then the very essence of A would be something privative, such that everyone who intellected A would also intellect 'not-B'. But this consequence is obviously false and its antecedent is also false. Thus, it is established that (in any

particular being 'A') the substrate of 'A-ness' (*mawdu'*) is something essentially compound (of being and a particular quiddity). And even according to the mind, the notion of 'A-ness' is a compound composed of the notion of something having being, by which A exists, and the notion of the privation of something, by which A is not B nor any of the other things that are negated of it.¹⁶

Here, Mulla Sadra wishes to demonstrate that all things are a compound of existence and quiddity and are therefore not simple (*basit*) in their nature. Take anything, for example, a horse ('A'). A horse is not a tiger ('not-B'). A horse although is not a tiger ('A is not-B') is not equivalent to or identical with not being a tiger ('A is not equal to not-B'). If this were the case, then everytime one perceives or conceives of a horse one will also perceive or conceive it as not being a tiger. This is obviously false therefore, 'A' which is also 'not-B' is not equal to 'not-B'. Therefore, every thing both at the level of external reality and mental conception is a composite of itself or being ('A') and a privation or a quiddity ('not-B'). With this, Mulla Sadra concludes:

Thus it is known that everything of which something that has being may be negated is not absolutely Simple in its essential reality. And the converse is likewise true: all That which is Simple in Its essential Reality can have nothing that has being negated of It. Otherwise, It would not be Simple in Its essential Reality, but rather composed of two aspects: an aspect by which it is such (such as 'A') and an aspect by which it is some other way (that is, 'not-B', 'not-C' and so on). So now it has been established that the Simple Being is all existent things (*mawjudat*) with respect to their being (*wujud*) and perfection (*tammam*), but not with respect to their privations (*naqa'is*) and imperfections (*a'dam*).¹⁷

Mulla Sadra states that anything or any being from which one can negate something from it is not simple or *basit*. Every existent to the extent it is itself ('A') and not something else ('not-B') is not simple since one can always negate something

from it. Only the absolutely Simple Being cannot have anything or any being negated from it. If something can be negated from the Simple Being then, It is no longer simple but a composite, i.e. a composite of being Itself ('A') and something else ('not-B', 'not-C' etc.). Thus, the Simple Being contains or encompasses all things (*basit al-haqiqah kull al-ashya*).

Although the Simple Being is everything, It is only so with respect to their being (*wujud*) and their perfections (*tamam*) but not in relation to their privations (*naqa'is*) and non-existence (*'adam*). This assertion of Mulla Sadra which is another formulation of the doctrine of the transcendent unity of being or *wahdat al-wujud* can only be understood in relation to the principle of the analogical gradation of Being or *tashkik al-wujud*. As discussed earlier, according to Mulla Sadra, creation is a gradation of Being which extends from Pure Being to Prime Matter. Every existent (*mawjud*) to the extent it exists is a mode of Being (*nahw al-wujud*). As an existent every being participates in Being which is simple and perfect, however, as a particular existent or a mode of Being, an existent is limited and imperfect. The perfection of an existent is due to its being (*wujud*) and its imperfection or privation is caused by its limitation as a particular existent and comes from its quiddity (*mahiyyah*).

From the above discussion of the first two principles of the *al-'Arshiyyah*, it can be observed that Mulla Sadra's discussion of the knowledge of God involves an exposition and demonstration of several important metaphysical ideas such as that of the indefinable nature of the reality of Being, the Unity and Simplicity of Being and the analogical gradation of Being. All of these ideas are summarized in the first fundamental principle of Mulla Sadra's philosophy treated in the previous chapter as the ontological primacy (*asalah*), unity (*wahdah*) and analogical gradation (*tashkik*) of Being (*al-wujud*). These three primary aspects of Being delineated by Mulla Sadra became not only a fundamental principle in his school of philosophy but also as we shall see in the next chapter, was to dominate nearly all subsequent discussions of Being by Islamic philosophers after him.

One of the principles which Mulla Sadra examines in the 'first place of illumination' in his discussion of the divine Names and Qualities is that of the unity of the knower and the known (*ittihad al-'aqil wa al-ma'qul*). The fact that Mulla Sadra discusses this principle in the 'first place of illumination' indicates that there exists a close relation between his epistemology and his metaphysics. Mulla Sadra's epistemological principle of the unity of the knower and the known as pointed out earlier, is a logical corollary of his metaphysical view of the ontological primacy of existence (*asalat al-wujud*).

In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra specifies that the source of this fundamental epistemological principle is divine inspiration or illumination and it is among the several principles which are derived from the divine Throne (*qa'idah 'arshiyyah*),¹⁸ which are the highest forms of intellectual intuition.

The principle of the unity of the knower and the known has a long history in Islamic philosophical thought. This principle which came to be known to the Islamic philosophers through Porphyry, a student of Plotinus, was rejected by the early Islamic philosophers, notably Ibn Sina and by many philosophers after him. In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra asserts that those who criticized and rejected this principle did not grasp it properly because they failed to understand the root of the matter.¹⁹ Mulla Sadra's re-instatement of this important epistemological principle in Islamic Philosophy thus involves a demonstration (*burhan*) of the truth of this principle. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* he begins his demonstration by asserting:

Everything that is intelligible in its being (*ma'qul al-wujud*) is also actively intelligizing (or intellecting) (*'aqil*). Indeed, every form in perception (*surah idrakiyyah*) – whether it be intelligible (*ma'qulah*) or sensible (*mahsusah*) – is unified (*mutahidah*) in its being (*al-wujud*) with that which perceives (*mudrik*) it.²⁰

There are two main assertions made by Mulla Sadra: one, every intelligible being (*ma'qul al-wujud*) is also actively intellecting (*al-'aqil*) and two, every form in perception (*surah idrakiyyah*), intelligible (*ma'qulah*) or sensible (*mahsusah*), is unified in its being (*al-wujud*) with that which perceives (*mudrik*) it. In the

first assertion, Mulla Sadra is stating that it is in the very nature of an intelligible being to also know. This is because to assert that a being is intelligible in its nature is also to state that it is an intelligible substance (*jawhar ‘aqli*).²¹ An intelligible substance is not only passively intelligible but is also actively intelligizing or intellecting. In the second assertion, Mulla Sadra states that at the moment of perception, the form of that which is perceived is united to the intellectual faculty of the perceiver.

