

Mullā Ṣadrā

The most famous and influential philosopher of the School of Isfahan and perhaps the greatest Islamic metaphysician, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, usually known as Mullā Ṣadrā or by his honorific title, Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn (foremost among the theosophers), was born in Shiraz in 979/1571–1572. His father, Ibrāhīm ibn Yaḥyā Qawāmī, was a high court official and from one of the best known noble families of Shiraz and he sought to provide the best education possible for his highly gifted son. It was in fact in Shiraz that Mullā Ṣadrā received his earliest education in the religious sciences. He was both deeply pious and philosophically minded and, moreover, had been interested in the spiritual sciences from his youth. Unable to find appropriate teachers in Shiraz for more advanced studies in those sciences, gnosis and metaphysics, the young Mullā Ṣadrā left his city of birth for the Safavid capital in Qazwin. The capital was moved to Isfahan in 1006/1597 and he also moved to that city where he received most of his philosophical training. His two main teachers were Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, who held the position of *shaykh al-islām* of the capital and with whom he studied mostly the religious sciences, and Mīr Dāmād, the founder of the School of Isfahan, who also succeeded 'Āmilī in that position in 1030/1621 and with whom Mullā Ṣadrā studied philosophy, studying with him the works of Ibn Sīnā, Bahmanyār, Suhrawardī and Ṭūsī. Mīr Dāmād was himself a student of Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn Sammāki Astarābādī who was in turn a student of Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Dashtakī. Therefore, through him, Mullā became connected to the philosophers of the School of Shiraz and the golden chain of the transmission of Islamic philosophy, a chain that is so significant because the teaching of Islamic philosophy in the traditional manner involves not only written texts but also an oral tradition that has been transmitted from one generation to the next during the past millennium.

At the time of the death of his father and also because of unfavorable conditions in Isfahan, Mullā Ṣadrā left that city and returned for a while to Shiraz. He also visited Kashan where he may have studied Sufism and gnosis with Mīrzā Ḍiā' al-Dīn Rāzī

known as *Ḍiā' al-'Urafā'*. Mullā Ṣadrā then left for retreat in the village of Kahak located near the road between Qom and Isfahan. It was in Kahak that Mullā Ṣadrā began the composition of his magnum opus, *al-Asfār al-arba'ah* (The Four Journeys). Then he returned to Shiraz where he spent the rest of his life teaching in the beautiful Khan School, founded by Allāhwirdī Khan. That school still stands and is perhaps the most outstanding Safavid architectural monument in that city.

While teaching and writing in Shiraz, Mullā Ṣadrā continued to travel within Persia to such cities as Qom and Kashan. He also performed the pilgrimage to Mecca seven times on foot. He died in Basrah in 1045/1635–1636 (according to some, in 1050/1640) during his last pilgrimage, the site of his tomb being unknown.

The writings of Mullā Ṣadrā transformed the landscape of Islamic philosophy and he also trained many students from near and far, including some from beyond the borders of Persia. Among his foremost students, who are themselves important figures in the history of philosophy in Persia, one may name Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī entitled *Fayyāḍ*, Mirzā Ḥusayn Tunakābunī and Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Bīdābādī. As for the forty some books that have survived from his pen, for the sake of classification they can be divided into two categories: those dealing primarily with the transmitted (*naqlī*) and religious sciences and those dealing mostly with the intellectual (*'aqlī*) sciences and more specifically philosophy. But because of his unitary perspective, this categorization can be misleading because these categories are not completely mutually exclusive. His *naqlī* works contain *'aqlī* elements and vice-versa.

His predominantly *naqlī* works include his monumental commentary upon the Qur'ān, the longest by an Islamic philosopher, an incomplete commentary upon the *Uṣūl al-kāfī* (The Sufficient Principles) of Kulaynī, *Asrār al-āyāt* (Mysteries of Qur'ānic Verses) and *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* (Keys to the Invisible World). His two books *Risāla-yi si aṣl* (The Treatise of the Three Principles), his only treatise written in Persian, and *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyyah* (Breaking the Idols of the Age of Ignorance), one dealing with the defence of authentic Sufism against its detractors and the other criticizing what Mullā Ṣadrā considered to be a decadent and deviant form of Sufism, must also be included in this category.

Mullā Ṣadrā's mainly *'aqlī* and philosophical works include first of all the *Asfār*, which is considered to this day in Persia to be the most advanced text of Islamic philosophy and also a major source for the history of Islamic thought. Then there is his second major philosophical opus containing a summary of his teachings, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah* (Divine Witnesses). In this category one must also mention some of his shorter philosophical works such as *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād* (The Origin and the Return), *al-Ḥikmah al-'arshiyyah* (Wisdom of the Throne) and probably his last work *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir* (The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations). We must also include in this category his masterly glosses upon Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (The Book of Healing) and Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*

(The Theosophy of the Orient of Light) as well as Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary upon *Kitāb al-Hidāyah* (The Book of Guidance) of Athīr al-Dīn Abharī. The latter book became his most famous text in Muslim India, where people often refer to the book itself as *Ṣadrā*.

Mullā Ṣadrā was the grand synthesizer of nearly a millennium of Islamic thought into a philosophical school that he called *al-ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah*, the transcendent theosophy or philosophy. This term had been used in Islamic philosophy and Sufism before Mullā Ṣadrā but he gave it a distinct new meaning by using it as the proper name for the school founded by him. Since then this school has taken its place among other major Islamic philosophical schools such as the *mashshā'ī* and *ishrāqī*.

Probably no Islamic philosopher had such an intimate knowledge of earlier schools of Islamic thought and certainly no one combined this historical knowledge on the level displayed by Mullā Ṣadrā with metaphysical acumen and knowledge of the highest degree. His *ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah* marks the integration of Islamic Peripatetic or *mashshā'ī* philosophy, the School of Illumination or *ishrāq*, gnosis or *'irfān* of the School of Ibn 'Arabī, schools of *kalām*, both Sunni and Shi'i, and the sapiential dimension of the Islamic religion itself as contained in the Qur'ān, *ḥadīths* of the Prophet and traditions of the Shi'i Imams. His synthesis was, moreover, based on the triple sources of *al-Qur'ān*, *al-burhān* and *al-'irfān*. This means that his epistemology was based on knowledge derived from the sources of revelation along with ratiocination and logical demonstration as well as intellectual intuition, illumination and unveiling. Not only did he not consider these paths of knowing to be contradictory, but he believed them to be complementary and in harmony with each other. This is why his works range from logic to spiritual unveiling to discussion of revealed texts in whose inner dimensions is to be found *ḥikmat*.

Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy deals with numerous issues not seen in earlier Islamic philosophy as well as new interpretations of already discussed theses. The cornerstone of his grand synthesis is the unity (*waḥdah*), principiality (*aṣālah*) and gradation (*tashkīk*) of being/existence, that is, *wujūd* and he writes that he received this truth as a gift from God bestowed upon him through illumination and unveiling. But there are also several other major doctrines which are basic to *al-ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah*. They include trans-substantial motion, or *al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*, which enabled him to provide a natural philosophy very different from that of Ibn Sīnā; the independent existence (*tajarrud*) of the imaginal world (*'ālam al-khayāl*) as an order of reality independent from the material level of existence, a doctrine that enabled him to provide a fresh philosophical explanation of eschatological realities as revealed in Islam; and the unity of the intellector and the intelligible in the act of intellection (*ittiḥād al-'āqil wa'l-ma'qūl*), which, although mentioned by such earlier philosophers as Abu'l-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī, gained a completely new significance when considered in light of Mullā Ṣadrā's ontology.

Nor are these doctrines the only new features of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, but because of limited space it is not possible to discuss the others here.

When we use the term The School of Isfahan, we do not mean that we have only one philosophical school in mind. Certainly the School of Mullā Ṣadrā is the most significant in the School of Isfahan but there were also philosophical currents opposed to him led by such philosophers as Mullā Rajab 'Alī Tabrīzī. In fact during the latter part of the Safavid period, Mullā Ṣadrā's teachings became to a large extent eclipsed. His philosophical school was, however, revived in the Qajar period by Mullā 'Alī Nūrī. Henceforth, although opposition to Mullā Ṣadrā continued here and there, most of the great philosophers of Persia such as Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Qumshā'ī, Āqā 'Alī Mudarris and Ḥajjī Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī were Ṣadrian. Moreover, it was around the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā that Islamic philosophy was revived in Persia during the Pahlavi period by such figures as 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī. Also after the advent of the Islamic Revolution, the major revival of interest in Islamic philosophy with Mullā Ṣadrā as its main axis has continued. In recent years many of his works have appeared in new critical editions, some have been translated from Arabic into Persian and European languages, many critical studies have appeared concerning his thought, international conferences have been held on him, a foundation has been established devoted to his teachings and a journal entitled *Transcendent Philosophy*, edited by S. G. Safavi, has been created primarily for Ṣadrian studies. The founder of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, taught the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā for decades and it continues to dominate the Islamic philosophical scene in Persia to this day.

In speaking about the influence of Mullā Ṣadrā outside Persia, Muslim India must be treated separately because of his extensive influence there in contrast to the Ottoman Empire and the Arab world where he had little influence until recently, except for Iraq whose Shī'ī circles were closely bound intellectually to Persia. In Muslim India the influence of Mullā Ṣadrā began even in his own lifetime and has continued over the centuries. One need only study the holdings in manuscript libraries in the Subcontinent to discover how rich they are in manuscripts of his works. Moreover, so many of the leading Muslim thinkers of that area, from Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi to Maḥmūd Jawnpūrī to Mawlānā 'Alī Thanwī, were deeply influenced by the master from Shiraz. Moreover, from the eleventh/seventeenth century onward, Ṣadrian philosophy has been taught in the *madrasahs* of the Subcontinent and some of his works have been translated into Urdu, including parts of the *Asfār* which were rendered into Urdu by the famous Mawlānā Abu'l-'Alā' Mawḍūdī, the founder of the Jamā'at-i Islāmī of Pakistan, in his younger days. The influence of Mullā Ṣadrā in Pakistan through the medium of English in modernized circles during the second half of the fourteenth/twentieth century must not be confused with his abiding presence in traditional circles in that land from a much earlier date.

During the past half century, interest in Mullā Ṣadrā has also grown by leaps and bounds in the West and also in much of the rest of the Islamic world. Although a few scholars such as Comte de Gobineau and Max Horten had written about Mullā Ṣadrā earlier, until the 1960s practically no one in the West, even among students of Islamic philosophy, knew much about him. Then Corbin and I began to write about him in French and English and since then Ṣadrian studies have continued to grow in the West and also in certain Islamic countries especially Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey. Translations of his writings continue especially into French and English and independent works about his thought do not cease from seeing the light of day. Numerous articles devoted to Mullā Ṣadrā also appear continuously, not only in *Transcendent Philosophy*, but also in many other learned journals in Western languages as well in Islamic languages such as Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Indonesian and Malay in which both the number of books and articles on Ṣadrian studies has been increasing continuously.

There is no doubt that Mullā Ṣadrā is now a central figure in the field of Islamic philosophical studies in both East and West. He is not of historical interest only, but is a living philosophical voice of great significance in contemporary Islamic intellectual life. His influence continues unabated and only grows with the passage of time as his ideas become better known globally.

We have included selections from three of Mullā Ṣadrā's major texts: his magnum opus, *al-Asfār al-ʿaqliyyah al-arbaʿah* (The Four Intellectual Journeys); *al-Mashāʿir* (Metaphysical Penetrations); and *Ittiḥād al-ʿāqil waʾl-maʿqūl* (Unification of the Intellector and the Intellected).

Our selection from *The Four Intellectual Journeys* is from the first volume which deals with metaphysics where Mullā Ṣadrā elaborates on the definition of philosophy and its primary divisions, its goal and its nobility. He says that the seekers of truth are embarked upon four journeys, the first of which is going from creation to the Truth. The chapter continues with the question of being and its primary parts, the subject of Divine science and its primary impression upon the soul and the definition of the soul. The question of the soul's descent from its Holy Abode, determination of the category to which motion belongs and Mullā Ṣadrā's unique response that motion occurs in the category of substance (*al-ḥarakah al-jawhariyyah*) are treated next. This chapter concludes with a discussion refuting what Ibn Sinā and others have said to the effect that the coming-to-be of substantial forms is not by motion alone.

The second chapter of this section is devoted to Mullā Ṣadrā's major work, *Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*, where he responds to doubts concerning the objectivity of essence. It is written in the form of a series of questions and answers and contains numerous references to major philosophers and their texts which is important from a historical point of view and also shows Mullā Ṣadrā's remarkable erudition. At the heart of this chapter is a discussion on the contention between the principiality

of existence versus essence. The chapter continues with a discussion concerning the manner in which quiddity is qualified and what causes particularization of individual existences and their ipseity.

In the final chapter, we have included Mullā Ṣadrā's treatise entitled *Ittiḥād al-ʿāqil wa'l-ma'qūl* which deals with the unity of the intellector, and the intelligible. The chapter contains a discussion concerning the following problems: on the degrees of the theoretical intellect in tandem with the view of Alexander of Aphrodisias; an examination of the method proposed to expound upon God's knowledge of contingent beings and to repudiate the objection against the unification of the intellector and the intelligible particularly as discussed by Ibn Sīnā. How the intellect is the *intelligibilia* and that in its intellection of something it is united with the active intellect, are discussed next. This chapter ends with a discussion on how the ancients believed that the soul intellects things through its unification with the Active Intellect.

S. H. Nasr

THE FOUR INTELLECTUAL JOURNEYS

al-Asfār al-‘aqliyyah al-arba‘ah

Translated for this volume by Majid Fakhry from Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār al-‘aqliyyah al-arba‘ah* (Tehran, 1378 Sh./1999), part 1, pp. 2–17; 20–27 and part 3, pp. 75–107; 355–367.

You should know that the seekers, among the knowers and the saints, are embarked upon four journeys.

The first of these is from creation to the Truth; the second is through the Truth in the Truth; the third is the reverse of the first, or from the Truth to creation through the Truth; and the fourth is the reverse of the second in a sense, since it is through the Truth in the creation.

Accordingly, I have divided my book, in conformity with their movements in (their) lights and effects, into four journeys and called it the ‘transcendental wisdom’ of the ‘intellectual journeys’. Thus, I will elaborate on the subject, seeking the help of the Truth, the Object of Worship, the Everlasting, and the Existent.

Volume One: Of General Matters or Metaphysics in the Broadest Sense

From the creation to the Truth, or investigating the nature of existence and its essential attributes. It consists of [three] courses:

The first course, or those cognitions which man requires in all the sciences. It consists of an introduction and six stages.

Introduction

The Definition of Philosophy and its Primary Divisions, its Goal and its Nobility

You should know that philosophy is the way in which the human soul is fulfilled through the knowledge of the realities of existing entities, as they are, and the way in which their existence is judged truly by means of demonstrative proofs, rather than conjecture and imitation, according to human capacity. If you wish, we might say ordering the world rationally according to human capacity, so that man might imitate the Lord, may He be exalted.¹

Now since man has come to be as a mixture of two elements, a conceptual form issuing from the world of (Divine) Command and a sensuous, created matter; and since his soul has two aspects, concreteness and abstractness, no wonder Wisdom

1. Cf. Plato's definition of philosophy in *Theaetetus*, 176 B.

has contrived, according to the double origination, to re-form the two faculties into two parts, theoretical or abstractive and practical or prudential.

As for the theoretical, its aim is to impress the soul with the form of being, with all its order, perfection and completeness, and to become an intelligible world analogous to the concrete world, not with respect to its matter, but rather with respect to its form, its design, shape and impression.

This part of wisdom is that which was sought by the Master of the Messenger¹ in his petition to his Lord, when he said: 'Lord, show us the things as they are'; and also by the Friend (of God),² when he asked: 'Lord, grant me right judgment' (26:83), judgment here being the assent to the existence of things, entailing their conception also.

The fruit of the practical part of wisdom, on the other hand, is the performance of good deeds, in order to achieve the soul's habit of domination of the body and the body's habit of subservience and submission to the soul. It is to this part that the Prophet has referred in his saying: 'Cultivate the moral traits of God', and Abraham called on God in these words: 'And allow me to join the righteous' (26:83). It is also to both these parts of wisdom that the Divine Codex³ has referred [in the verse]: 'We have created man in the best of forms', which is the model of the World of Command, 'then we abased him to the lowest ebb, (95:4–5) which is his matter, consisting of dark and thick substances, 'except for those who have believed', a reference to the consummation of theoretical wisdom, and doing 'the righteous deeds' (95:6), a reference to the perfection of practical wisdom. It was actually in allusion to the fact that what counts, with respect to the perfection of the practical faculty, is the proper ordering of our livelihood and salvation upon resurrection, on the one hand, and what counts with respect to the theoretical on the other hand, is the knowledge of the conditions of birth and resurrection, and reflection upon what lies in between, in point of true speculation and deliberation, that the Prince of the Faithful⁴ has said: 'May God have mercy on one who has taken care of himself, prepared for his grave, and acquired knowledge of wherein and whereto' he is destined. It is also to those two arts that the metaphysical philosophers have alluded when they said, in emulation of the prophets (may God greet them), that philosophy is a mode of imitating the Deity,⁵ as was also mentioned in the prophetic tradition:⁶ 'Cultivate the moral traits of God', meaning in your cultivation of cognitions and shunning corporeal traits.

The nobility of wisdom can also be known from other numerous directions, one of which is that it is the cause of the existence of things in the most perfect

1. That is, the Prophet Muḥammad, followed by the usual blessing, May God bless and greet him.

2. That is Abraham, nicknamed in the Qur'ān also as al-Khalil.

3. That is the Qur'ān, called here *ṣaḥīfah*.

4. That is, 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, the first Shi'i Imam.

5. That is, Plato and his followers.

6. Usual prophetic greeting here.

manner; indeed the cause of the essence of being. For were being, as it is in itself, not known, it would not be possible to bring it into being or generating it. Being is pure good and there is nothing noble other than existential goodness. This is the meaning hinted at in the words of God, may He be exalted: 'he who receives wisdom has received an abundant goodness' (2:269). It is in this sense also that God has called Himself wise in numerous passages of His glorious Book, which is 'a revelation from a wise and praiseworthy One' (41:42), and attributed wisdom to His prophets and saints and called them godly and wise men, conversant with the truths of essences, in these words: 'When God made His covenant with the prophets, [He said]: I have indeed given you a book and wisdom' (3:81). He also said especially in reference to Luqmān: 'We have indeed imparted wisdom to Luqmān' (31:11). All this was said in the context of benefaction and gratitude; for a wise man has no other meaning than one who possesses wisdom, as already defined, and which cannot be denied. It is clearly manifest that there is nothing nobler than the Adorned Lord and His messengers who guide us to the clearest paths, all of whom have been described by God as wise.

It is thus clearly shown in what sense [wisdom's] nobility and glory consist; therefore we must follow the milestones of its ups and downs; so let us then freely offer parcels of it, give a sample thereof and advance towards laying down its principles and rules and summarizing its arguments and proofs, as best we can; joining together various fragments imparted to us from the Highest Principle. For the keys of favour are in God's keeping and He grants them to whomsoever he wishes.

First Stage: Of Being and its Primary Parts, including a Number of Paths

First (Path): Of the Conditions of Being per se, in a Number of Chapters

Chapter One

The Subject-matter of Divine Science¹ and its Primary Impression Upon the Soul

You should know that man may be described as one or many, universal or particular, in act or in potentiality. He may also be described as equal to something, smaller or bigger than it; and he may be described as moving or at rest, hot or cold, and so on. However, a thing cannot be described by an intermediate of these attributes, except insofar as it has a magnitude; and it cannot be described by what corresponds to its limit, except insofar as it possesses a matter capable of transformation. However, in order to be one or many, it does not require to become mathematical or physical; but insofar as it exists, it is susceptible to being described as one or many and what goes therewith. Accordingly, just as mathematical entities have their own attributes and properties, which are investigated in the mathematical sciences of astronomy,

1. Or metaphysics.

geometry, arithmetic and music; and just as physical entities have their own essential attributes which are investigated in the science of physics, with its many parts, the same is true of being, as such, which has its own essential attributes that are investigated in the metaphysical sciences. The subject of metaphysics, then, is absolute being, and its questions turn either on the investigation of the ultimate causes of every caused existent, such as the First Cause, who is the source of every caused existent, insofar as it is caused; or on the attributes of being as such; or finally the subjects of the other particular sciences, since the subject-matter of the other sciences is like the essential attributes of this science. It will appear clearly to you from our method of prosecuting the discussions of being, which are the essence of the scope¹ of the divine secrets, that essences constitute the primary essential attributes of the reality of being, just as unity and plurality and other universal concepts constitute the essential attributes of the concept of being, as such. It follows that the subject-matter of the other sciences are accidental attributes with respect to the First Philosophy.²

In general, this science, due to its utmost nobility and scope, investigates the conditions of being as such, and its primary divisions. Therefore, absolute being must be self-evident and in no need of definition or affirmation, or else it would not be the subject matter of the general science. Moreover, designation is either by definition or description,³ and both alternatives are impossible with respect to being. In the first case, because [definition] is by genus and *differentia*, and being, which is the most general entity, has no genus and no *differentia*, and accordingly admits of no definition. In the second case, because [description] is a form of designation by reference to what is better known, and nothing is better known than being. Thus, whoever seeks to explain being by reference to things which are more manifest than it would be in grave error.

Now, if being admits of no definition, it will not admit of demonstration either, because definition and demonstration have common terms, as was shown in the Balance.⁴ Just as some modes of assent cannot be understood unless we understand many other things prior to them, such as when we wish to know that reason exists, we need in the first place to acquire other modes of assent, leading necessarily to an assent which is not preceded by another assent, but is self-evident, primary and manifest to reason in itself; such as saying a thing is a thing, the thing is other than its opposite and two opposites cannot co-exist or cease to exist simultaneously in reality. The same is true of conception;⁵ for if a certain conception requires a prior

1. I read *madar* for *dar* here.

2. Another term for metaphysics or the 'Divine science'.

3. In definition (*ḥadd*) the essential, whereas in a description (*rasm*), the accidental attributes are given.

4. That is, logic.

5. *Taṣawwur*, as distinct from assent (*taṣdiq*) in logic.

conception, it does not follow that this is true of every conception, since it is necessary to reach a final conception which does not depend on a prior conception, such as necessity, possibility and being. These [conceptions] and their likes are sound notions embedded in the mind and imprinted on reason in a primary and innate manner. Should one seek to exhibit those notions in words, which would be simply a form of drawing attention to them in thought or reminding one of them, as well as determining them by reference to other innate notions embedded in the mind, so as to explain them by reference to other things which are better known than they.

As for proving that being is the subject matter of this science, I mean being *qua* being, it can be dispensed with; in fact, it is not even a sound enquiry. For proving a thing by itself is not possible, if we mean that by that the reality of proof, especially where that thing is identical with the proof. For that which is proved exists, and similar synonyms are identical with the concept of proof or being; just as the real relative is identical with relation to itself rather than something else, except figuratively, whether the being in question is regarded as identical with the being of something else or the being of its essence or itself. For in itself, I mean absolute [being], is not averse to any of the two divisions; nor does it require a demonstration or a necessary explanation, due to the fact that being in reality is always merely the being of something, or being in itself. It is demonstration and sensation alone that make both divisions necessary, the second conceived as the being which has no cause, and the first as the being which is relative to the material bodies. For the being which is unrelated to anything else is the very act of being and accidental being is the act of being something else.¹

Fourth Journey: Part I

On the Science of the Soul From its Original Generation from Bodily Elements to its Final Stations and its Return to its Ultimate Goals, in a Number of Sections

First Section: *The General Conditions of the Soul in a Number of Chapters*

Chapter One

On the Definition of the Soul

You should know that when the providence of the Creator, may His name be exalted, imparted everything it could create by way of the most sacred emanation, from the noblest to the nobler, until the lowest, simplest and barest elements were reached, it was not possible for this providence to stop at the point of imparting which could not be exceeded; but instead the existence of an infinite number of entities was still possible in point of potentiality leading to actuality. For, although bodily elements were characterized by great darkness, density and frigidity, they were not fully resistant to

1. The section titled 'An Illusory Obscurity and a Rational Dissipation' which follows here has been omitted.

the possibility of fulfilment, under the influence of an active principle, as happens when the rays of the stars, especially the sun, cause them to acquire subtlety and moderation, whereby they become, by acquiring ripeness and moderation, suitable materials for foods and nutrients, on the one hand, or a passive faculty for generating different entities, susceptible of receiving generation and life, on the other hand, and that through certain forms upon which the effects of wisdom and providence depend, such as animals and plants, once nature has fulfilled the conditions of the other compounds and faculties which have preceded them. The reason why the lower entity is susceptible of receiving the higher has already been discussed. For, the possible was not created as naught or in vain, but rather to fulfil its original goal; since the elements were only created so as to receive life and spirit.

The first thing they receive of the effects of life is the life¹ of nutrition, generation, growth and reproduction; followed by the life of sensation and motion, then the life of knowledge and discrimination. Each of these species of life has a perfective power through which it imparts to matter the effects of that life, together with the power subserving it. This form is called soul, the lowest [grade] of which is the vegetative soul, the intermediate the animal soul and the noblest the rational soul. All these three have a common essential intension and a common definition. We intend in this chapter to mention the absolute proof of its existence and the definition of its essence as soul. For, although simple [entities] admit of no definition or proof, with respect to the reality of their simple essence, they admit of definition and proof with respect to their action and passion. Such, then, is the status of souls and forms, insofar as they are souls and forms.

As for the proof of its existence, we say that we observe certain physical objects from which certain effects emanate in a non-uniform manner and without will, such as sensation, movement, nutrition, growth, and reproducing their kinds. Now the principle of these effects is not prime matter, since it is purely receptive and does not possess the power of acting or efficacy; nor is it the corporal form which is common to all bodies, since there may exist certain bodies which differ from those bodies with respect to these effects. Moreover, it may not be described as the source of these actions. Therefore, there must exist in these bodies some principles other than their corporeity, and are not bodies inherent therein, or else the absurdity would recur.

It follows, then, that [the soul] is a power attaching to those bodies. You have already learned, in the course of discussing passion and action, that we call every active power, from which effects emanate in a non-uniform manner, a soul; this term being the name of this power, not with respect to its simple essence, but rather with respect to its being the principle of these above-mentioned actions. That is why the discussion of the soul forms part of natural science.

1. That is, faculty or power.

As for its definition, we say, following the lead of the philosophers, that the soul has various aspects, according to which it is given different names; namely, power, perfection and form. Thus, due to its ability to act or impart motion, and to be affected by the forms of sensible and intelligible objects, which we call apprehension, it is called a power; but in relation to the matter in which it dwells, so that a vegetative, or animal entity may result, it is called a form. However, in relation to the fact that the nature of the genus was incomplete prior to the addition of the differentia, so that when it is added to it the species attains its perfection, they have asserted that the definition of the soul by reference to perfection¹ is preferable to defining it by reference to form, for the following reasons:

First, because it [perfection] is more general, insofar as the form, in the usage of the public, is what is impressed on matter. Now, part of the soul is that which is not impressed and accordingly is not a form of the body, but perfection thereof; just as the king is the perfection of the city and the pilot the perfection of the ship.

Secondly, because perfection is in relation to that notion which is closer to the nature of the genus; that is, the species; whereas form is in relation to the thing which is farther than that; that is, the matter. Form, then, requires a relation to a thing which is far and is of the nature of the substance resulting therefrom, on the one hand, and to a thing in relation to which the resultant substance is what it is purely potentially, on the other; and finally, to a thing to which real activities are not referred; I mean, the species.

Thirdly, because the connotation of matter is conjoined to the connotation of species, without conversion.

From all this, it is clear that when we say in defining the soul that it is a perfection, that would be more indicative of its meaning and would include its species from every aspect, and would not exclude immaterial² soul... .

An Ishrāqī insight

Here is a noble secret, whereby it is shown how substance can increase in substantiality and the perfection of human reality in its identity and essence may be perfected, and how this definition of the soul is not merely in accordance with its name, as in the definition of the mason, the father, son and the like. The reason for this is that the soulness of soul is not like the fatherhood of the father or the sonship of the son and the writership of the writer and the like, which may be supposed to be divested of that relationship. [Just as] the essence of the mason has a certain existence and his being a mason another existence. Moreover, his being a

1. Aristotle has defined the soul as the first actuality or perfection (*entelecheia*) of a natural or organic body capable of life (*De Anima II*, 412b). For him, however, actuality is always synonymous with form. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, ed. M. Fakhry (Beirut, 1985), p. 197.

2. Or separate.

man is not the same as his being a mason; for the first is substance and the second a relative accident. All this is different from the soul; for the soulness of the soul is identical with its specific existence, and the essence of the soul has no other existence whereby it is not a soul, unless it has undergone certain essential perfections or changes, supervening upon its essence and substance whereby it becomes an active intellect, after being an intellect in potentiality.

The proof that the soulness of the soul from its inception is not an accident attaching to its essence, whether correlative or separate, such as motion which attaches to the sphere or fatherhood which attaches to the father's own essence, is that were it such as the generality of the philosophers have asserted,¹ it would follow that the soul is an actually realized substance like the rest of intelligible substances which are separate in essence; then something happened to it compelling it to become attached to the body and depart the sacred world and consort with the elements. Now the consequent is impossible, because what is essential does not vanish and the separate substance is not susceptible of any condition which did not belong to its essence; for the locus of accidental occurrences is corporeal matter and its accompaniments.

Moreover, the soul is the perfection of the body, and from it and the corporal matter there arises a perfect corporeal species. Now it is impossible that a natural and material species should result from an abstract and material entity necessarily; so that if the consequent is false the antecedent is also false.

Thus, it is shown that the soul's relation to the body and its management thereof is essential to it, in accordance with its individual existence. Therefore, this psychic relation to the body is constitutive thereof; but it does not follow from this that it pertains to the category of relation and does not divest the soul of the nature of substantiality, but only of that of rationality. That relation is similar to the relation of receptivity to matter and formality to physical forms and creativity, knowledge and power to the Necessary Being; as well as the relation of accidentality to blackness and whiteness and similar accidental categories. The modes of existence of these cannot be separated from a relation to something, although they have certain meanings other than sheer relation. I do not say that they have an existence other than the existence of relation; for blackness, for instance, has an essence of independence in meaning and definition, and pertains to the category of quality. However, its existence in itself is identified with its existence in the subject; I mean, its accidentality. Thus, the supervention on the subject is essential to the existence of blackness, rather than its essence. The same is true of matter, form, nature, and the soul, insofar as each one of them has another substantial essence other than relation, just as accidents have another accidental essence other than accidentality, although their individual existences are relational identities.