Mulla Sadra substantiates the above two assertions which relate to the principle of the unity of the knower and the known with the following arguments:

The proof (*burhan*) of this, emanating from God’s Presence (*‘ind Allah*), is that every form in perception (*surah idrakiyyah*) – even if it is sensible, for example – has some sort of separation (*tajrid*) from matter (*maddah*), so that its being in itself and its being sensible (*mahsusah*) are really only one thing and do not differ at all. Thus, one cannot suppose that the specific form might have a mode of being with respect to which it would not be sensible, because its very being is a being in sensation – quite different from the being of the heavens or earth or anything else which is in external material being. For the being of those (material) things is not in sensation, and they are grasped by sense or by intellect only in an accidental manner and in consequence of a form in sensation corresponding to them.

At the moment of knowledge or of perception, it is the form of the perceived object that is intellected or known and not the object itself. The form of the object which is separate from its matter and which corresponds to the object, is that which is perceived by the intellect and not the object itself. The intellect cannot be united with or contain the object but it can be united with the form of the perceived object which is separate from matter.

Now if this is so, then we can say of that form in sensation, whose being is precisely the same as its being sensed, that its being could not possibly be separate from the being of the substance which senses it. For if it had its being and the

substance sensing it had another (different) being, and they only subsequently became connected in the relation of that which senses and that which is sensed, then this would be like the case of a father and son, each with his own essence and being independent of their relationship – yet who could be intellected in no way other than through (their relationship of) fatherhood and sonship. But something like this is impossible in the case we are considering.²²

For Mulla Sadra, it is in the very nature of the perceived form that it be perceived. A perceived form (*surah idrakiyyah*) is precisely a form which is perceived (*mudrak*) and perception (*idrak*) presupposes a perceiver (*mudrik*). Therefore, the perceived form cannot be separated from the perceiver. The form in perception which is separate from matter and the perceiver are necessarily related. Mulla Sadra compares the necessity of the relation between the perceiver and the perceived form to that of a father and his son and the son to his father. It is not possible for a man to be a father and another to be the son independent or outside of the relationship of father and son. Similarly, it is not possible for a perceived form and the perceiver to be independent of each other. Thus, in the act of knowledge (*al-'ilm*), there is a unity between the subject who knows (*al-'alim*) and the object that is known (*al-ma'lum*).

Furthermore, in Mulla Sadra's perspective the principle of the unity of the knower and the known applies to knowledge of all levels of reality whether it be corporeal, imaginal or spiritual. At every moment of knowledge of a form – sensible or imaginal or spiritual – the intellect of the knower is united with the form that is known. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra states:

... one of the terms of the relation (between that which senses and that which is sensed), in so far as it is part of the relation, cannot be separated from its partner in their being, at any levels of (intensity of) that being. And the same rule holds for the status of the form in imagination or intellection with respect to its being identical with that which imagines or intelligizes.²³

The inter-relations between the subject who knows or intellects, the intellect and the object that is known or is intellected are expressed in Arabic by three terms which have the same root, 'a-q-l: *al-'aqil*, *al-'aql* and *al-ma'qul* respectively. For the Islamic thinkers who advocate the doctrine of the transcendent unity of Being such as the case with Ibn al-'Arabi and Mulla Sadra, the inter-relations between the subject who intellects, the intellect and the object that is intellected or *al-'aqil*, *al-'aql* and *al-ma'qul* respectively, are a unity and their unity is derived from the unity of Being or the unity of the divine Names and Qualities (*tawhid al-asma' wa al-sifat*). God is the Knower (*al-'alim*), Knowledge (*al-'ilm*) and the Known (*al-ma'lum*). Thus, the unity of the knower and the known has its metaphysical basis on the Unity of Being and the Unity of the divine Names and Qualities. This explains Mulla Sadra's discussion of the principle of the unity of the knower and the known in his discussion of God's Names and Attributes.

An important topic treated by Mulla Sadra in his discussion of God's Acts or Signs is the long standing issue debated among Islamic theologians (*mutakallimun*), philosophers (*falasifah* or *hukama'*) and Sufis, which is as to whether the world (*al-'alam*) is created (*hadith*) in time (*zaman*) or is eternal (*qadim*) or uncreated? In the *al-'Arshiiyyah*, Mulla Sadra takes up a discussion of this issue in the thirteenth principle of the 'first place of illumination' which is entitled 'concerning the continuous origination of the world' (*huduth al-'alam*) and which is derived from the 'source of illumination' (*qa'idah mashriqiyyah*).²⁴

Generally, the Islamic philosophers advocate the view that the world is not created in time and the theologians the contrary view that the world is created in time. The philosophers believe that time is a condition of the created order and therefore, the world cannot be created in time. The theologians on the other hand, believe that God created the world in time from nothingness or *ex nihilo*.²⁵ The theologians consider the philosophers' view to be against Islamic teachings since to state that the world is not created in time is also to assert that the world is co-eternal with God. A classic demonstration of the debate between the philosophers and theologians on this issue is

contained for example, in al-Ghazzali's *Tahafut al-falasifah* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) in which he took the Peripatetic philosophers to task, particularly Ibn Sina.

In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra's discussion of the issue of whether the world is eternal or created in time is carried out within the context of its long standing debate in Islamic intellectual history. This is made evident by Mulla Sadra's vocabulary as well as his references and allusions to certain views concerning this issue. Mulla Sadra begins his very comprehensive treatment of the issue by asserting immediately and explicitly, his perspective:

The whole world (*al-'alam*) originates (*hadith*) in time (*zaman*), since everything in it is preceded in its being by nonexistence (*masbuq al-wujud bi-'adam*) in time. And everything in it is constantly renewed (*tajaddud*) (in its being), in the sense that there is absolutely no ipseity (*huwiyyah*) or individual – be it celestial (*falaki*) or elemental (*unsuri*), simple (*basit*) or composite (*murakkab*), substance (*jawhar*) or accident (*'arad*) – but that its nonexistence precedes its being in time, and its being likewise precedes its nonexistence in time. In general, every body (*jism*) and every bodily thing whose being is in any way connected with matter (*maddah*) is constantly renewed in its ipseity and impermanent in its being and its individuality.²⁶

Mulla Sadra asserts that the world is created in time and thus appears to be in agreement with the theologians and opposed to the philosophers. However, Mulla Sadra's reasoning differs fundamentally from that of the theologians and is closer instead to the Sufi view of the perpetual renewal of creation in every moment. According to Mulla Sadra, the world is created in time because every being in the world is preceded in its being by nonexistence in time. At every instant, the world or every being in the world is created or renewed (*tajaddud*). Since at every moment the being of the world is being created or renewed, its being can therefore, be regarded to be preceded by its non-being in the previous moment. For Mulla Sadra, every being which is connected to matter (*maddah*), both gross and subtle, is constantly renewed or created at every moment.