1. The reference here appears to be to Plato's concept of the soul as existing originally in the world of ideas then forced to descend into the material world, whereupon it became united to the body.

From this, it appears that existence is something extraneous to essence. Thus, the existence of the soul, insofar as it is a form of matter, requires a relation to the body, just as every form requires a relation to matter. However, it does not follow from this that it belongs to the category of relation or that it is an accident. For, this relation is a relation constitutive and perfective of [the object], not one of absolute necessity, as in the case of accidents. For the soul, so long as it has not passed from the potentiality of bodily existence to the actuality of a separate intellect, is still a material form, of varying degrees of proximity to or distance from its intellectual origin, depending on its varying modes of existence in point of strength or weakness, perfection or imperfection. For, existence is susceptible of strength and its opposite, as we have shown in the universal science,¹ when discussing potentiality and actuality.

Let us return now to where we left off regarding the definition of the soul and re-assert that it is a perfection of the body. Perfection, however, is either primary, which renders the species a species in act, such as the shape in relation to the sword and the chair; or secondary, which follows the specific nature of the thing, according to its actions and passion, such as cutting in relation to the sword, discrimination, deliberation, sensation and voluntary motion in relation to man. These are in fact the secondary perfections which the species does not require in order to become a species in act, unless the principle of these things attaches to it actually, so that it may acquire these things by a proximate potentiality after it only had them by a remote potentiality. Thus an animal is an animal in act, even if it does not move by will actually, and even if it does not have any sensation actually. Similarly, an engineer is an engineer in act, even if he does not exercise the art of engineering or its equivalent, and the doctor is a doctor in act, even if he is not treating anybody. The soul is a first perfection; and for a thing to be a first perfection in relation to one thing does not contradict its being a secondary perfection in relation to something else.

It cannot be said in response that the soul is not a perfection of the animal, as an animal; nor that the soul, absolutely speaking, is a perfection of the body, as such; for you have learnt that the actualization of every nature corresponds to the actualization of every member thereof, and its cessation corresponds to the cessation of all its members. Accordingly, the soul is a first perfection of a certain thing, although it is a secondary perfection of something else. The thing of which it is a first perfection must be a body; but body occurring in this definition is body in the generic sense, not in the material sense as was shown in the science of the Balance,² and the difference between the two has already been discussed in the

1. That is, metaphysics.

2. That is, logic. However, in *De Anima II*, 412 a²², Aristotle distinguishes two meanings of actuality or perfection, the one corresponding to *possession*, the other to *exercise*, of any given faculty or power.

discussion of essence also. Nor is the body of which the soul is the perfection more general than the natural or artificial body, such as the bed, the chair, the ship or the city. Even if we were to assume that the soul of the pilot is the perfection of the ship and the soul of the king the perfection of the city, this mode of perfection is not the same as that of soul in relation to the ship and the city. Were the compound of ship and soul considered as one thing, so that the soul is the perfection thereof, that supposed compound will not be a body, substance or any of the other categories. For essence is consequent upon existence and existence is a concomitant of unity; so that whatever has no unity will have no existence either. Thus, it is shown, that the soul is a first perfection of a natural body, but not every natural body; since the soul is not a perfection of fire or earth. Rather, the soul which is in this world is the perfection of a natural body from which its secondary perfections emanate through certain organs which assist it in the vital functions of sensation and voluntary movement. The significance of this with respect to the reality of the soul is that those forms whose action upon matter does not require another power are united essentially with matter, such as the elemental and inanimate forms, including the fiery, the gaseous, the ruby, the golden and other. It is as though they were purely material and divisible along with [matter].

As for those forms which act through the use of another faculty, that faculty is undoubtedly inferior to that form insofar as it is an intermediate instrument.¹ That form would then be almost superior in essence to the nature of matter and this superiority to approaching the primary corporeal matter is the characteristic of the soul, since it has a share in the angelic realm and abstractness, if only in part. It thus appears that the first perfection of a natural body is that whose psychic property operates through an organ; so that any faculty of a natural body to which it belongs to perform a certain action by means of another faculty inferior to it is, for us, a soul. This definition, namely that [the soul] is the first perfection of an organ is natural to the body in general and applies to all souls. For by the instrument mentioned in the definition of the soul is not meant that which is analogous to organs, but rather to faculties, such as the nutritive, the augmentative and the reproductive, with respect to the vegetative soul; imagination, sensation and the desiderative power, with respect to the animal, not like the stomach, the liver, the heart, the brain or the muscle in it. On this basis, the celestial soul is included in this definition, since the concept of the organic applies to it demonstratively. For demonstration rests, for us, on the fact that the sphere which possesses a soul capable of apprehending the sciences possesses a natural power which generates motion, and has also a sensitive power which differs from that belonging to those animals which act through an affection of the sense-organ. Moreover, that power of sensation is confined to some parts of their bodies, whereas another power is

1. Or organ: Arabic *ālah*.

found in the other parts. The matter of the sphere is different, due to its simplicity. For the nature of the sphere is totally of the nature of local motion which is of the same kind as the fifth nature;¹ it is also totally sensation, although the power of sense and motion without the power of imagination and the power of universal apprehension if not possible.²

We thus overcome the difficulty which the moderns have found insoluble; namely, that the above-mentioned definition, as well as any other, cannot apply to all three souls; I mean, the vegetative, the animal and the heavenly. For if we give it the name soul, because it is a perfection performing a certain action only, it would follow that every power is a soul and all the natural properties are souls also. This, however, is contrary to what the ancient men of learning have concurred in unanimously.

The soul's descent from its Holy Abode

You should know that the account of the human soul's descent from the holy world, the abode of its holy father, into the world of corporeal nature, which is like the cradle and abode of the animal soul, which is like its mother, is amply reported in the books revealed from heaven, in the symbolic references of the prophets and the allusions of the saints and the leading philosophers.

In the gracious Qur'ān the descent of the soul and its [subsequent] ascent are mentioned in numerous verses, such as the Almighty's saying: 'We have indeed created man in the best fashion, and then reduced him to the lowest of the low; except for those who have believed and did the righteous deeds' (95:4); or His saying in the account of Adam and his descent from the Garden: 'We said: 'Go down all of you from it. Then, there might come to you a guidance from Me. Then, those who follow My guidance have no cause to fear or to grieve' (2:37) or his saying: 'Go down, each one of you an enemy of the other. On earth, you will have a dwelling and enjoyment for a short while' (2:35); or His saying: 'Amassing wealth has distracted you, until you visited the graveyards—on that Day you shall be asked about that enjoyment' (102:1, 8); or His saying: 'None of you but will visit it;³ that upon your Lord is a necessary decree. Then, we will save the God-fearing and leave the evil-doers prostrate therein' (19:69, 70) or His saying: 'Just as He created you in the beginning, you shall return. One group He has guided and another group has been condemned to perdition' (7:27–28).

In a prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) [it is said]: 'People are metals like the metals of gold and silver', in reference to their pre-existence in the mines of their essences as separate intelligences, which are the treasures of God's knowledge. The node of

1. That is, ether.

2. The original here is unclear.

3. The fire of Hell.

this pre-existence corresponds to that we have established and pointed out; namely, that souls have an abstract intellectual mode of being, as well as a relational one; just as external particular objects have a certain permanence in the prior divine decree, where they are guarded against change, obliteration of permanence; whereas here below they are subject to coming to be or corruption, obliteration and affirmation, as the Almighty has said: 'God obliterates what He wishes and affirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book' (13:39); that is the preserved Tablet guarded against change or alteration.

The Commander of the Faithful,¹ peace be upon him, has said: 'May God have mercy on one who has known wherefrom, wherein and whereto.' The first [adverb] refers to the condition of the soul prior to its generation, the second to its condition upon generation and the last to what follows its generation. He has also said: 'Let him collect his wits and be one of the children of the Hereafter. For from it he came and to it he will return.' It is also reported that he said concerning the essence of the soul its origin and its resurrection: 'You should know that the human form is God's greatest proof to His creation, and it is the Book which He wrote with His own hand and is the sum-total of the forms of the two worlds. It is also the epitome of the Preserved Tablet and the witness to everything invisible and the right road to every good and the path which stretches between Paradise and Hell'.

The philosophers' Teacher, Aristotle, has said in the book of *Uthūlūjiyā*, concerning the uses of the soul's coming down to this world, something to this effect: 'It [the soul] was not harmed by its coming down to this world, but rather benefited from it. For it has acquired from this world knowledge of [visible] things and what their nature is, after it conferred on them its powers, whereby its noble and sound actions and deeds which it possessed while in the intelligible world, were revealed. For had it not revealed its actions and conferred its powers, making them exposed to sight, these powers and actions would have been in it in vain, and the soul would have forgotten the virtues and sound and perfect actions, so long as they remained hidden and invisible. Had this been the case, the soul's power and nobility would not have been known, insofar as action is actually the unfolding of the hidden power upon its appearance. Therefore, had the power of the soul remained hidden and was not manifested, it would have ceased to exist, as though it never had come into being'.²

In addition, we find in the sayings of the ancient philosophers subtle allusions and noble symbols in reference to the soul's fall from that world and its [eventual] ascent, as well as many other tales pointing in that direction. One of these is the

1. 'Alī, the first Shi'i Imam.

2. *Uthūlūjiyā Aristūṭālīs*, F. Dieterici edition (Berlin, 1882), p. 76. It is now known that the so-called *Theology* or *Book of Divinity*, generally attributed to Aristotle in the Middle Ages, is actually a paraphrase of Plotinus' *Enneads* IV, V and VI, probably by his disciple and editor, Porphyry of Tyre.

tale of *Salāmān and Absāl*,¹ the tale of the ringed pigeon in *Kalilah wa Dimnah* and the tale of *Hayy ibn Yaqzān*.²

The Chief Master³ has written an ode in which he enquires about the fall of the soul which opens with this line: A winged dove full of dignity and recalcitrance has come down to you from the highest world....

All this indicates that the soul enjoyed an existence antecedent to the body and a mode of being in the higher divine world and that it will eventually return and revert to where it came from. The sun of its reality and the stars of its power will rise from their setting-place, either bright and upright, or crestfallen and troubled. He,⁴ may his secret be hallowed, has also said: 'It is said that agencies which operate on bodies will be exposed to a condition which will necessitate their fall from their higher stations, etc.'

I have said in the *Footnotes*⁵ that the soul's fall is tantamount to its emanation from its original source and its coming down from its holy intellectual father.⁶ The condition necessitating its descent from that world relates to the conditions of its Maker, and the modes of its cause and circumstances. It has already been pointed out that the effects coming down or emanating from their makers emanate, together with their modalities and contingent concomitants, as well as their deficiencies and possibilities and their own need for their everlasting perfect Maker. Those deficiencies are sometimes referred to as the sin imputed to our father Adam, and the soul's emanation from it by fleeing from God's wrath. However, that is merely a dictate of wisdom in the disposition of being; for the most imperfect light is not capable of contemplating the most intense light. Do you not see that if you wish to consider a metaphysical question of great obscurity, which you have not mastered yet, and then delve into it deeply, your mind is wearied before you are able to acquire the habit of returning to it, and it hastens to neglecting it and occupying itself with some other base matter, out of fear that your brain might burn up, due to the domination of its mental appearance, just as the light of the sun dazzles⁷ the eyes of bats? It is to this [condition] that the prophetic tradition refers in this statements: 'God has seventy veils of light which, were He to uncover, the beads of His face would burn everything which its sight reaches'. The philosophers have mentioned numerous paths, by way of symbolism or allusion, pointing to the reason for the soul's falls.

Of the maxims of the ancient philosophers, we mention what Empedocles⁸ has said; namely, that the soul existed in the high and noble place, but when it sinned it

1. One of Suhrawardī's mystical writings, cf. *Opera metaphysica et mystica* (Istanbul, 1945).

2. Of Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī.

3. Ibn Sīnā.

4. Ibn Sīnā.

5. *al-Ḥawāshī*.

6. That is, the first intellect, or *Nous*, which emanates originally from the One.

7. Literally, dominates.

8. Empedocles of Acragas (Agrigento) in Sicily (d. 430 BC).

fell to this world. In fact, it came down to this world to flee God's wrath. However, having come down to this [lower] world, it became a succour of the souls whose minds were disturbed.

To these maxims also belongs the saying of the Divine Plato in his dialogue,¹ the *Phaedo*: 'The cause of the soul's descent into this [lower] world is the loss of its feathers. When it regains its feathers, it is able to ascend to its original world. 'To this may be added what he has also said in his dialogue called *Timaues*: 'The causes of the soul's descent into this [lower] world are varied. For some of them² were brought down for a sin they committed, and therefore came down to this world to be punished and chastised for their sins. Some were brought down for other reasons. However, he was brief in his account and deprecated the soul's fall and its dwelling in these [material] bodies.'³ He has also said elsewhere in his dialogue, the *Timaues*:

'The soul is a noble and blessed substance. It came down to this world by action of the good Creator. For when the Creator created this world, he sent forth thereto the soul and consigned it to it, so that the world may possess reason; because it was not possible⁴ for this world which was made thoroughly perfect to be without reason. Nor was it possible for the world to have reason while it had no soul. It is for this reason that the Almighty Creator sent down the soul into this world and made it to dwell in it. That He sent down our souls and made them to dwell in our bodies, so that this world may become thoroughly perfect. Now, in order that it may not be lower than that world⁵ in point of perfection, it was necessary that there should exist in the world of sense the same variety of living things as exist in this intelligible world.'⁶

In the same strain, Aristotle has said in many parts of his book, the *Knowledge of Divinity*.⁷ Such is his statement that 'nature is of two types, rational and sensible. When the soul dwells in the intelligible world, it is better and nobler; whereas when it dwells in the world of sense, it is baser and lower, due to the body in which it was made to dwell. However, the soul, although it is rational and belongs to the higher intelligible world, it is bound to derive some aspects of the world of sense and dwell in it. For its nature is akin to both the intelligible and the sensible worlds. Nor should the soul be blamed or reproached for departing the intelligible world and dwelling in this [lower] world, because it is placed between both worlds. The soul was reduced to that condition, because it is the last of those noble, divine substances and the first of the natural, sensible substances. When it became a resident of the

1. Arabic, book.

2. That is, the souls.

3. cf. *Uthūlūjiyā*, p. 10.

4. The original says: necessary.

5. That is, the higher or intelligible world.

6. cf. *Uthūlūjiyā*, p. 11.

7. That is, the *Uthūlūjiyā*.

sensible world, it did not withhold therefrom its virtues, but instead imparted to it its own powers and adorned it with the highest adornment. It may even have contracted part of that baseness, but only that it may be on its guard and beware.¹

He has also said in another place: 'The noble soul, despite the fact that it has departed its higher world, and descended into this lower world, has done so by dint of its capacity and high power, so as to inform the entities which are beneath it and manage them. When it has been released from this world, after informing and managing it and regained its own world quickly, its descent into the [lower] world will not cause her the least harm; but instead it will have acquired from that world the knowledge of things and learnt what its nature is'.²

*The argument of the Master of Illumination³ that souls cannot pre-exist
and its rebuttal*

The same is true of what has been reported about the Persian Orientals that darkness besieged light and imprisoned it for a period, then it was assisted and was supported by the angels. Thus [light] overcame Ahriman, who is identical with darkness, and beat darkness, but exempted it for a fixed period. Moreover, darkness arose from light due to an evil thought.

This account is also referred to the soul, which is a luminous jewel, insofar as it is identical with reason in act, as has been shown; whereas darkness is identical with the animal and natural power. Its imprisonment is the result of the domination of [external] powers and its gravitation towards the lower world. The assistance of the angels may be explained as the result of the accidental good fortune in guiding the soul to receive an intellectual illumination and its actualization. The exemption for a fixed period indicates the soul's survival until the onset of death or severing the relation,⁴ and finally the evil thought indicates the soul's preoccupation with material affairs.

Of the arguments for the impossibility of human souls pre-existing their bodies is the statement of the author of the *Wisdom of Illumination*⁵ and *Allusions*⁶ in that book that, had 'ministering lights' existed prior to their bodies, we would say that had some of [them] been such that they did not minister to any body whatsoever, then they could not be referred to as ministering and their existence would be nullified. Had any of [these lights] been such as to minister, a time will necessarily come when the whole would collapse, and no ministering light would remain.

1. cf. *Uthūlūjīyā*, p. 80.

2. cf. *Uthūlūjīyā*, p. 76.

3. Shaykh al-Ishrāq is the title of Suhrawardī (d. 1191), who laid down the foundations of the philosophy of illumination (*Ishrāq*).

4. That is, contact with the external world.

5. *Hikmah al-ishrāq* of Suhrawardī.

6. That is, *al-Talwīhāt*.

I have mentioned in my own *Footnotes*,¹ in commenting on that, that we have to choose the first alternative and say that the separate existence of souls is different from its relational existence. Those ancient [philosophers] who held that souls have a certain existence in the intelligible world, prior to bodies, did not mean thereby that the soul, as soul, has an intellectual existence. They rather meant that it has a mode of existence which belongs to it as a ministering soul. On this view, there does not follow from [their thesis] that it is not ministering to bodies any inactivity. Inactivity will follow only if the soul, as soul, were not ministering to bodies; for then its existence would be idle and negative. Inactivity will not follow, unless in its intellectual existence it did not minister to bodies. Rather, insofar as it is an intellect, it has no concern for the body; but insofar as it is a soul, it never ceases to manage the body and be in touch with it.

We may add that the intellectual principle² from which the souls derived their existence and spread throughout this [lower] world is infinite in power, direction and existential modality. Therefore, whenever souls separate from it, it still retains its infinite power, exactly as it is, without cessation or diminution; for it is the product of the First Principle of all things. The existence of the infinite souls in the intelligible world should not be understood as an attribute of numerical plurality; or that it is subject to essential or spatial order, so that the repetition which he³ has mentioned will recur in each one of them. For then, what he has mentioned would follow; namely, that there will come a time in which not a single soul will remain.

You should not imagine, on the basis of what we have mentioned, that the existence of souls in the intellectual principle is similar to the existence of one thing in another potentially, like the existence of the infinite forms in the receptive principle, I mean prime matter. For, the existence of one thing in the *agent* is not the same as its existence in the *recipient*; because its existence in the agent is more real and greater in efficacy than its existence in itself. Its existence in the recipient, however, may be lower and baser than its existence in itself and according to its essence. For, its existence in the recipient is liable to a power analogous to non-being, whereas its existence in itself consists in being or non-being. It has in the agent, a mode of being by necessity. Thus, the existence of the souls in their intellectual principle and holy father is a noble and simple being which is neither liable to partition nor dissipation. To understand all this, the heart's insight must rise from the plane of certain knowledge to that of certainty itself.

1. *al-Ḥawāshī*.

2. Or First Intellect according to Neoplatonism. This intellect is itself an emanation from the First Principle or the One.

3. That is, Suhrawardī.

Chapter Twenty-Three¹*Determination of the Category to Which Motion Belongs and That to Which it Does Not Belong*

You should know that motion, due to its weak existence, is in relation to six matters: the agent, the recipient, that in which motion inheres, that from which motion issues, that towards which it moves and finally time.

We have already shown its relation to the recipient. As for its relation to the agent, you have also learnt it in two ways; since you have learnt that its relation to the agent and the recipient is of two kinds: one which determines their difference in reality, just as the two categories of action and passion differ, and one which does not determine their difference, just as the concomitants of entities and those of essences, such as the heat of the form of fire, and the even character of number four.

As for its relation to that from which and towards which, this can be inferred from its definition, since it is susceptible of the potentiality for continuity—that from which and towards which are sometimes contraries. Sometimes they are opposites in some respect, so that they can never combine, sometimes that from which or towards which may be such that occurrences in them will last for a while, so that there may be a period of rest at both ends, as in intermittent notions; or it may not be so, as is the case with the spheres.

Some philosophers have said that the beginning is sometimes identical with the end, as in the sphere. For, that from which motion issues is the beginning and that to which it leads is the end. This is false; for the sphere's arrival during the diurnal movement to a given daily position at sunrise is different from its position the day before, both in fact and in essence, although it is similar to it. Thus, the beginning is different from the end in essence, and it is not necessary to consider both aspects, except when we compare the antecedent and the consequent, as in all limits of the instant; for each one of them is a beginning of one thing and an end of another.

You should also know that calling the limits of the spatial, celestial motion points, is by way of latitude. For those limits are actually instantaneous positions which exist in potentiality; but it is a potentiality which is close to actuality. As for the relation of motion to that in which the motion inheres, it is much closer; so much so that some have claimed that it is the same as the category in which motion has occurred. This, however, is not true at all; it is rather the renewal of that category, as we have shown. Yet, it is the same as the category of passion when referred to the recipient, and the category of action when referred to the agent. That is why it is impossible for motion to occur in one of them, because it is in fact the cessation from one state and departing from another in such a way that it is the cessation of a fixed state. For, were it to occur in a non-fixed state, it would not be a cessation of that state, but a continuation thereof.

1. Part 3 of vol. 1 (1383/1963), p. 75.

In general, motion in a certain category signifies that the mover has at every point an individual part of that category. Therefore, that in which motion occurs must at every point have a part thereof in potentiality. There is no instant part of those two categories. For instance, if the motion of heating occurs, it should be towards cooling. Therefore, the body in process of heating must be towards cooling, although it did not cease to cool, so that it may be said to move in it. If, however, in the process of moving, it had ceased to be heated, then the motion does not belong to the category of passion. Nor does it belong to the category of time¹. As for the [category of] relation, even if renewal occurs in it, its existence is not independent; since relation is always concomitant to the existence of both terms; so that there is no motion therein, as already mentioned.

The same is true of renewal; for its motion is concomitant to a motion of position, as in the turban or suchlike. Therefore, there are only four of the categories in which motion, according to the public view, remains; but five, according to us: substance, modality, quantity, place and position. Rest is [motions] opposite, in the sense of its privation or non-being. (This is dealt with in detail in *al-Shifā'*).²

However, this privation cannot be described in terms of existence; for that which is a privation absolutely does not exist in any sense. Now, the body which is not [actually] in motion, but is moving potentially, must have an extraneous description which distinguishes it from other things. For, were it not extraneous, it would not separate from it when it moves. Therefore, this description applies to the body in question by virtue of some peculiarity in it. [The body] must have an agent and a patient, unlike the privation which does not need to be given any description; such as the privation of two horns in relation to man, which cannot be referred to any existence or power, contrary to walking. For the latter comes into being as soon as the impediment of walking ceases to exist, and it has, in some sense, a mode of being and a cause identical with the cause of being potentially. From this, it can be seen that the cause of motion implies the motion of privation, as already mentioned. This caused privation is not the privation of things in general, but rather the nothingness of something in a given thing in a given state, which is its being potentially.³

1. Arabic, *matā*, when.

2. Of Ibn Sīnā.

3. The thrust of the above argument is that motion always implies two terms, 'from which' and 'towards which', resulting in the emergence of a new condition, which did not exist earlier. Thus, the crescent is potentially a full moon, in the sense that it moved or changed from one condition A which existed, to a subsequent condition B, which did not, but was still possible. The non-existence of B was an essential condition of the motion in question.

Chapter Twenty-Six*Resuming the Proof that the Motion Occurs in the Category of Substance*

You should know that the nature inherent in the body does not contribute any of the natural properties belonging to it by itself. For, were it to act upon a certain body, it would be capable of action without the intermediary of the body. The consequent is false and so is the antecedent.

The proof of the falsity of the consequent is that [nature] is a corporeal power and were it to act without the intermediary of the body, it would no longer be corporeal, but immaterial. As for the truth of the concomitance, it follows from the fact that the various natures and powers do not act without the assistance of matter and position. The proof thereof is that the act of bringing into being depends on actual being and is posterior to it; for unless a thing exists, it cannot be imagined to be a cause of being. Thus its being a cause of being depends upon its being existent. Therefore, if the mode of being an entity depends on matter, then its mode of bringing [something else] into being is dependent upon it.

Moreover, the existence of matter is a spatial mode of existence and its role, either in point of action or passion, follows upon its spatial position; so that what has no position in relation to it cannot be supposed to have an action or passion thereon. For had any power with the capacity to act without the concurrence of position, it would dispense with [matter] in its operation, and whatever can dispense with [matter] in its operation can dispense with it in existence, so that it would be independent of it, which is absurd. It follows, that nature has no manner of action upon the matter in which it exists; since matter has no position in relation to itself or to what dwells in itself; otherwise everything which has a position would have another position, which is absurd. Therefore, whatever produces matter or acts upon matter cannot be something material, and accordingly corporeal nature cannot act upon matter, or else individual matter would precede [general] matter. Therefore all the properties which nature derives from, natural motion of natural primary qualities, such as heat with respect to fire and humidity with respect to water, are concomitants of nature, without the intervention of production or affection between it and these things. Thus, it is necessary that there should exist in the order of being a principle higher than nature, its concomitants or effects. Now, one of its necessary effects is motion in itself; and therefore nature and motion are conjoined in being. For nature must be something constantly recurring in itself, just as motion; in fact, motion is the manifestation of the necessary recurrence. The same is true of natural quality and natural quantity; since the coming into being of each of them is simultaneous with the coming-to-be of nature and its permanence with that of nature. Such also is the case in all natural conditions with respect to their simultaneity with nature with respect to coming-to-be, cessation and permanence. The emanation

of being, however, passes through the medium of nature and this is the sense of what they¹ said about the mode of the form's preceding matter; namely, that it is a partner in causing matter rather than that form causes it independently of any intermediary or instrument preceding it; for they are coequal with respect to being. The same is true of nature in relation to those natural properties which include motion; therefore motion must constantly arise and change in all bodily objects. In fact, the changing positions of the spheres are caused by the changing natures of the spheres, very much like natural alterations and quantitative motions which occur in the elemental entities, whether simple or compound.

Another 'oriental' proof [may be given]. Every corporeal substance has a mode of being which requires the inherence of certain accidents, which cannot be separated from it, and whose relation to the individual entity is similar to the relation of necessary derivative differentiae to the species. These necessary accidents are called individuating [properties] by the masses, but are in fact *signs* of individuation only. By sign is meant here 'mark' of the object which is expressed in terms of its concept, just as the real derivative differentia is expressed in terms of its concept, just as the real derivative differentia is expressed in terms of its logical differentia,² as for instance, growing in relation to plants, sensation in relation to animal and rational in relation to man. Now, the first is the mark of the vegetative soul, the second, of the animal soul, and the third, of the rational soul. All these souls are derivative differentiae, and the same holds of other differentiae in relation to substantial compounds. For each one of them is a simple substance which can be called universal, logical differentia, according to the manner of calling a thing by the name of its essential concomitant; they are in fact simple, particular entities which have no essence.

The same is true of necessary concomitants of individual entities, insofar as they are called individuated. For individuation in a certain mode of being is identical with the individuated entity; and these necessary concomitants emanate from it in the same way light emanates from the luminous object and heat from the hot object of fire. If this is granted, we would say that each corporeal individual is susceptible of receiving these individuating properties in succession, either in whole or in part, such as time, quantity, position, place and the like. For their alteration depends on the alteration of the mode of being requiring it, and is in fact identical with it somehow. For the existence of every corporeal nature may be described essentially as the continuous, quantified, positioned, localized temporal substance in itself. The alteration of quantities, colours and positions necessitates the alteration of the

1. That is, the Neoplatonists, who regarded matter and form as two separate components of physical objects, which emanate from a higher principle, which is *Nous*, or from the One.

2. The differentia (*faṣl*) in logic, is that characteristic which distinguishes the *different* species, subsumed under the genus (*jins*). Thus rational is the differentia of animal, flying that of bird.

individual, substantial and corporeal existent, and this is precisely what is called motion in the category of substance; since the existence of a substance is substance, just as the existence of an accident is an accident.

As a representational admonition, [we say] that every corporeal substance has a flowing, ever-renewed nature, but has at the same time an aspect which is constant, continuous and permanent, whose relation to it is similar to the relation of the spirit to the body. And just as the human spirit, being immaterial, abides, whereas the nature of the body is in constant disintegration, dissolution and flux, and yet its essence is constantly renewed due to the supervention of similar parts continuously [upon it]; while mankind is in total oblivion of that, rather 'are in perplexity with respect to a new creation' (50:14); the same is true of the natural forms of things. For they are ever-renewed, with respect to their material, spatial and temporal mode of being, and they have a progressive mode of being which is not permanent in itself; but with respect to their intellectual mode of being and their immaterial, Platonic existence eternally and everlastingly in the mind of God Almighty. I do not say that they are permanent by virtue of their own permanence, but rather by virtue of the permanence of God Almighty, not even by virtue of God Almighty's causing them to be permanent. Between the two statements, then, is a difference, as will be shown in due course; for the first is a worldly mode of being which is vanishing and perishing constantly and has no stability, while the second is a permanent mode of being in God, which is neither vanishing nor perishing, due to the fact that it is impossible that anything should vanish from His knowledge of that His knowledge should undergo change. 'There is indeed in this an admonition to worshipping people' (21:106).

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Refuting What the Master (Ibn Sinā) and Others Have Said to the Effect that the Coming-to-be of Substantial Forms is not by Motion [but] by Something Else.

The gist of what they said, as already mentioned, is that form is not susceptible of growth, and what is not susceptible of growth comes to be instantly. For, were it susceptible of growth its species will either remain the same, in the midst of growth, or not. If it remains the same, then the change has not occurred in the form, but rather in its concomitants. If, on the other hand, it does not remain the same, then this will be tantamount to the vanishing of the form, rather than its growth. Moreover, it is necessary that it should be succeeded by other forms, and those succeeding forms will either include one which lasts longer than one instant or not. If they do include, then that motion has come to rest; if not, then we have a series of successive forms each existing for an instant.