Mulla Sadra's view of the continuous renewal or creation of the world at every moment is based on divine illumination which is the result of meditation upon certain Quranic verses on the renewal of creation by God. In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states:

It is penetrated into us (Mulla Sadra) (*la halana*) from God (*min 'inda Allah*) as result of meditation of certain verses of His Exalted Book, such as His Saying: 'Verily they are in confusion concerning a renewed creation (*khalq jadid*)' (Q.50:15); and His Saying: 'And We are not to be forestalled, in that We will exchange your likenesses and re-create you in what you will not know' (Q.56:60–61); and His Saying: 'And you see the mountains, considering them solid, but they are passing by like the floating of clouds' (Q.28:88). These and other verses allude to the ceaseless renewal and passing away of this material world (*dunya*) and indicate its transience (*zawal*) and infinitude (*inqita'*), as in His saying: 'Everyone who is on it is passing away, but there remains the Face of your Lord, He of Majesty and Glory' (Q.55:26–27).²⁷

Having mentioned that the source of his view of the continuous renewal of the world at every moment is intellectual illumination, Mulla Sadra proceeds to give a philosophical demonstration (*burhan*) of it. Mulla Sadra's demonstration is based on the principle of transubstantial motion (*al-harakah al-jawhariyyah*):

This demonstration (*burhan*) is taken from the proof (*ithbat*) of the continuous renewal (*tajaddud*) of 'Nature' (*tabi'ah*), which is a substantial form (*surah jawhariyyah*) pervading (*sari*) every body (*jism*) and is the immediate principle of its motion (*harakah*) and rest (*sukun*). There is no body that does not have this substantial formal (Nature) pervading the entirety of its parts. It is the immediate principle of (each body's natural) inclination (*mail*) (towards a particular motion), whether that be in potency (*quwwah*) or in actuality (*fi'l*), circular (*mustadir*) or straight (*mustaqim*), and (if straight), toward or away from the center of the earth. It is forever changing and transforming and flowing (into particular forms) according to the substance of its essence.

Its essential motion of being (by giving being to all substances) is the source of all motions in the accidents of place and position and all changes of condition and of quantity and quality.²⁸

In Mulla Sadra's view, *tabi'ah*²⁹ or Nature is a substantial form (*surah jawhariyyah*) which pervades and permeates (*sari*) every body (*jism*) and its parts, and is the immediate principle of its motion and rest. *Tabi'ah* or Nature is the principle of each body's natural inclination (*mail*) for all kinds of motion (*harakah*) whether it is from potentiality (*quwwah*) to actuality (*fi'l*), circular or linear. The whole world and every body in it is pervaded and permeated by the substantial form of Nature which is perpetually in motion and renewing itself. In Mulla Sadra's perspective, the very being of the world of Nature is in constant motion and it is this all-pervading motion which is the source of motion in the individual body. Thus, motion is not limited to the accidents of things but to the very substance of things. This world which is dominated by Nature or *tabi'ah* is in constant transubstantial motion (*al-harakah al-jawhariyyah*). Furthermore, the cause of the perpetual transubstantial motion of the world of Nature is not caused by any agent or cause outside of itself but by its own essential nature which has been given to it by God. In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states:

... the ipseity of this Nature is such that It is ceaselessly being renewed and passing away, originating and ending. There is no cause (other than God) for Its continual origination and renewal, since what is essential in something is not caused by anything but its own essence. And the Maker, when He made (the essence of Nature) made Its essence to be continually renewed. This continual renewal is not made or acted upon or influenced by anything (other than God).³⁰

Eschatology

Mulla Sadra begins his discussion of eschatology (*al-ma'ad*) which constitutes the second part of the *al-'Arshiyyah* or the

'second place of illumination' with a discussion of the knowledge of the soul (*ma'rifat al-nafs*). Here it is important to note that Mulla Sadra uses the term *ma'rifah* which means inner or esoteric knowledge which is obtained through intellectual illumination and intuition, instead of *'ilm* which means knowledge in general and which when juxtaposed to *ma'rifah* denotes a form of knowledge which is acquired through formal learning and discursive thought. The early Islamic philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina used the term *'ilm al-nafs* for the science of the soul and they treated it as a part of Natural Philosophy.³¹ The term *ma'rifat al-nafs* for the science of the soul came to be used in the later history of Islamic Philosophy to distinguish between a presential knowledge (*al-'ilm al-huduri*) of the soul and an acquired knowledge (*al-'ilm al-husuli*) of it. Unlike the early philosophers, Mulla Sadra treats the science of the soul as a part of eschatology (*al-ma'ad*) because it is the soul which will experience the Return and the various eschatological events described in the Quran and *Hadith*. The differences in the terms used for the science of the soul therefore, has to do with the different sources of knowledge of the soul and that of their treatments, with the different perspectives of the subject.

In the first principle of the 'first illumination' (*ishraq al-'awwal*) on 'the inner knowledge of the soul', Mulla Sadra states the necessity for illumination to attain esoteric knowledge of the soul. He considers esoteric knowledge of the soul as 'one of the extremely difficult fields of knowledge' and which cannot be attained merely by discursive thought and philosophical investigations alone. In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states:

Know that the inner knowledge of the soul is one of those extremely difficult (fields of) knowledge in which the philosophers were exceedingly neglectful, despite the length of their investigations, the power of their thought and the frequency of their endeavours in this field. For this knowledge can only be acquired from illuminations drawn (*iqtibas*) from the 'lamp-niche of Prophecy (*mishkat al-nubuwwah*) and through following

the lights of Revelation (*anwar al-wahy*) and Prophethood (*al-risalah*) and the lanterns of the Book (*masabih al-kitab*) and the Tradition (*al-sunnah*) that has come down to us in the Path of our Imams, masters of guidance (*hidayah*) and infallibility, from their ancestor the Seal of the prophets. . .³²

By the use of the terms *mishkat* (lamp-niche) and *masabih* (lanterns), Mulla Sadra is making explicit references to the famous Light Verse of the Quran.³³ For Mulla Sadra, the prophet or prophecy is the 'lamp-niche' (*mishkat*) which is illuminated by the 'lantern' or 'lamp' (*misbah*) which is the Quran. The Prophet by receiving revelation is illuminated with knowledge. Similarly those who accept and have faith in the veracity and guidance of the Quran and the prophethood of Muhammad and the infallibility of the Imams on religious matters can also attain true and certain knowledge, such as that concerning the nature of the soul, and be illuminated.

Having asserted the necessity of accepting revelation and prophecy for attaining esoteric knowledge of the soul, Mulla Sadra then gives a philosophical exposition of the nature of the soul. According to Mulla Sadra, the soul from its origination to the end of its goal has many levels (*darajat*) and stations (*maqamat*). In the beginning, the soul is connected with the body and is a corporeal substance (*jawhar jismani*), however, through the process of transubstantial motion (*al-harakah al-jawhariyyah*) the soul becomes gradually intensified (*ishtidad*) and its mode (*tawr*) of existence or being is likewise transformed until it attains independence (*tajrid*) from the body and finally subsists as spirit and 'returns to its Lord' (Q.89:27). The soul as summarized by Mulla Sadra, originates as body but subsists as spirit: '*jismaniyyat al-huduth ruhaniyyat al-baq*'.³⁴

Mulla Sadra delineates the various stages of the development of the human soul from the vegetative soul (*al-nafs al-nabatiyyah*) to the animal soul (*al-nafs al-haiwaniyyah*) and to the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqah*) with its practical intellect (*al-'aql al-'amali*) and theoretical intellect (*al-nafs al-nazari*) and to the subsequent stages of the development of the theoretical intellect from the intellect in potentiality (*al-'aql bi*

al-quwwah) to the intellect in actuality (*al-‘aql bi al-fi‘l*) which finally attains union with the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*).³⁵ Mulla Sadra’s delineation of the various stages of developments and faculties of the soul are similar to that of Ibn Sina. Mulla Sadra identifies the Active Intellect with the Holy Spirit (*al-ruh al-quds*) or archangel Gabriel who is the Angel of Revelation in Islam. Contrary to the *Mashsha’i* philosophers but in agreement with the Sufis, Mulla Sadra considers human effort and labor alone are insufficient to attain this highest station of unity with the Active Intellect. There is a need for divine aid and grace for the attainment of intellectual perfection as testified by a prophetic *hadith* quoted by Mulla Sadra: ‘A single attraction (*jadhb*) from God (*al-Haqq*) outbalances all the efforts of men and jinn’.³⁶

In the *al-‘Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra states that human souls which have become fully actualized are very few in number. The vast majority of individual souls are imperfect and have not attained the rank of the intellect in actuality which is united to the Active Intellect. However, the fact that these human souls have not attained the highest state of intellectual perfection does not entail that they will perish or are annihilated after death as supposed by Aristotle and his neo-Platonic commentator Alexander Aphrodisias whose works were well-known among the Muslims.³⁷

Unlike Ibn Rushd who agreed with Aristotle and Alexander Aphrodisias and considered only the intellect in man to be immortal and therefore only that part of the human soul which has become actualized in the intelligible world to survive death, Mulla Sadra in agreement with Ibn Sina considers the individual human soul to be immortal. In Mulla Sadra’s perspective, a denial of the immortality of the individual human soul is contrary to Islamic eschatological belief which states explicitly that every soul will be justly requited with what it has earned in this world.

According to Mulla Sadra, Alexander Aphrodisias’s view is based on the supposition that there exists only two kinds of worlds: the world of material bodies and the world of intellects. Consequently, in this cosmological scheme of things, there is no

place for imperfect souls which have not become fully actualized. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra asserts that there is an imaginal world which is intermediate between the spiritual and sensible worlds. All the souls which have not attained perfection or unity with the Active Intellect which is also the station of the Universal Man (*al-insan al-kamil*) will be placed in the intermediate world. It is in this intermediate world that the souls will experience certain eschatological events described in the Quran and *Hadith*. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra explains:

But it is not like that (Mulla Sadra is referring to Alexander Aphrodisias's view). Instead, there is another world of being, alive and sensible (*mahsusah*) by essence, unlike this (physical) world – a world that is perceived by these true (inner) senses (*al-hawas haqiqah*), not by these transient external ones (*al-hawas al-zahirah datharah*). That world is divided into a sensible Paradise (*al-jannah mahsusah*) containing the felicities of the blessed (*na'im al-su'ada'*), including food, drink, marriage, sensual desire and all that could delight the soul and give pleasure to the eyes; and a sensible Hell (*nar mahsusah*) containing the punishments of the wretched (*'adhab al-ashqiya'*), including hellfire, torments, serpents and scorpions. If this imaginal world did not exist what Alexander mentioned would be undeniably true and that would mean that the Sacred Laws (*sharaya'*) and divine Books (*al-kutub al-ilahiyyah*) were lying when they maintained the resurrection (*ba'th*) for everyone³⁸

It is significant to note that Mulla Sadra refers to the Sacred Law (*shari'ah*) and the divine Book (*al-kitab al-ilahiyyah*) in the plural, thus indicating that the rejection of the immortality of the individual human soul is not only contrary to Islamic teachings but also to the other religions. Mulla Sadra is obviously aware of similar debates of this issue among the Christian and Jewish philosophers. Elsewhere in the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra describes the remarkable nature of the human soul and its incredible potentiality in the following manner:

... the human soul is 'the conclusion of the world of sensible things (*nihayat 'alam al-mahsusat*) and the beginning of the spiritual world (*bidayat 'alam al-ruhaniyyah*). It is the greatest gateway to God (*bab Allah al-'azim*), through which one can be brought to the Highest Kingdom (*al-malakut al-ula*); but it also has 'a certain portion of all the gates of Hell' (Q.25:44). It is the dyke standing between this world and the other world because it is the form (*surah*) of every potency (*quwwah*) in this world and the matter (*maddah*) for every form in another world.