This argument can be reduced to two arguments; one is that it entails the succession of instants, which is contradicted by the existence of motion in the

category of quality and the rest. The second entails that motion requires the existence of the subject [of motion], and matter as such does not exist; therefore it is not liable to motion with respect to form, contrary to quality; since the subject, insofar as it exists, does not require quality so as to be liable to motion. If the validity of this argument is granted, the first part of the discourse¹ would fall to the ground, since the crux of the matter is this argument, which asserts that motion in the form can only be a matter of successive forms, none of which can exist for more than one instant. Now, the cessation of the form entails the cessation of the subject; therefore, no part of these subjects will last for a moment of time, whereas everything movable lasts throughout the time of the motion. This calls for scrutiny, since it is contradicted by [the phenomena of] generation and corruption, and [Ibn Sīnā's] statement that the corruption of the form necessitates the corruption of the subject may either mean that its corruption will necessitate the corruption of the whole resulting from it and its locus, and this is true. However, the movable is not that whole, so that it may cause the corruption of the whole. The movable, instead, is the locus together with some form or other, just as the movable in the category of quantity is the locus of quantity, together with some quantity or other. If, however, he means that the corruption of the form necessitates the corruption of the matter, then this is not true; or else matter would come to be in every form which did not exist before, whether instantly or gradually. Now, every contingent entity has a matter, therefore contingent matters will be required *ad infinitum*, which is absurd. However, if there did not exist something whose essence is permanent, contingent entities would not need matter; whereas if there existed therein a permanent entity, the cessation of the form will not entail its cessation necessarily.

Moreover, it is strange that the Master [Ibn Sīnā] has asked himself the question regarding the necessary correlation of matter and form; namely, that the specific form is evanescent, and therefore matter should cease to exist upon its evanescence. He then replied that the individual unity of matter is preserved by the *specific* unity of the form, rather than the individual unity. If this is the Master's view with respect to the assumption that motion should occur in the form, then the change of form does not necessitate the corruption of matter; the truth being that matter remains, and so does the form in the manner of continuous renewal, which does not contradict individual existence, as they have declared in connection with the individuation of intermediate motions. Their statement that the degree of growth or diminution is another type [of motion] must mean that which is actually distinct from other [motions] in point of existence. This does not contradict the claim that where blackness increases, the infinite varieties thereof are in it potentially; and the same holds in the case of continuous alteration.

1. Namely, the succession of instants of time.

Moreover, the Master [Ibn Sīnā] has given another argument and shown its weakness; namely, that substance has not contrary and therefore there can be no motion therein, since motion is the transition from one contrary to another. He then criticized [this argument] on the ground that if we consider, in the case of two contraries, their successive supervention upon the same subject, then form has no contrary; but if we do not consider that, and are content with their succession upon the substratum, then form has a contrary. For, the form of water and fire are two modes of being common to the same substrate and they can succeed each other, despite the fact that they are of the utmost contrariety.

METAPHYSICAL PENETRATIONS

*Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*¹

Reprinted from Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*, tr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, as *Metaphysical Penetrations* (Provo, UT, 2013), pp. 18–34.

The Fourth Penetration

In Response to Doubts that have been made Concerning the Objectivity of Essence

Verily there is, for those who are veiled from the contemplation of the light of essence, which shines upon all contingent beings which exist and those who deny the lights of the sun of the Truth which manifests itself in all quiddities which are contingent, [there are for these people] imaginary [negative sense] veils and strong veils, which we have cast aside. We dispersed this darkness and untied their knots and we solved the difficulties by permission of God the Wise. And here they are [here are the doubts cast upon them]:

Question: As far as essence is concerned, if it were to be actualized *in concreto*, or in the external world, it would be an existent (*mawjūd*) and then for that existing thing there would have to be another essence, and so on, ad infinitum.

Answer: Verily [as assertion] if one means by existent, that by which essence subsists, that is impossible because there is nothing in the world which is existent according to this meaning, neither quiddity nor essence. As for the quiddity we have indicated that it is not possible for essence to subsist by it. As for essence itself, it is impossible because a thing cannot subsist upon itself. The consequent (*lāzim*) is false therefore the antecedent (*malzūm*) must be false. Rather, we say that if we mean by existent this meaning, that is that by which essence subsists, it is necessary that essence be non-existent according to this meaning. A thing does not subsist by itself. For example, whiteness is not something which possesses white colour. In fact, that which possesses white colour is something else like a body or matter. And being non-existent according to this meaning does not necessitate qualifying a thing by its contradictory opposite, because that which is contradictory to existence is nothingness [non-existence], not a thing which has become non-existent or the non-existent. Now, one considers (in what is logically called contradiction) the unity of attribution in which the predicate is attributed to the subject by univocality (*muwāṭāt*) or by derivation (*ishtiqāq*).

And if one means by it [i.e., *mawjūd*] the simple meaning which is interpreted in Persian as *hast* and its equivalents, it is existent (*mawjūd*), and its existentness

1. This translation is based on the Arabic original of *Kitāb al-Mashāʿir*, published by the Département d'Iranologie de l'Institut Franco-Iranien de Recherche (Tehran, 1964), pp. 18–34.

(*mawjūdiyyah*) is its actualization objectively by itself. For something to be actualized as existent is exactly for it to be actualized as essence. It is not that it is something which is added to its essence. By this is meant that whatever is actualized for other than existence through existence is actualized for existence in itself in its very essence, such as to become actualized in space and in time is to be so in their essence and for others through them. And the same is true for precedents and antecedents of various times and places [by which is meant that for time and space to exist in time and space there is no need for another time and space]. But those things which are temporal and spatial need time and space in order to be temporal and spatial. This is also the case in the meaning of continuity and it is permanent in mathematical (*ta'limī*) quantity in itself and for other things accidental through it. And [this is also the case of] the intelligible for the intelligible form in its essence and for something other by accident.

Question: But then each existence is a necessary existence by its essence since there is no meaning to necessary being except that its existence be necessary [that is, could not exist]. And it is inevitably the affirmation of a thing being this thing itself.

Answer: One can solve this through three considerations: anteriority and posteriority (*taqaddum* and *ta'akhkhur*), perfection and deficiency (*tamām* and *naqs*), richness [in itself, and in need of nothing else] and need [independence and dependence] (*ghinā'* and *hājah*). [And in this case] the objection does not distinguish between the necessity of essence and a pre-eternal necessity. Now, the Necessary Being is anterior to everything and is not caused by anything. It is perfect and there is nothing more intense [than it] as far as the power of being is concerned and there is no imperfection in it in any way whatsoever. Furthermore, it is sufficient unto itself and it does not depend on any existence because its existence is necessary through pre-eternal necessity and is not limited by the duration of its essence nor conditioned by the duration of any qualification. The contingent existences are essences which are not sufficient unto themselves to exist, being dependent ipseities, if one ceases to consider their instaurer. From this point of view, they are illusory and impossible, since the act is constituted by the agent in the same way that the quiddity of the species is constituted by its specific difference. The meaning of 'existence being necessary' signifies that its essence is existent by itself without having need of any instaurer which would bestow existence upon it nor of a receptacle which would receive it. But the meaning of 'existence being existent' signifies that if it is actualized either by itself or by an agent, it has no need, in order to be realized, of another existence which would make it become realized, in contrast to non-existence, because of its need in becoming existent of the consideration of existence and that which is adjoined to it.

Question: If it is understood that for existence to be existent signifies existence itself while for something else to be existent signifies that it is a thing which possesses existence, then existence is not attributed to everything with the same

meaning. And yet it was proven that the employment of existence for all existents is according to a common meaning. One must therefore take the proposition that existence is existent as having the same meaning as what [it possesses] in other things among existents, that is to say, a thing possessing existence. However, existence is not existent because of the necessity of a chain *ad infinitum* because one would have to begin once again with the existence of the existence, *et cetera*.

Answer: This difference between the existentiality of things and the existentiality of existence does not necessitate a difference in employing the concept of existence as one that is derived and common among all things, because either the existent is taken in its simple meaning as we have indicated before or it is taken in the most general sense as signifying something whose existence one affirms, whether it involves the affirmation of a thing in itself which comes back to saying that it is impossible for a thing to be separate from itself, or it involves affirming something else for it, as for example the concept of 'whiteness' or of 'relation', *et cetera*. In this latter case what one understands by 'white' is what possesses whiteness whether whiteness be this thing itself or something else.

To permit the use of a part of the significance of a term does not exclude the term being used in its true sense. That white encompasses something more than whiteness results from the particularity of some of the individuals and not from the very concept of white. In the same way, the being of existents encompassing something more than existents, for example quiddity, results from the particularities of contingent individuals and does not come from the essence of the concept that is common among them.

Similar to this is what has been said by Ibn Sīnā in the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā'* (The Book of Healing): 'In the same manner that one understands existence to be the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) Itself, one understands the unique as being the unique itself and one comprehends from this that a quiddity, whatever it may be, such as man or another substance, is necessary existence. In the same way one can understand by the unique that which is a certain water or man and that this water or this man is unique.' He [Ibn Sīnā] has also said: 'There is thus a difference between a quiddity to which has been added the unique or existent, and the unique and the existent inasmuch as they are unique and existent.'

And he [Ibn Sīnā] has also said in the *Ta'liqāt* (Glosses): 'If it is asked: Does existence exist? the answer is yes, it exists, in the sense that it is the very reality of existence to exist, for existence is the act of existing (*mawjūdiyyah*).'

The words of Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī in his *Ḥawāshī* (Glosses) on *al-Maṭālī'* (The Places of Rising) by Urmawī really astonished me: 'It is not the concept of a thing which is considered in the derived from (*mushtaq*) as such, for example "rational", because if this were to be so then general accident would enter into specific difference. And, inversely, if that to which a thing is attributed were to be considered in the derived from the matter of particular possibility would become

necessary. In fact, the thing to which one attributes “laughing” is “man” and the judgment which affirms a thing of itself is a necessary mode of judgment. And the mention of a thing in the explanation of derived forms is to show the source to which that which is implied leads back.’ End of his words.

And this is close to what has been mentioned by some of the outstanding figures among those who have come later [i.e., Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī] in *al-Ḥāshiyāt al-qadīmah* (The Old Glosses) in order to prove the unity of accident and accidental.

It is then understood that that to which is attributed the derived form and that to which it corresponds is a simple thing not necessitating any composition resulting from the qualified and qualification. Furthermore, a thing is not taken into notional consideration (*mutabar*) in the qualification itself, whether it be in a general or particular manner.

Question: If existence were *in concreto* a qualification existing for quiddity, the latter would be therefore a receptacle *in concreto* and of necessity the existence of the receptacle is anterior to the existence of that which it receives. Therefore existence would have to be anterior to existence (to itself).

Answer: That existence exists or is realized *in concreto* in that which possesses quiddity does not imply at all that the quiddity plays the role of receptacle for it, because the relation between the two is one of unification and not connectedness. The qualification of quiddity by existence results from an analysis operated by thought, since existence is one of the accidents of quiddity distinguished as such by analysis of thought, as we have already explained and as we shall explain later.

Question: And if existence were to be existent then it is either anterior to quiddity or posterior to quiddity or the two are simultaneous. The consequence of the first alternative is the actualization of existence independently and in the absence of quiddity. It follows that qualification (*ittiṣāf*) is anterior to the thing that is qualified and is realized independent of it. The second alternative has for consequence that quiddity is existent before existence, from which would follow regression ad infinitum which is absurd. The third alternative has for consequence that the quiddity is existent at the same time as existence but not by it. It therefore must derive its existence from elsewhere and would have the same consequence as the preceding case. The consequences being false, the antecedent must [also] be false.

Answer: It has been said before that the qualification of quiddity by existence is a mental or intellectual abstraction and is not like the qualification of a thing by external accidents such as a body by whiteness, which would require that each of the two would have a positive reality apart from the other so that one could imagine between the two these three alternatives of anteriority, posteriority and simultaneity. Consequently there is no anteriority and there is no posteriority for either of the two concerning the other and also no simultaneity because a thing is not anterior to itself, is not posterior to itself and also is not simultaneous with itself.

The accidentality of existence for quiddity resides in it being within the power of the intellect (*‘aql*) to consider essence as such, [completely] separated from existence. In this case, existence is found to be external to essence by the intellect. If one comes back to the question concerning the relation between the two, when they are separated (*tajrīd*) by the operation of the mind, it will be said that these two [i.e., essence and existence], inasmuch as they are considered as abstractions operated by the mind, exist simultaneously. By this is meant that existence exists by itself or by its instaurer, and quiddity considered in itself and as the intellect isolated it from all existences, possesses a kind of positive reality (*thubūt*), as it will be explained further on. As a result, when one speaks of the simultaneity of quiddity and existence in reality, it means that existence is existent by its [own] essence and quiddity is united with it, and is existent through it and not through something else.

When the Agent has bestowed existence (*afāda*) to a quiddity, it has bestowed its existence. And when it has bestowed existence, it is meant precisely that it has bestowed this existence by itself. The existence of everything is in its essence the subject which receives in predicate the quiddity of this thing. Therefore neither quiddity nor existence possesses antecedence or precedence in relation to one another.

When one of the knowers of Truth [i.e., those who have ascertained the truth of things in reference to Ṭūṣī] declares that existence is anterior to quiddity, he means by it that that which is the principle and source for the procession and realization *in concreto* is existence. That is to say that existence is in its essence the subject to which is attributed in predication certain universal concepts called quiddities and essentialities [*dhātīyyāt*]; in the same way that, by the intermediary of another existence added to it in accident, it becomes the subject to which is attributed other concepts which one calls accidentalities. The anteriority of existence to essence is not the same as the anteriority of cause to effect nor the same as the anteriority of the receptacle to the thing received. Rather, it is like the anteriority of that which is by essence to that which is by accident or the anteriority of that which is true (*ḥaqīqah*) to that which simply has a figurative (*majāz*) (or metaphorical) sense.

Question: We can come to the point of conceiving existence while we doubt whether it exists or not. Therefore, it needs an added existence for it to exist and the same reasoning could be repeated à propos of the existence of the existence and there would be an infinite regression (*regressus ad infinitum*). There is no refuge except to say that existence consists of nothing but a manner of considering things (i.e., quiddities).

Answer: The reality of existence is not in any way actualized in its essence in any mind among all the minds, because the act of existence is not a universal concept and the existence of every existent is this existent itself *in concreto*, and it is not possible for that which is *in concreto* to be a mental concept. Existence which is represented as a general concept of thought is the existence which one

calls copulative [*intisābī*] existence, which is proper to logical judgments. As for knowledge of the reality of existence, that cannot be other than illuminative presence and immediate vision of concrete reality. Consequently, no doubt remains concerning its identity.

What responds best to this question is to demonstrate what consequence follows of necessity from sustaining the view that existence is added to quiddity, in making use of the same argument as this question (or the person who poses it) and in saying: we can conceive intellectually the quiddity while doubting its existence or while neglecting it (not thinking about it). What one conceives intellectually is other than what one doubts; therefore existence is added to quiddity. However, what we verified in principle is that existence is not added to quiddity, and also that the way in which it is an 'accident of' quiddity is not that of an accident, neither in the concrete realm (or objectively), nor conceptually, except in the analysis carried out by the mind as we have already indicated. And therefore the two bases (of the question) are destroyed.

Question: If existence were to be *in concreto* in the objective world, it would follow from that, since it does not belong to the predicate of substance, that it would belong to the category of quality and the definition of 'quality' would be applicable to it. Therefore, from that would follow first of all the absurdity that was mentioned before, that is that the subject would exist before its own existence implying a vicious circle and infinite regression. Furthermore, quality would be the most general of all things and substance would be itself also quality and the same would hold true for quantity and other predicates.