According to Mulla Sadra, the human soul is the conjunction of the terminal point of the sensible world and the initial point of the spiritual world or using a Quranic description: 'the junction of the two seas' (Q.18:59).³⁹ It has the capability of having dominion over the physical world and the possibility of entering into all of the higher levels of reality.

One of the most important doctrines discussed by Mulla Sadra on the human soul is the immortality of the imaginative faculty (*quwwah khayaliyyah*). In the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states:

In man, the imaginal power is a substance which is independent of this world (*jawhar mujarrad*), that is, the world of physical beings (*al-akwan al-tabi'iyyah*) and the motions (*harakah*) and transformations of material things... But this power is not (totally) independent of generated being (*al-kawnayn*), since in that case it would have to be (pure) intellect (*'aql*) and object of intellection (*ma'qul*).⁴⁰

By stating that the imaginal power in man is a substance which is independent of the sensible world (*jawhar mujarrad*), Mulla Sadra is asserting that the imaginative faculty is immaterial and immortal and it does not die when the body dies. Although the imaginative faculty is of a substance which is independent of the material world, it is not without connection or relation to it. The imaginative faculty according to Mulla Sadra is not totally independent of the two worlds of generated being (*al-kawnayn*) which are this world and the next world. If the imaginative faculty were to be totally independent of both worlds, then it would be pure intellect (*'aql*) or spirit.

For Mulla Sadra the imaginative faculty belongs to or is a part of the imaginal world. The imaginal world is a world which corresponds to or is similar to the material world but is very much richer than the material world. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra explains:

... Its being (i.e. imaginative faculty) is in another world, one that corresponds to this (physical) world in that it comprises heavens, elements, different species of plants, animals, and so on – only multiplied many times over (the things of) this world. Everything that man perceives and sees directly by means of his imaginative faculty (*quwwah khiyaliyyah*) and his interior sense (*hiss al-batin*) does not at all inhere in the stuff (*jirm*) of the brain or in some power inhering in that area (as maintained by Ibn Sina); nor is it located in the bodies of the heavenly spheres or in a world separated from the soul as some followers of the Illuminationist (philosophers) have maintained. Instead, it subsists in the soul – not like something inhering in something else, but rather like an act subsisting through its agent.⁴¹

Mulla Sadra does not consider the imaginative faculty to be located either in the material stuff of the brain or in some area of the brain which is associated with its function as thought of by Ibn Sina or in a world which is separate and independent of the human soul as believed by Suhrawardi.⁴² The imaginative faculty has its locus in the human soul. The relation between the imaginative faculty and the soul is not in the manner of something inhering in another thing but in the way an act is related to its agent. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra states:

These forms present in the world of the soul may differ in manifestness (*zuhur*) and hiddenness (*khafa'*), in intensity (*shiddah*) and weakness (*du'f*). The stronger and more substantial the power of this imaginal soul – (which is to say), the more it returns to its own essence and the less it is preoccupied with the distractions of the body and the use of the bodily powers of motion – the more manifestly will these forms appear in the soul and the stronger will be their being. For when these forms have become strengthened and intensified, there is

no proportion between them and the things existing in this world so far as the intensity of their being, actualization and certainty of effect. It is not true, as is popularly supposed that these forms are mere phantom images without regular effects of real being as is the case with most dreams.⁴³

According to Mulla Sadra, the degree of manifestation (*zuhur*) or hiddenness (*khafa'*) and intensity (*shiddah*) or weakness (*du'f*) of the imaginal forms which are perceived by the imaginative faculty is dependent on the strength of the imaginative faculty itself. The greater the strength of the imaginative faculty, the more manifest and intense are the imaginal forms which are perceived by it. The soul's preoccupations with the body affects directly the strength of the imaginative faculty. This explains why for most individuals imaginal forms are only perceived in the dream state when the body is asleep and the soul is less preoccupied with the body. The imaginal forms are not mere phantom images without objective existence or reality. The imaginal forms are objectively existent and they belong to a level of being which is higher and more intense than that of the sensible world. For the majority of the people, the imaginal forms are hidden from them and if manifested in the dream state are often weak due to their souls' immense attachment with the body. The complete manifestation of the imaginal forms and the power of the imaginative faculty will only be experienced fully after death when the soul is separated from the body. In the posthumous state, the individual will perceive the full manifestation and intensity of the imaginal forms and come to realise that the sensible forms of the material world are weaker and less real, relative to the imaginal forms. This is a reverse of the situation in this world in which the imaginal forms which are perceived for the most part in the dream state appear less real compared to the vivid sensible forms of the world. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra states:

The complete manifestation of these forms and the perfection of these forms and the perfection of the power of their being occurs

only after death. (This is true) to such a degree that compared to the forms man will see after death, the forms he sees in this world are like dreams. This is why the Commander of the truly faithful (Imam Ali) said: 'Mankind are sleeping; when they die, they awaken.' Then the Unseen becomes immediate vision. In this is the secret of the Return...⁴⁴

In Mulla Sadra's perspective, the imaginative faculty is the end of this world's modality of being (*akhir hadhihi al-nash'ah al-'ula*) and the beginning of the other world's modality of being (*awwal al-nash'ah al-akhirah*)⁴⁵. When the soul is separated from the body it carries along with itself the perceiving form (*al-surat al-mudrikah*) which enables it to perceive sensible things through its inner sense (*hiss al-batin*).⁴⁶ Thus, although at death the soul is separated from the body and the external senses, the soul continues to perceive forms through its inner senses. In addition, the imaginative faculty when it is separated from the body can create or originate (*ibda'*) imaginal forms by its own volition (*al-iradah*). In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra explains the creative power of the soul to originate imaginal forms in the following manner:

Extended forms and shapes and structures can occur through the activity of a maker because of the preparedness of certain materials and in association with certain receptive conditions. But those forms may likewise occur by immediate creation (*ibda'*), simply through the conceptions and formative directions of the maker, without any association with a (material) receptacle and its location and preparedness. The being of the planets and heavenly spheres is like that, through God's immediate conception of their principles and formative directions and through His knowledge... Another example of this sort (of creation) is the origination by mere volition (*al-iradah*) of the imaginal forms (*al-suwwar al-khayaliyyah*) subsisting in no place, through the imaginal power (*al-quwwah al-khayaliyyah*) which is independent from this world (*mujarradah*)... Those forms do not subsist in the corporeal substance (*jirm*) of the brain, nor in the heavenly bodies as some people have

maintained, nor in a world of phantasmal images subsisting apart from the soul. Rather they subsist through the soul and exist in the domain of the soul.⁴⁷

Forms which have extension and shapes can be created by an individual when there are present the appropriate or correct materials and conditions at his disposal. However forms can also be created (*ibda'*) simply by the conception and formative directions of an agent without the presence of the necessary materials and conditions. Here Mulla Sadra gives the example of God's creation of the planets and heavenly bodies as an illustration of such a creation.

According to Mulla Sadra, God created the heavenly bodies from nothing or without any preceding matter. God's act of creating or originating the heavens from nothing is denoted by the term *ibda'*.⁴⁸ It is one of the terms used in the Quran along with others such as *khalq* and *takwin* to describe God's creative activities. The term *ibda'* means to create or originate something from nothing. One of the Names of God is *al-Mubdi'* or 'He who creates from nothing'.

Mulla Sadra like Ibn al-'Arabi believes that the soul is endowed by God with a similar power to originate forms from nothing. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra quotes Ibn al-'Arabi on this point:

Some of the 'people of realization' (*al-muhaqqiqun*) (i.e. Ibn al-'Arabi) said: 'Every man creates with his imagination things which have no being outside the place of his intention. . . Yet his intention continues to preserve them without this act of preservation at all tiring him; whenever neglect overtakes him, though, that which he created disappears.'⁴⁹

The imaginal forms which are originated from nothing by the human soul exist in the soul. For Mulla Sadra, these imaginal forms which are originated by the soul and which exist in it are 'more substantial, more firmly established and permanent in their reality than material forms which are constantly changing and being regenerated'.⁵⁰ Using a Quranic analogy, Mulla Sadra states that the material forms when compared to the imaginal

forms are 'like a mirage in the desert which the thirsty man thinks to be water' (Q.24:39).⁵¹

In the posthumous state, everything that an individual conceives of or desires or longs for is immediately present to him. The mere conception of a thing is the very same as its presence. In the *al-'Arshiyyah* Mulla Sadra asserts that all that a man attains and is requited with in the after-life whether it be the blessings (*na'im*) of Paradise (*jannah*) such as houris (*hur*), palaces (*qusur*), gardens (*jannat*), trees (*shajarat*) and streams (*anhar*)⁵² or the opposite sorts of pains (*'adhab*) that are in Hell (*jahannam*) such as fire (*nar*), chains (*salasil*), scorpions (*'aqarib*) and serpents (*tha'abin*)⁵³ are 'in the essence of his soul (*dhat al-nafs*): in his intentions (*niyyat*), meditations (*ta'ammulat*), beliefs (*i'tiqadat*) and character (*akhlaq*)'.⁵⁴ Therefore in the after-life, the ambience of the soul is nothing other than the projections of its inner being. An individual's intentions, meditations, beliefs and character will determine whether he will experience the felicity of Paradise or the suffering of Hell. Every human being whether he is among the blessed (*su'ada'*) of Paradise or the wretched (*ashqiya'*) of Hell will have his own complete and independent world which is more immense than this world.

In his account of Paradise and Hell, Mulla Sadra has made use of the vocabulary of the Quran as well as its descriptions about them. Following the Quran Mulla Sadra uses the word *jannah* for Paradise, *jahannam* for Hell, *na'im* for the blessings of Paradise, *'adhab* for the suffering of Hell, *su'ada'* for the blessed of Paradise and *ashqiya'* for the wretched in Hell. The specific items mentioned by Mulla Sadra in relation to Paradise and Hell respectively such as *jannat* (gardens), *anhar* (streams), *hur* (houris), and *nar* (fire), snakes (*tha'abin*) and scorpions (*'aqarib*) are also taken from the Quran. The Quran describes Paradise and Hell in very vivid and sensuous imageries drawn from the things of this world. In the 'third illumination' concerning the states that occur in the other world, Mulla Sadra discusses in a detailed manner the symbolic meanings and significance of the sensual imageries used to describe Paradise and Hell and the various eschatological events which human souls will experience in the after-life. Mulla Sadra's interpretation

of the symbolic descriptions of the after-life contained in the Quran can be regarded as a philosophical exegesis of the revealed verses. It is by positing the existence of an imaginal world intermediate between the spiritual and sensible worlds and the immortality of the individual soul and the creative power of the imaginative faculty to originate forms without requiring material instruments and receptacles that Mulla Sadra is able to uphold and explain the Islamic view of eschatology as contained in the Quran and *Hadith*.

An Analysis of Mulla Sadra's Method of Synthesis of the Truth Claims of Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason

From the above discussion of Mulla Sadra's approach to and treatment of the fundamental principles of his philosophy in the *al-'Arshiyyah*, there can be observed and discerned certain general patterns and characteristic features of Mulla Sadra's method of synthesizing the truth claims of revelation, gnosis and discursive philosophy. The following is a discussion of the salient features of Mulla Sadra's method of synthesis.