Answer: Substance, quality, and other predicates which are the same as Aristotelian categories belong to the category of quiddity and they are universal concepts which are genus, species, essentiality and accidentality. But existing realities or realities in the act of existence are concrete ipseities and individual entities, not contained under a universal [concept], whether it be essential or accidental. Substance, for example, is a universal quiddity whose reality in concrete existence is that it not be in a substratum. Quality is a universal quiddity whose reality in the concrete existence is not to accept either divisibility or relationality and the same holds true for the other predicates (categories). Therefore the objection that *existence* would be substance or quality or quantity or another one of the accidents falls by the wayside.

And it has been also mentioned that existence has no genus and no specific difference and no quiddity and it is not itself a genus or a specific difference or a species for anything; and it is neither general nor particular accident because all these matters belong to the category of universals.

[The existence] that one counts among general accidents and general concepts is *mawjūdiyyah* (state of existence) in the sense of the copulative verb 'to be' and not the reality of *existence*.

Whoever says that 'existence is an accident' means by that the general intelligible concept and in saying that it is an accident he means that it is something outside of or extrinsic to quiddities, which are added to it [existence] as predicate.

Also *existence* is opposed to accidents because the *existence* of accidents in themselves is their *existence* for their substratum, whereas existence is precisely the *existence* of the substratum and not the existence of an accident in the substratum.

In order to become realized, accidents are in need of a substratum and *existence* does not need for its realization a substratum. Rather, it is the substratum which needs *existence* in order to become real (*taḥaqquq*).

The truth of the matter is that the existence of substance is substance by or through the substantiality of the substance and not by another substantiality; and the *existence* of the accident is accident through the very accidentality of this accident and not by another accidentality, in the same way that you were taught concerning what exists between *essence* and *existence*.

Question: If existence is that which is existent for quiddity, then it has a relationship to it, and there is also an existence for this relationship; and this saying can also be said concerning the existence of that relationship to the relationship of the relationship and this causes an infinite regression.

Answer: The explanations that have proceeded suffice to remove this objection, because *existence* is quiddity (*essence*) itself *in concreto* and is only different from quiddity conceptually. There is therefore no relation between the two, except as considered in thought. Under this consideration, the relationship does possess a certain existence, which is essentially this relationship itself and which in its turn cannot be distinguished from it except conceptually (according to the manner in which thought considers it). The infinite regression [which is alleged] is broken as soon as conceptualization ceases to make distinctions. You will come to know later how the two (*existence* and *essence*) are connected according to their condition under conceptual analysis.

The Fifth Penetration

Concerning the Manner in which Quiddity is Qualified (ittiṣāf) by Existence

Perhaps you will return and say: 'If there were to be for *existence* individuations in quiddities other than portions (*ḥiṣaṣ*), then the affirmation of all individuation of *existence* for quiddity would presuppose the positive reality of the quiddity according to the well-known principle [i.e., if one affirms something of a certain thing, this presupposes the affirmation or positive reality of that thing]. Consequently, quiddity would already have to possess a certain positive reality before its own positive reality, like the difficulty which has already been raised.'

Know that the allegation of this saying [difficulty] does not concern the reality of existence as existence *in concreto*. Rather, when it pertains to the problem of

existence as an abstract concept, then difficulties arise because existence is the same as quiddity itself according to the thesis of admitting the reality *in concreto* of *existence*. Properly speaking there is in reality no qualification between the two [i.e., one cannot be the predicate of the other] according to this hypothesis. On the contrary, in the second hypothesis, *existence* differs from quiddity and is therefore a qualification for it. It is then the modality of this qualification that causes difficulty, because if one speaks of the qualification of quiddity by existence, in the case where one understands by *existence*, being expressed by the predicative verb 'to be' (*al-kawn al-maṣḍarī*), then the subject which receives the predicate is the positive reality of the quiddity. And quiddity, in whatever aspect one considers it, possesses being expressed by the predicative verb. But then it is inconceivable that, from the point of view of being in the absolute sense, quiddity be anterior to this absolute being. The situation is different if it is *existence* that is the real thing *in concreto* while quiddity possesses a conceptual actuality outside its *existence*.

However, the truth which merits being verified is that *existence*, whether it be concrete or conceptual, is the very affirmation of the quiddity and its *existence*. It is not the affirmation of something or the existence of something belonging to this quiddity. Between these two meanings there is an evident difference. That to which the already mentioned rule (*al-qā'idah*) applies is that the affirmation of something for another thing is not the affirmation in itself alone. Thus our proposition 'Zayd is existent' comes to the same thing as 'Zayd is Zayd'. Therefore, the derivative rule does not concern it.

The majority (*jumhūr*) of philosophers, because they were inattentive to this subtle distinction, fell into the perplexity that is known. And they became divided into followers of different paths. Some of them applied exclusively the general rule of the proposition, said to be 'derivative' (*far'īyyah*), to cases other than to the qualification of existence. Others fled from this rule and rallied around the idea of necessary substitution (*istilzām*) to this 'derivative' proposition. And yet others rejected completely the positive idea of *existence*, conceptually as well as *in concreto*, maintaining that *existence* is purely and simply an interpretation and the creation of a false fantasy.

The reason [according to them, the people who deny that there is *existence*] is that what conditions the truth of the attribution of the derived concept is one with the thing to which it is attributed. It is not that the principle from which it derives subsists by itself because the concept of the derived form, for example 'manager' or 'white', is a simple thing expressed [in Persian] as *dabīr* and *safīd*. Thus for a thing to be existent consists in its being united with the concept of existent (*mawjūd*) and not that existence subsists by it, whether concretely or abstractly. Therefore, there is no need whatsoever for *existence*.

Moreover, the Necessary Being for the philosopher who holds this view is exactly the same as the concept of existent, not the reality of *existence*, and the

same holds true for contingent existence. Likewise, the same holds true for all of the qualifications attributing to concepts. Furthermore, the difference between the essential and the accidental as far as the derived forms are concerned, for that philosopher, does not consist in the mode of unification in existence—unification which, according to us, is the basis of predicative judgment, essential in the case of essentialities and accidental in the case of accidentalities—since there is no *existence* for him; rather the difference exists according to him in that essential concept is that which is given in response to the question, ‘What is it?’ whereas the accident is that which is not given in such a response. And all of this is mental adventure.

Metaphysical Illumination (*ishrāq ḥikamī*)

The *existence* of all contingent existents is their very quiddity *in concreto* united with it in some kind of union. This is because existence is positive and real, which is the result of our previous demonstrations showing that *existence* is real and is that which is the principle of effects [on things] and the source of determinations and that by which quiddity becomes existent and that by which non-existence is repulsed from it. Such *existence* is a *existence in concreto*.

And if the existence of each quiddity is not *in concreto* and is not unified with it *sui generis*, the following dilemma will ensue: either *existence* is a part of quiddity or it is added to it as an accident. Both of these are false because the *existence* of the part would be anterior to the existence of the whole and the existence of the qualification would be posterior to the existence of the subject qualified. In both of these hypotheses it would be necessary that the quiddity have an existence actualized anterior to itself and that existence would be anterior to itself and both of these are impossible.

It would also be necessary that a certain mode of existence of a single thing would be repeated identically and would also engender an infinite regression in the assembly of the gradations of the individual members of the chain of being. Now besides the impossibility of this infinite regression by reason of established proofs and because this would imply an infinity in act contained between two limits, that is *existence* and *essence*, besides all that, this infinite regression would imply a proof contrary to our thesis which is that *existence* is *essence* itself *in concreto*, because the subsistence of the totality of all existing things in such a way that no accidental existence would lie outside of it implies for these quiddities a *existence* that would not be an accident; otherwise that which was supposed to be the totality is not the totality but part of the totality.

Once it is established (*thabata*) that the existence of every contingent being (*mumkin*) is its very quiddity *in concreto*, then one of two alternatives follows: either there exists between quiddity and *existence* a difference in the significance and in concept, or such is not the case. The second hypothesis is false. Otherwise

man and *existence*, for example, would be two synonymous terms and there would be no benefit in saying 'man is existent'. In the same way, to say 'man is existent' and to say 'man is man' would come to saying the same thing. Besides, it would be impossible for us to conceive one of them while neglecting the other, not to say anything of other absurd consequences mentioned in common books (*mutadāwilāt*). Furthermore, the absurdity of each of these consequences postulates the absurdity of the antecedent. Therefore there remains the alternative mentioned in the first place, that is, that quiddity and *existence* are different from each other in their concept when they are analyzed by the mind, while they form one single unity essentially and in their ipseity *in concreto*.

There remains for us in our treatment to discuss the manner in which quiddity receives the qualification of the predicate existence in light of the fact that the predicative judgment implies the differentiation of one from the other with regard to the analysis carried out by the mind, which itself is also a certain mode of existence of the thing *in concreto* without being itself in act and without something else having put it in act. This difficulty pertains to the fact that each subject qualified by a qualification or each subject to which there inheres an accident must of necessity have a certain degree of existence in function of which, before this qualification or this accident, it is neither a subject qualified by this qualification nor a subject in which this accident inheres. Consequently, either existence happens to a quiddity which exists, or it happens to a quiddity which does not exist, or it happens to a quiddity which neither altogether exists nor does not exist. The first hypothesis involves the petition of principle (*dawr*) and *regressus ad infinitum* (*tasalsul*). The second hypothesis implies contradiction and the third hypothesis the lifting or abolition of two contradictories.

To make the excuse that abolishing the two contradictories belonging to a single level is possible, since it is an accomplished fact, is not useful here because the level at which the removal of the two contradictories is possible is exactly one of the degrees of reality. Therefore of necessity this level must have a certain reality anterior to or preceding the two contradictories, similar to the level of the quiddity with respect to accidents. In reality the quiddity has a certain existence irrespective of the accident and in opposition to this accident, like the body, for example, with respect to whiteness and its opposite [non-whiteness], but the quiddity does not possess any degree of existence when one considers it precisely outside of its very act of existing. Therefore, to compare the occurrence of *existence* to *essence* with the occurrence of whiteness to a body, and to compare the state where the quiddity is deprived of existence and non-existence with the state of a body in its proper level of existence being without whiteness or nonwhiteness is a lame argument (*qiyās bi-lā jāmi'*). And this is so because the subsistence of whiteness and its opposite in a body presupposes the existence of that body, whereas the subsistence of existence by quiddity does not at all

presuppose the *existence* of this quiddity precisely because quiddity does not possess *existence* except through existence itself.

In order to reach to the depth of what is being discussed here, now that we have indicated that the accident of the quiddity signifies something which *in concreto* is the quiddity itself in its act of *existence*, whereas for the analysis carried out by the mind it signifies something other than it [the act of *existence*], we will formulate [the following]: it is in the nature of the intellect to carry out an analysis which analyzes the existent (*mawjūd*) into a quiddity and existence. In carrying out this analysis the mind isolates each of these two from the other and declares the anteriority of one over the other and considers that one is the qualification of the other.

As for the concrete order, in this case, the principle 'that which exists by itself' is existence is because what proceeds from the Instaurer (*al-jā'il*) is by essence. Quiddity is united with existence and it is quiddity which is attributed in predication to *existence*, but not in the manner in which other accidental things which come to be united with it are attributed to it. If the quiddity is attributed to existence, if it is nothing but a single reality with it, it is because its attribution and this unification constitute the very ipseity and essence of this existence.

As for the order of the mind, in this case it is the quiddity which is anterior because it is a universal concept of the mind which is of necessity found in its very essence in the mind without any other existence [existence in act] than its general concept which is a question of thought. Therefore, quiddity is the principle in mental judgments which are related to the mind and not in judgments related to the external world. That is why this anteriority is anteriority by meaning and quiddity, and not by existence. And this anteriority lies outside of the five famous categories of anteriority.

And if you say, 'This abstraction of the quiddity from *existence* through the analysis carried out [by the mind] is itself also in fact a sort of existence for quiddity. Then how can the rule of the necessary presupposition be safeguarded, from the moment one thus attributes to the quiddity a certain and undetermined existence, considering the fact that this abstraction is a kind of undetermined existence?' Then our answer would be as follows: Although this abstraction constitutes a sort of undetermined existence, it nevertheless belongs to the intellect, in carrying out this abstraction, to not consider this abstraction itself and to not consider that it is a sort of existence which would have for consequence the fact that the quiddity would receive in predication this undetermined *existence* from which we had precisely abstracted the quiddity. Now this consideration which signifies that one empties the quiddity of all acts of *existence*, even of this consideration and this emptying itself which are in reality a sort of *existence* without being in act, [this consideration] carries with it two points of view. There is the point of view according to which it is an abstraction and stripping and there is the point of view according to which it is a kind of existence.

According to the first point of view, the quiddity is qualified by the predicate of existence. According to the second point of view it is mixed; it is not qualified by the predicate of existence. It is a stripping from one point of view and mixture from another. However, the position of each of these two points of view does not differ from that of the other. Otherwise the difficulty would begin again from the beginning, in the sense that the point of view according to which the quiddity is qualified by the predicate of existence would imply of necessity its conjunction established with existence and thus the rule of the necessary proposition would be broken. That is because this abstraction separating the quiddity from the totality of the acts of existence constitutes itself for this quiddity a sort of existence, not that this abstraction is another thing different from existence. It is that this abstraction is at the same time *existence* and the abstraction from *existence* in the same way that the *materia prima* possesses the potentiality of substantial forms and others and that this potentiality itself is realized in act for matter without its needing another potentiality for the actualization of this potentiality. That is because the actualization of this potentiality is precisely the potentiality of matter with regard to multiple things in the same way that the continuation of movement is its renewal itself and that the unity of number is multiplicity itself. Observe well the propagation of the light of *existence* and the penetration of its law in the totality of conceivable realities from all different points of view and positions to such an extent that the abstraction separating *existence* from quiddity presupposes the *existence* of this quiddity.

Remark: It should be known that what we have mentioned has for its goal to complete the doctrine which is common among the philosophers in a way that it is in accordance with their taste (*madhāq*) and adapted to their method (*maslak*) when it reduces *existence* to an abstraction operated by the mind. However, for our part we have no need of such delving deeply into this matter since we have established that *existence* is quiddity itself *in concreto* and that moreover *existence* is the positive reality of the thing itself, not the reality of something that appertains to it, and therefore the 'derivative' principle does not apply here. To speak of qualification by a predicate, to designate the copula which comes between the quiddity and *existence* is to speak in a general and figurative sense because the copula between the quiddity and *existence* is of a unitive order. It is not like the copula between a subject in which an accident inheres and its accident, between the subject qualified and the attribute which qualifies it. Rather, it is more like the qualification of a genus by its specific difference in the case of a simple species when this is carried out by the mind analyzing them, from the point of view of there being a genus and specific difference, and not from the point of view of there being intelligible matter and form.

THE UNIFICATION OF THE INTELLECTOR¹
AND THE INTELLECTED²

*Ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa’l-ma‘qūl*³

Translated for this volume by Ibrahim Kalin (comprising part of his Ph.D. thesis), from Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Risālah fī ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa’l-ma‘qūl*, ed., Ḥāmid Nāji Iṣfahānī in *Majmū‘a-yi rasā’il-i falsafī-yi Ṣadr al-muta’allihīn* (Tehran, 1375 Sh./1956), pp. 63–103.

In the Name of God, the Infinitely Good, the All-Merciful: Gratitude is for the Giver of knowledge and wisdom, and benediction is upon the instrument of generosity and compassion, and upon his family of Imams who are the treasury of the secrets of the Shari‘ah and religion, and the protectors of the lights of knowledge and certitude.