In his exposition of each of the four fundamental principles, Mulla Sadra states explicitly that the source of his knowledge of these principles are intellectual illuminations derived either from proximity with God (*qa'idah laduniyyah*) or the divine Throne (*qa'idah 'arshiyyah*) or the place of illumination (*qa'idah mashriqiyyah*). These illuminations which are bestowals from God are the result of having faith in Him, the Quran, the Prophet and the Imams. In the Prologue of the *al-'Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states that he wrote the text in order to disclose 'some of the divine (*rububiyyah*) matters and sacred (*qudsiyyah*) insights' with which God has illuminated his heart 'from the world of Mercy and Light'.⁵⁵ According to Mulla Sadra, these illuminative insights are beyond the understanding of the multitude and are not to be found in the works of the rationalistic philosophers or to be acquired by formal learning and discursive thought.⁵⁶ He asserts that these insights are 'like glowing embers lit at the Lamp-niche of Prophecy and

Sainthood (*mishkat al-nubuwwah wa al-walayah*) drawn forth from the sources of the Quran and Prophetic Tradition'.⁵⁷

Mulla Sadra's choice of the title of *Kitab al-hikmat al-'arshiyah* for his text which literally means *The Book of Wisdom Descending from the Divine Throne* also indicates in an explicit manner that it deals with a form of knowledge or wisdom which is attained from the highest form of intellectual illuminations. The term *al-'arsh* is a Quranic term and it means the Throne of God. In Islamic cosmology, the Throne of God symbolizes the boundary between the created order and the divine order. Thus the term '*al-'arshiyah*' in the title, indicates that the text deals with Mulla Sadra's illuminative knowledge (*al-'ilm al-laduni*) about God and the Last Day which is derived from sacred inspirations received from the Divine Throne. In Mulla Sadra's consideration, these two forms of knowledge are the most essential to the attainment of divine wisdom and intellectual perfection⁵⁸ and are therefore fundamental to his transcendent philosophy.

Although the primary objective of the *al-'Arshiyah* is to communicate some of Mulla Sadra's illuminative insights about God and the Last Day or metaphysics and eschatology for the purpose of guiding 'ardent and noble souls' who desire to attain divine wisdom and certain knowledge,⁵⁹ these insights as demonstrated in the preceding discussion of the *al-'Arshiyah*, are not expressed and communicated independent of or in isolation of either revelation or discursive thought or philosophy. The illuminative insights of Mulla Sadra are formulated as philosophical principles (*qawa'id*) and are expressed in the technical vocabulary (*istilahat*) of the Islamic philosophical tradition and whenever relevant, that of *kalam* (theology) and '*irfan* (doctrinal Sufism). Mulla Sadra demonstrates the veracity and cogency of the illuminative principles by employing logical reasoning and arguments. To illustrate, in his discussion of the illuminative principle of the unity of the knower and the known, Mulla Sadra makes use of the logical relation between the perceiver (*mudrik*), the perceived (*mudrak*) and perception (*idrak*) to demonstrate their unity. Their logical relations with each other provide Mulla Sadra with a legitimate basis for

establishing their unity. Although Mulla Sadra makes use of logical reasoning and arguments to demonstrate the cogency of his illuminative principles, he also often pushes discursive thought to its limits in order to prepare the occasion for intellectual intuition. For example, in his discussion of the unity of Being, Mulla Sadra examines all the various concepts of unity that man can conceive of and denies that any one of them pertains to God's Unity. Mulla Sadra's purpose of negating all human concepts of unity from the understanding of God's Unity is to demonstrate that God's Unity transcends all the logical categories of human reasoning and therefore cannot be known discursively. God's unity can only be known through immediate experience (*dhawq*) and intellectual 'unveiling' (*kashf*).

In addition, Mulla Sadra discusses his illuminative principles in the context of the various views, perspectives and debates of them in the different schools of thought in Islamic intellectual history. For example, Mulla Sadra's discussion of the illuminative principle of the renewal of creation at every moment is made in the context of the views of the philosophers, theologians and Sufis about it and the debates between them. Thus, Mulla Sadra's intellectual illuminations are not expounded or expressed in an intellectual vacuum. Rather, they are formulated as cogent philosophical principles which are expressed in the precise technical vocabulary relevant to their treatments and expounded in their necessary and vital intellectual background and contexts. If on the one hand, Mulla Sadra's intellectual illuminations are personal and particular to him, on the other hand, the discussion and demonstration of his illuminations in the language and context of Islamic philosophical thought makes them intellectually comprehensible and accessible.

Mulla Sadra frequently makes references to and quotes from the Quran, *Hadith* of the Prophet and sayings of the Imams. Mulla Sadra quotes from these sources in order to demonstrate the conformity of his views to them and to explicate the profound metaphysical meanings and significances which are contained in or implied by them. Mulla Sadra's quotations of the relevant verses of the Quran, *hadiths* of the Prophet and

sayings of the Imams not only demonstrate the orthodoxy of his views but more importantly, his particular understanding and interpretations of them. Not only does Mulla Sadra demonstrate the coherence of his illuminative insights by the use of logical reasoning, but he also demonstrates their orthodoxy by confirming them with the relevant verses of the Quran, *Hadith* and sayings of the Imams. For example, in his exposition of the principle of transubstantial motion, Mulla Sadra not only provides the reader with a philosophical justification of it but also quotes certain verses from the Quran to demonstrate that the principle of transubstantial motion is consistent with its teachings.

From the above discussion of the salient features of Mulla Sadra's method of synthesis of the truth claims of revelation, gnosis and discursive philosophy, two important observations can be made. First, Mulla Sadra's recognition and acceptance of the three principal sources of knowledge available to man: revelation, intellectual intuition and reason. Second, there exists a synthesis of the three sources of knowledge in Mulla Sadra's formulation of the fundamental principles of his philosophy.

On the basis of the preceding discussion of the *al-'Arshiyyah*, it is evident that Mulla Sadra considers the Quran, *Hadith* of the Prophet and sayings of the Imams as certain and ultimate sources of knowledge. The truth of these sources of knowledge can be accepted on the basis of faith (*iman*) and obedience to religious authority (*taqlid*) as is the case with the majority of Muslims. However, according to Mulla Sadra, the truth of the Quran, prophetic *Hadith* and sayings of the Imams can also be verified and known with certainty (*yaqin*).