After that, this [tract] is a magnificent sign from among the signs of God’s wisdom and providence, and a perfect pearl from among the ocean of the jewelry of His generosity and mercy, concerning the critical investigation (*taḥqīq*) of the question of unity between the intellector and the *intelligibilia*,⁴ and the question of whether the active intellect is all existents (*mawjūdāt*). These two noble issues are among the most difficult problems of metaphysics so much so that they are like the two eyes and two ears through the power of which the forms of things are seen. Or they are like two luminous stars by which everything in the world and the heavens is illuminated. Both of these issues have been mentioned in the

1. I translate the word *al-‘āqil* as ‘intellector’ instead of simply as intellect (*al-‘aql*) to convey Ṣadrā’s intended meaning. At times, Ṣadrā uses the terms ‘intellect, intellector, and intellectured’ together as a more comprehensive title for the unification argument. He occasionally uses the words *al-‘aql* and *al-‘āqil* interchangeably but there is a subtle difference between the two. While *al-‘aql* conveys the generic meaning of intellect, *al-‘āqil* refers to the subject in whom the intellect functions as the agent of unification with the intelligible world. Not only the intellect but also the person who intellects is united with the intelligible world. This allows Ṣadrā to tie together his ontology and noetics in a more direct way.

2. I translate the word *al-ma‘qūl* as ‘intellectured’ rather than simply ‘intelligible’. Depending on the context, *al-ma‘qūl* can be translated as intelligible, and I have done so throughout this work. Where possible, I tried to spare the reader such clumsy neologisms as ‘intellector-ness’ (*al-‘āqiliyyah*) and ‘intellectured-ness’ (*al-ma‘qūliyyah*).

3. Nineteen manuscripts of the *Risālah* have been found in the libraries of Tehran, Qom, Mashhad, Najaf, and Hamadān. The editor has used the manuscripts found in the Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī-yi Dānishgāh, Kitābkhāna-yi Malik, and the personal libraries of Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī and Āyatullāh Sayyid ‘Izz al-Dīn Zanjānī.

4. I used the Latin *intelligibilia* to translate *al-ma‘qūlāt* in the plural when Ṣadrā uses it as a single term. I also used the Latin *sensibilia* to translate the word *al-maḥsūsāt* again in the plural. I believe both terms convey Ṣadrā’s intended meaning better than their standard English translations.

language of some of the ancients (*al-mutaqaddimīn*). The minds of all the later philosophers were incapable of understanding them as they sharpened the teeth of their language in accord with the approach of those who debased these two matters and drew the weapons of defamation and repudiation. They tormented themselves in [order to] rebuke [this view], openly declaring [their] censure and hate. But they do not listen to the word of (certainty)¹ nor is it clear to anyone of them the reason [why they do this] so that this could be a deliverance for them from their vilification, and an abstention for those who have participated in this defamation. But alas! They have increased their denial and insisted on this in the most stubborn way. Attributing this grave error about what inhibited the perception of the great majority of the people of learning to those who have some experience in the art of learning is a kind of heedlessness and haste, and abstention from the path of proper direction, patience, and fairness. The haste for man is the act of Devil: 'Do not approach the Qur'ān in haste ere it has been revealed unto thee in full' (20:114).

Clinging to the robe of firm standing and asking for the descent of the rain of mercy in the world of lights is by far preferable to promptitude in denial. And commencing [one's inquiry] with the grace of the One who possesses the key of mercy and salvation is worthier than sealing the path of deliverance to the face of students capable of attaining happiness and grasping the truth and what is right. In this tract, we are going to present in a summary form what we have explained concerning the truth of this problem in our great book called *The Four Journeys* as an approximation of the matter to the minds [of readers] and explanation of our purpose for 'everyone who has a heart, or everyone who lends ear, and he is a witness' (50:37). God is surely the guardian (*waliyy*) of innocence and confirmation.²

In regard to the organization of what we mention in the [following] two discourses (*maqālah*), we say that each of them comprising several chapters is pillars and principles for the sciences.

1. The editor's addition in parenthesis.

2. This prelude is a reference to those, including Ibn Sinā and Suhrawardī, who have rejected the unification argument as mere sophistry. Ṣadrā's call for 'proper direction, patience, and fairness' indicates the extent to which this issue has been passionately debated. Cf. *al-Hikmah al-muta'aliyah fi'l-asfār al-'aqliyyah al-arba'ah*, (cited hereafter as *Asfār*) (Beirut, 1981, third edition) I, 3, pp. 321–322.

The First Discourse Concerning the Unity of the Intellector and the Intelligible, and It is Comprised of Several Chapters

Section 1:

*On the Degrees of the Theoretical Intellect in Tandem with the View of Alexander of Aphrodisias*¹

The intellect has several stations:²

One [of them] is the material intellect (*al-ʿaql al-hayūlānī*). The philosophers mean by the material a subject which can transform into something else either as a sensible or intellectual [substance] through the being of a form in it. The essence of everything, which has the potentiality of becoming something else, has to be actual from the point of view of what it is as a [concrete] thing. Even if such a thing were to contain the potentiality of all things, its essence will have to be itself so that there would not be [another] form for it among the forms. And it would be pure potentiality with no actuality except what occurs to it from outside. When it assumes a form through [an actual] form, it becomes united with it in such a way that there is no duality between the two. This holds true for the *sensibilia* as we see in the case of the matter (*hayūlā*) of physical bodies, which are in and of themselves denuded of all forms. As it is explained in the science of metaphysics, this matter is also identical with these physical species and their simple and composite individuals. It has already been demonstrated that composition between matter and form is a kind of unity, as this is the accepted view among the verifiers (*al-muḥaqqiqīn*).³

The same holds true for the material intellect in comparison to the *intelligibilia*. The material intellect in itself is not an intelligible substance *in actus* nor one of the intelligible things before it comes into actuality. It is, however, one of the sensible things *in actus* and all of the intelligible things *in potentia*.⁴ The soul is thus the form of perfection for the species of the sensible body such as man, which, in contrast to

1. In the *Asfār*, Ṣadrā says that he had a copy of a treatise by Alexander of Aphrodisias on the unification of the intellect and the intelligible without mentioning its title. This must be a reference to Alexander's *De Intellectu* discussed in Chapter I. It is important to note that Ṣadrā mentions Alexander's work after he mentions the *Theology of Aristotle* and Porphyry's treatise on the intellect. This confirms one more time that Ṣadrā reads Alexander through the eyes of Neoplatonism and as supporting the unification argument. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 427.

2. This section is a paraphrase of *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 428–433 where Ṣadrā's discussion of Alexander of Aphrodisias follows almost verbatim his *De Intellectu* 106–108.7.

3. The term 'verifier' (*al-muḥaqqiq*) and its plural appear many times in Ṣadrā's writings. Ṣadrā uses it when he refers to a specific group of philosophers whom he considers closer to the perspective of his Transcendent Wisdom. Ibn ʿArabī uses the same term to refer to his own school of thought. In its singular form, it is also used as a nickname like 'the verifier' Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. For its usage in different contexts see *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 55, 59; I, 2, pp. 12, 38; I, 3, p. 311; II, 1, p. 85; II, 2, pp. 35, 87, 95.

4. This essentially Aristotelian idea refers to the innate potency of sensible objects to assume various forms.

the primary matter (*al-hayūlā al-ūlā*), is capable of perceiving all things together. The primary matter in itself is not a sensate (*ḥissiyyah*) or intellective (*‘aqliyyah*) thing. It has to represent every sensate object one after another. The human soul is therefore [like] a form in relation to the matter of the *sensibilia*, and matter in comparison to the form of the *intelligibilia*. In itself, viz., before it perfects [i.e., actualizes] itself into a sensate entity, it is not an intellective thing as it is said in the word of He the Transcendent: ‘People of the Book! You have no valid ground’ (5:68).¹ It is therefore a sensate form and intellective matter, and a material intellect in itself. Thus it is potentially all of the *intelligibilia* for it is capable of perceiving them all.

The percipient (*mudrik*) must be one of its own objects of perception in actuality and because of its nature otherwise its particular form would be an obstacle for perceiving anything other than this nature. This is like the senses that do not perceive things that have a part of them in what they perceive. The faculty of sight, for instance, perceives colours but not its own colour. Therefore the instrument in which this faculty is found and by which perception takes place does not have a particular colour. The instrument of smelling, by which smelling objects are perceived, does not have a smell. In the same way, touching, through which the elementary forms of the *sensibilia* are perceived, has to be in balance in such a way that it is not conjoined with any [of the *sensibilia*] in an excessive and complete way so that everything can be perceived by it. It has been said that whatever is in balance between opposites is the same as being free from them. These instruments, however, do not perceive things that are similar to them in hotness or coldness, moisture or dryness, softness or roughness. This is due to the fact that nothing can be a body, especially an elemental body (*‘unṣuriyyah*), unless it has a share in the opposites. Every natural body is without doubt tangible, and it cannot perceive its like or its opposite because opposites cancel each other out. This difficulty, however, is resolved in the case of touching, as we have pointed out before. We have explained this matter in its respective place, and this is not the place to go into its exposition again.

In sum, the goal is [to show] that since in [the domain of] the *sensibilia* nothing can have potentially only one relationship to the whole because it cannot be free from the actuality of some of them in itself, there cannot be one [single] external sense perceiving all of the *sensibilia*. For every sense is one single form in actuality. But there is among the existents something which is a potential intellect in relation to all of the *intelligibilia*.² This is the case before it becomes an intellective form. Then its existence is a sensate existence, a material form, and an intellective matter. When

1. Literally ‘you are not on a thing’ (*shay*). Šadrā is making use of the multiple meanings of the word *shay* in Arabic.

2. This contrast between the senses and the intellect is a reference to the fact that while the senses can perceive only one sensate object at any given time, the intellect can conceive multiple concepts. In this regard, ‘the senses multiply and the intellect unifies.’

it is actualized in one of the *intelligibilia*, it becomes united with it, and becomes one of the intellectual entities (*al-ashya' al-'aqliyyah*).

Know that there is a difference between the matter of the *sensibilia* and the matter of the *intelligibilia*, which is the following: in contrast to the matter of the *sensibilia*, it is a characteristic of the matter of the *intelligibilia* to come into actuality in all *intelligibilia* at once whereas the matter of the *sensibilia*, in its passage from potentiality to actuality in these forms, is a new thing not in an instant but in time and motion. And this is so for two reasons.

The first reason: the sensible *qua* sensible has a weak existence, in which the opposites take place. A sensible object cannot be a horse, tree and stone [at the same time] because its existence cannot contain two realities [simultaneously] and [cannot accept] the unity of two forms, let alone [accepting] all realities and forms. Rather, it takes on only one form because of its being a measured thing, each measured parts of which are separate from its other measured parts.

The second reason: sensible natures are in constant renewal, passage, and cessation from one being to another. If it were possible for them to be all things in one single substance, they would not remain moving, could not have had the expected perfection [in them], and would have had the intellectual rather than the bodily form.

It has been firmly established and proven that whenever the matter of the *sensibilia* in a certain form has come into actuality from potentiality, it has returned from actuality to potentiality in some other things. This is like the parts of motion and time, some of whose existence necessitate the non-existence of the other,¹ or like the parts of physical bodies and space, the presence of which requires the absence of the other. But this is not the case with the matter of the *intelligibilia*, which, whenever it arises from potentiality into actuality in a particular thing, assumes a stronger relation and proximity to other *intelligibilia*.

The second degree [of meaning] for the intellect is that by which the soul achieves the capacity of passing from primary to secondary [intelligibles], and from self-evident truths to theoretical statements through these primary [intelligibles] obtained by means of senses and imagination (*al-khayāl*). It is through the occurrence of this capacity in it that the soul is able to take the forms of the *intelligibilia* from the objects of imagination (*mukhayyālāt*), and obtain theoretical statements from self-evident truths just like those who have the capacity of arts and crafts and who are able to know their own work by themselves.

The first one, I mean the material [intellect] is like these people. [A better example] is rather those who have a latent [lit., distant] capacity by which they accept the [ir] ability for arts and crafts until they become artisans as in the case of children and those who are as yet incomplete (*al-nāqishūn*) in their development. As for this

1. As Ṣadrā explains in great detail in the *Asfār*, this is a confirmation of the absolute contingency of possible beings vis-à-vis the Necessary Being: they are hung between existence and non-existence.

capacity, it is found in those who have perfected themselves and become counted among the people with intelligence (*‘uqalā*).

The third degree [of meaning] is the active intellect, and it is through it that the material intellect comes to possess the capacity of passing [from potentiality to actuality]. As Aristotle says, this active [intellect] can be compared to the ray of light because the ray is the cause of visible colours *in potentia* in that they become visible in actuality [through it]. By the same token, this intellect effects the material intellect, which is potential, in such a way that the faculty of intellectual conception (*taṣawwur ‘aqlī*) becomes established in it, and then turns material forms, which are potential, into intelligibles in actuality. This third [i.e., the active intellect] is intelligible by its own nature, and it is in actuality whether an intellect intellects it or not. This is so because it is the agent of intellectual conception,¹ and it transfers material intellect into an actual intellect. As such, it is the active intellect because the material [i.e., potential] forms, which are intelligible only *in potentia*, become actually intelligible through it when this intellect disembodies them from the matter that is co-existent with them. Before this, they are neither intelligible [in actuality] nor is it in their nature to be so. Similarly, it is by virtue of light, which makes vision possible and emanates upon the faculty of sight that this capacity becomes seeing in actuality and a source of existence for physical bodies and colours, which are visible in view of it and which were visible before only potentially. In the same manner, light, by definition, is visible and makes things visible. It is impossible for it to be otherwise or *in potentia*. In fact, it is always actual in this way.

When this illuminating and intellective light shines upon the potential intellect, it becomes an intellect in actuality, and when it shines upon the imaginal or sensible forms that correspond to it, they all become intelligible in actuality. This is simply impossible not to be so. Because of this, as it shall become clear to you, God willing, there has to be an intellector here.

Section 2

Concerning that Intellection Consists in the Unification of the Intellector with the Intelligible

I say, and success is from God: forms of things are of two kinds. The first is the form whose existence is supported by bodily matter. The forms of this kind can neither

1. Ṣadrā's choice of words is extremely important for a proper understanding of how the Active Intellect functions in classical philosophy. One of the ways in which we can elicit the meaning and function of the Active Intellect is to see it not as a 'thing' but as principles of conceptual thinking. Just as light makes things visible, these principles make thinking possible. Unification with the Active Intellect means to learn these principles and 'participate' in them. The Active Intellect moves the potential intellect from mere appearances to the principle of thinking. Ṣadrā's phrase 'the agent of intellectual conception' captures this meaning quite accurately. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 431–432.

be intelligible nor sensible for their existence is the same as veiling and absence because of their sharing in the meaning of non-existence whereby the existence of everything in this [category] is equal to the non-existence of the other, and the presence of each part necessitates the absence of the other. Knowledge consists of the existence of something for something else, and its presence in it.¹ How can then something that does not have an existence in itself be existent for something else? Therefore this kind of forms cannot be perceived except through the acquisition of another form whose likeness is to be found only in concept [i.e., in the mind] and whose opposite is in the order of existence.