Like all philosophers concerned with the pursuit of certain knowledge, the issue of verification (*tahqiq*) is of profound importance for Mulla Sadra. The truth (*al-haqiqah*) in order to be ascertained has to be verified. There are various ways to verify the truth of something. The truth of an empirical statement, for example, can be verified by observation of the facts which relate to it and the truth of a logical statement by the rules of sound reasoning. According to Mulla Sadra, the truth of revelation can be verified by intellectual illumination or

‘unveiling’ (*kashf*) or direct witnessing (*mushahadah*). Through intellectual illumination, the true meaning of the verses of the Quran can be known with certainty. In the concluding statement of the *al-‘Arshiyyah*, Mulla Sadra states:

Know that to attain the true inner divine knowledge one must follow a proof (*burhan*) or ‘unveiling’ by immediate vision, just as He – May He be exalted! – said: ‘Say: Bring your proof, if you are among those who speak truthfully!’ (Q.2:11); ... This proof is a Light that God casts on the heart of the man of true faith, a Light that illuminates his inner vision so that he ‘sees things as they really are,’ as it was stated in the prayer of the Prophet...⁶⁰

If the truth of revelation is verified by intellectual illumination, then the subsequent logical question that can be raised is: How can the truth of an intellectual illumination be verified? From Mulla Sadra’s writings it appears that there are two ways to verify the truth or authenticity of an intellectual illumination. They are: one, by referring and confirming it with the ultimate and certain source of knowledge which is revelation and two, by checking its coherence and cogency with the rules of logical reasoning.

Although an illuminative experience is particular and personal to the individual to whom it has been bestowed on by God, the cognitive content of an illuminative experience can be expressed and communicated in the language of phenomenal experience. Characteristic of a *hakim*, Mulla Sadra expresses and discloses the noetic content of his illuminations in the language and categories of the Islamic philosophical tradition. Mulla Sadra confirms the truth or legitimacy of his intellectual illuminations which are expounded in the form of philosophical principles by demonstrating their consistency and conformity with revelation and their intellectual coherence and cogency with the rules of logical reasoning.

Thus, there exists a synthesis of the three sources of knowledge in Mulla Sadra’s philosophy. In Mulla Sadra’s perspective, the three principal sources of knowledge are not only necessary and vital in the pursuit of certain knowledge and

intellectual perfection, but they can also be synthesized or brought together in a harmonious way in the realization of the Truth. This perspective of his is clearly demonstrated in his philosophical writings. As the preceding analysis of the *al-'Arshiyyah* reveals, Mulla Sadra's philosophy which contains a synthesis of the truth claims of revelation, gnosis and discursive philosophy is based on his synthesis of the three sources of knowledge. It is by synthesizing the three sources of knowledge that Mulla Sadra synthesizes the truth claims of revelation, gnosis and discursive philosophy in his transcendent philosophy.

Notes

- 1 See James Morris's introduction to his translation of the *al-'Arshiyyah*, *Wisdom of the Throne*, 54.
- 2 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 219; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 92.
- 3 See for example the concluding testament of the *al-'Arshiyyah*.
- 4 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 219; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 94.
- 5 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 221; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 98.
- 6 Here Mulla Sadra uses the word *ayat* meaning God's Signs as equivalent to the term *af'al* which means God's Acts. The *ayat* or signs are the result of God's Acts.
- 7 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 219; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 94–95.
- 8 Here, I would like to note that much of my understanding and appreciation of the vocabulary and material of the *al-Hikmah al-'Arshiyyah* is derived from a reading course on this text with Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr.
- 9 In the second principle of the 'first illumination' Mulla Sadra demonstrates the veracity of this metaphysical premise.
- 10 Although both Ibn al-'Arabi and Mulla Sadra uphold the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, there are certain fundamental differences in their understanding of it based on their respective views on the relation between Being and existents. This issue will be discussed in the following chapter.
- 11 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 220; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 96.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 'God is not proven by any proof nor conceived of by any rational faculties. Rational faculties reach Him not with their reflective powers.' From Ibn al-'Arabi's *al-Futuhat al-makiyyah* quoted in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 381.

- 14 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 221; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 96–97.
- 15 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 221; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 98.
- 16 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 221; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 98–99.
- 17 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 221; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 99.
- 18 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 227; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 113.
- 19 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 228; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 115.
- 20 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 227; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 113.
- 21 Islamic Philosophy like Greek Philosophy, distinguishes between three different substances: corporeal (*jism*), psychic (*nafs*) and intelligible or spiritual (*'aql*) substances.
- 22 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 228; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 114.
- 23 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 228; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 114–115.
- 24 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 119.
- 25 For a comprehensive treatment of the views of the philosophers and theologians concerning the creation of the world, see Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), Ch. 7.
- 26 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 119–120.
- 27 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 120.
- 28 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 121.
- 29 Mulla Sadra like many Islamic thinkers before him use the word *tabi'ah* to mean the world of Nature or of bodies, the nature of something as well as Nature as a force or a power.
- 30 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 121–22.
- 31 For example in his *Kitab al-najat*, Ibn Sina's discussion of the soul forms the sixth section of the second book devoted to Natural Philosophy (*tabi'ah*).
- 32 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 234; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 131.
- 33 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His Light is as a niche (*mishkat*) wherein is a lamp (*misbah*). The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things' (Q.24:35).
- 34 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 132.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 230; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 132.
- 37 Many of the works of Alexander Aphrodisias or al-Iskandar al-Afrudisi as he is known among the Muslims were translated into Arabic and they made a tremendous impact on the Muslim philosophers. His commentary on Aristotle's *de Anima* (*Kitab al-nafs*) for example, was greatly debated. See Richard Walzer, 'On the legacy of the classics in the Islamic world,' in his *Greek into Arabic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

- 38 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 243–44; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 150.
- 39 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 242; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 148.
- 40 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 137.
- 41 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 138.
- 42 Although Suhrawardi is the first Islamic thinker to state in an explicit manner of the existence of the imaginal world which is intermediate between the material and spiritual worlds, he however, does not assert that there is a corresponding level of being in man. See Fazlur Rahman, 'Dream, Imagination and 'Alam al-mithal,' *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (June 1964): 169, 175.
- 43 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 138.
- 44 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 238; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 138.
- 45 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 258; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 178.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 247; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 157.
- 48 The term *ibda'* is used by Islamic philosophers before Mulla Sadra to denote God's timeless and unmediated creation of the separate intelligences and the heavenly spheres. See James Morris's notation of this in *Wisdom of the Throne*, 157.
- 49 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 247–248; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 158.
- 50 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 250; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 163.
- 51 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 256; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 173.
- 52 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 250; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 162.
- 53 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 252; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 166.
- 54 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 251; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 164.
- 55 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 218, *Wisdom of the Throne*, 90.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 219; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 92.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *al-'Arshiyyah*, 286; *Wisdom of the Throne*, 253.

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al-'Arshiyyah

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