The second kind are the forms whose existence is not supported by matter but rather disembodied from it whether it has a relational connection to matter or not. This has two aspects. As for the carrier of the capacity of perception concerning its external matter such as the *sensibilia*, the instrument in which we find the capacity of the existence of this actual sensible form has a positional relation to its external matter, and this relation becomes particular through the attainment of this form for the sense[s]. Thus, these forms are related to their particular and sensate forms as we see in the case of estimations (*mawhūmāt*) and imaginations. Or this form has no connection and relational or positional attachment to matter. This is because of its extreme purity and disembodiment from matter, and also because of its individuation by its particular existence and the existence of its perfect instaurer (*jā'il*)² which does not need any aides from outside and extraneous accidents added to it.

Do you not see that when something from among the physical bodies and their forms is taken to be an individuated unit, it would neither have anything extraneous to its essence nor would the other things around it remain existent? An example of

1. Ṣadrā draws a distinction between the 'presence of perceptual forms for the soul and their actualization in matter'. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 300–304. In this context, the presence of something to itself signifies the absence of any epistemic obstacle. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 449.

2. The word *ja'l* and its derivatives *jā'il* and *maj'ūl* occupy a special place in Ṣadrā's philosophical vocabulary. Briefly stated, it signifies putting something into a specific state or condition in conformity with its essential properties. Ṣadrā divides it into two: simple and composite. Simple instauration refers to the construction of something by itself when we say, for instance, 'man is man'. In logic, this corresponds to 'essential primary predication' (*al-haml al-dhātī al-awwalī*). Composite instauration refers to cases where the definition of a quiddity involves the convergence of both essential and accidental properties such as when we say 'man is rational animal' and 'man is writer'. For Ṣadrā, what is 'instaurated' by itself (*al-maj'ūl bi'l-dhāt*) is not essence but existence, because existence does not need an external agent to make it a specific substance, whereas all essences need some cause external to them to exist in the external world. In this sense, essences are 'instaurated' or produced 'by accident' (*al-maj'ūl bi'l-'araḍ*). Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 65–66; *Aṣālat ja'l al-wujūd in Majmu'a-yi rasā'il-i falsafī-yi Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn* ed. Ḥamid Nāji Iṣfahānī (Tehran, 1375/1955), pp. 184–185; *Sharḥ-i ilāhiyyāt*, vol. II, p. 805. See also Ṣadrā's extensive analysis in *Asfār*, I, 1, pp. 396–423 where he talks about concept (*taṣawwur*) and judgment (*taṣdiq*) as two cases of simple and composite instauration. In using the old English word 'instaur', I follow Corbin and Nasr to distinguish *ja'l* from 'causation'.

this is the following. If we were to suppose a sky or an encircling object with nothing in it, it would not exist because of the necessity of void. If we were to suppose a land or an encircled thing with no sky to raise it up, it would not exist because this being would of necessity have nothing to make it something determinate whereas existence [as determined in the external world] is a physical body with extension. Or physical bodies would have aspects and extensions without something making their aspects and extensions determinate. All of this is impossible.

It has become clear that things of this kind need accidental and coincidental (*ittifāqiyyah*) causes as they are in need of essential causes. That is why this world has been called the world of coincidences (*‘ālam al-ittifāqiyyāt*). As for the intellectual existence, it is not in need of accidental causes that are extraneous to its nature and which distinguish its substance [from others].

Once this is established, we say: it is certain according to the philosophers that the disembodied form as a universal is an actual intelligible form. In the same way, the disembodied form as disembodied in general is either a sensible in actuality or an imaginal [object] in actuality. The proof [for the assertion] that every disembodied form as a universal is an intelligible in actuality is that if it were not to be so, it would be impossible for it to intellect actually or potentially, or it would be possible for it to do so. The first is not tenable because whatever is established in existence is capable of being intelligible, even potentially.¹ The second is not tenable either because that which can receive something as an accident is not established for it in actuality. In the same manner, non-existence is something among the causes of the existence of this thing, either because of the absence of something from the side of the agent or because of the inability of the receptor. The first is impossible because the agent acting upon intellectual forms is a complete reality and essence, in which there can be no shortcoming, deficiency or inability. The second is also impossible because disembodied forms do not have a specific locus. They do not accept or allow change, nor permit the possibility of something that has not been already actualized. This is due to the fact that things of this order are to be found only in the world of motions, changes, matters, and potencies. Our initial assumption, however, was that this form is a disembodied one with no relation to matter, change, transformation, or movement.

It has thus been established that the existence of every disembodied form in itself is its actual intelligible existence. It is also known on the basis of sound intuition that the existence of every sensible form in itself is its very sensible-ness

1. This is another way of stating the identity of existence and truth/reality (*ḥaqīqah*). Ṣadrā insists on this in no uncertain terms: 'The reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of everything is its existence through which it receives the effects specific to it for the 'being-ness' (*mawjūdiyyah*) of something and its having a reality have one single meaning and one single subject, there being no difference between the two except in expression (*lafẓ*).'*Aṣālat ja' l al-wujūd in Majmu'a-yi rasā'il-i falsafī-yi Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn*, p. 182.

(*maḥsūsiyyah*), which is its existence for the sensate substance. Also, the existence of every imaginal form (*mutakhayyalah*) in itself is its existence for imagination. Even if we suppose that intelligibility is removed from the forms which we had assumed to be intelligible, this does not make them a thing among other things like a planet, tree, animal or plant.

The same holds true for imaginal and sensible objects. Their intellective existence is nothing but the manifestation of things in the mind or in the soul, and their existence becomes an intellective and intelligible light, not that through which existential quiddities [i.e., quiddities *in concreto*] become intelligible in actuality. The same analogy can be made concerning the imaginal or sensate form in that it is an imaginal light by which things are imaginalized, or a sensate light by which the *sensibilia* are manifested and become sensible in actuality.

When this is the case, viz., the intelligibility of the intelligible is of the very kind of the existence of the intellector and nothing else and, by the same token, the existence of the sensibleness of the sensible is exactly the same as the sensate substance and nothing else, it becomes necessary that the intellector be just like this intelligible, not different from its existence. If there were to be an existence for the intellector and another existence for the intelligible form, which is intelligible in actuality, and thus we would have two beings totally different from one another, each having a separate existence for itself, as most people assume, then this would lead to an impossible situation. Because when we look at the intellective form and consider it [in itself] and then turn our eyes from the intellecting substance, [then we have to ask]: is it, in this consideration, intelligible—as it was in and of itself—or not? If it is not intelligible in this consideration, then its mode of existence is not the same as its intelligibility, which means that it is intelligible only in potentiality, not in actuality. What we have considered to be correct, [namely the view] that its being is the same as its intelligibility, is contrary to this [conclusion]. If, in this regard, only this [form] is intelligible as considered in isolation from all other things whose existence is different from it, then in this consideration it certainly is an intellector. Intelligibility is not separable from intellector-ness (*‘āqiliyyah*) because both belong to the category of attribution (*bāb al-muḍāf*). None of the attributed elements can have a meaning without its corresponding part.¹ Therefore one single being is both an intellector and an intelligible. Every form that is disembodied from matter is both intelligible and intellecting without there being any difference between the two meanings from the point of view of existence. But there is a difference insofar as meaning and conception is concerned because the concept of intellector-ness is different from the concept of intelligibility. Otherwise, the two words would be synonymous.

1. Fārābī distinguishes attribution (*muḍāf*) from necessity (*luẓūm*). The day necessitates the sunrise but the two are not ‘attributed’ to one another in the logical sense of the term. See *Jawābāt li-masā’il su’ila ‘anhā in Risālatān falsafiyyatān* ed. Ja’far ‘Alī Yāsīn (Beirut, 1987), p. 92.

As for the fact that one single being is the subject of two different or even more meanings, this is not to be repudiated, as in the case of the essence of the exalted One who, with His absolute unity, is the subject of the meanings of His Names and Attributes without there being any stain of multiplicity. It then follows that when one single intellector can have multiple intelligibles, its very existence becomes identical with the existence of those *intelligibilia* insofar as they are *intelligibilia* in themselves without there being any multiplicity and differentiation in existence. The same analogy applies to the unity of the sensate substance with all of its sensible forms as well as to the unity of the faculty of imagination with all of the imaginal forms.

The fact that various perceptual forms, whether intellective, imaginal, or sensate, have one single identity, existing by virtue of one single existence, in spite of their disparity and difference, is one of the wonders of the secrets of existence. A rigorous proof has been established for this and it cannot be denied by anyone engaged in [this discussion] on the basis of the judgments of sound thinking unless one drifts away from this way to another such as dialectic (*jadāl*), imitation (*taqlīd*) and the like. 'And whosoever for whom God has not created a light has no share of light.'¹

Section 3

Concerning the Finalization of What We Have Substantiated and the Confirmation of What We Have Established

Know that the state of the soul in its stages of sensate, imaginal and intellective perceptions is not like what has become common among the majority [of philosophers]. It is mentioned in the [ir] books that the soul is one in its essence and degrees whereas the perceptibles (*al-mudrakāt*) are different in their existence and opposite in their disembodiment (*tajarrud*) and bodily existence. The truth, however, is that every potency of perception is itself the very form of what it perceives when it is perceived in actuality.

It is a common view among them that the soul disembodies sensate forms, separates them from their matter with a kind of disembodiment, and becomes sensible in actuality. After that, it disembodies them with a more complete disembodiment and become imaginal in actuality. Then it disembodies them with a complete disembodiment and becomes intelligible in actuality. And the soul in itself remains the same as in the beginning without passing from being sensate to being imaginal and from being imaginal to being intellective. In this way, they make the soul unchanging, and its objects of perception passing and transforming.² The

1. Qur'ān 24:40.

2. Another consequence of this is what Ṣadrā calls the privative (*salbī*) view of knowledge. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, pp. 286–287.

truth of the matter, however, is not like this. It is rather the opposite of what they have mentioned. It is closer to truth to make the differences of perceptual forms in various degrees of disembodiment and perfection subject to the transformations of the perceiver. That which is immersed in the veil of matter cannot perceive a form with which it is not covered. The fact that every reality related to a species, such as man for instance, becomes manifest to the potency of intellection at one time through one single intelligible form and to the senses through multiple opposite forms at other times, does not lead to the conclusion that in its existential modes the soul is subject to its own changes. Nor does it warrant the idea of making its differences and changes subject to the different states and transformations of the soul itself. This [view] is more fundamental and more appropriate.¹

O intelligent and smart one! Look at the soul, its existential modes and states, and its being united with a group of existents from this mode of existence in every existential mode. It is of a bodily nature with the body, a sense with the senses, an imaginal [reality] with imagination, and an intellect with the intellect. 'And no soul knows where it shall die.'² When the soul is united with nature, it becomes the organs. When it is united with the senses in actuality, it becomes the very *sensibilia* that have come about for the senses in actuality. When it is with imagination in actuality, it becomes the imaginal forms that it has. This continues until it reaches the station of the actual intellect, and becomes the intellectual forms that have obtained for it in actuality.

The wisdom behind this is that when God instated in existence an intellectual unity, which is the world of the intellect, and a physical multiplicity, which is the world of the senses and imagination with degrees, the Divine Providence made it necessary to create a comprehensive being (*nash'ah jāmi'ah*), by which everything in the two worlds is perceived. And it designated for it a subtle potency corresponding to this all-encompassing unity. It is through this correlation that the perception

1. As Ṣadrā explains in the following paragraph, his main point is to show the dynamic nature of the soul vis-à-vis the sensate, imaginal and intelligible forms that it appropriates. Essentially, this is a criticism directed at the Peripatetic notion of the soul as a passive receptacle of abstract forms. Ṣadrā attributes this view to Ibn Sinā's belief in the absolute 'disembodiment' of the soul from matter in its original state of being (*fiṭrah*)—a view that needs to be corrected'. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 443. Ibn Sinā states the same view in various places. See, *inter alia*, his short treatise 'On the Rational Soul' in D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (New York, 1988), p. 74. Even though Ṣadrā bases his criticism on this absolutely non-corporeal view of the soul, he fails to explain why this particular view should lead to a passive concept of the soul. See also *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (2nd ed., Mashhad, 1981), pp. 195–196, 199–200 and 221–222 where Ṣadrā reiterates his view of the soul as arising out of material conditions. For Ṣadrā's proofs, which he calls *sam'ī*, i.e., 'heard' or transmitted, from the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and other reported sayings about the disembodiment of the soul from matter, see *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 303–324. Ṣadrā begins this section by saying that 'most people benefit from the transmitted arguments (*sam'īyyāt*) more than they do from the intellectual arguments (*'aqliyyāt*).'

2. Qur'ān 31:34.

[of the two worlds] is possible. And this [subtle potency] is nothing but the active intellect.¹ It also designated another physical or material capacity corresponding to this physical multiplicity whereby it perceives multiplicity as it is. But the soul in the initial stages of its origination is succumbed to the aspect of physical multiplicity due to its deficiency and imperfection, and as such its intellectual unity is only potential whereas its physical multiplicity is actual. When its essence becomes strong and its activeness intensifies, the aspect of unity takes precedence over it, and it becomes an intellect and an intelligible after having been a sense and a sensible. The soul thus undergoes substantial motion from this first origination to the second and to what comes after it.

Section 4

Concerning the Close Examination of This Method and Allusion to God's Knowledge of Contingent Beings

You have already seen that the analogy of the intellect to the *intelligibilia* is like the analogy of the sense to the *sensibilia* even though it is not the case that the senses—faculty of sight, for instance—consist of the acquisition of the sensible form from matter. It is not true that sight takes something from what is seen, which passes from matter to the matter of sight because, as explained before, natural qualities cannot pass from one subject to another. Likewise, it does not mean that the faculty of sensation, such as vision, moves towards the form of the sensible that exists in matter as the defenders of the view of ‘extromission’ (*shu‘ā*) have assumed on the question of vision (*baṣār*).² It is to be noted that vision is neither a mere positional relation to the sensing subject nor a relation of knowledge that the soul has to this material form, as it was defended by the School of Illumination on the question of vision and by people like Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī concerning perception in a general

1. Cf. *Shawāhid*, pp. 245–256 where Ṣadrā, following Ibn Sīnā in broad outlines, defines the active intellect as the fundamental principles of thinking. As mentioned before, this meaning is sufficiently clear in Ibn Sīnā's description of the active intellect as the ‘principles of intellectual forms’. Cf. *Kitāb al-Najāt*, ed. Majid Fakhry (Beirut, 1985), p. 234.

2. Ṣadrā is referring to the celebrated controversy between the two theories of vision in the Middle Ages. While the defenders of the intromission theory argued that the vision of physical objects takes place by something coming into the eye, the defenders of extromission explained vision by something going out of the eye and contacting the object seen. While the first view is usually associated with Aristotle and the ‘naturalists’, the second view is attributed to ‘the mathematicians’. The difficulties and inconsistencies of both views can be followed from David Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, 1976). For the significance of this debate in the School of Illumination, see John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients* (New York, 2000), pp. 157–164. Ṣadrā rejects both theories and opts for Suhrawardī's idea that vision takes place through an ‘illuminative and presential knowledge’ (*‘ilm ishrāqī ḥudūrī*). Cf. *Asfār*, I, 1, p. 301. See also *Asfār*, IV, 1, pp. 178–200 and *Sharḥ-i ilāhiyyāt*, vol. I, p. 589. For Suhrawardī, see his *Kitāb al-Mashārī‘ wa’l-mu‘āraḥāt*, p. 486, par. 209.

sense. As we have explained in its due course, all of these three views are false in our opinion, especially the view [that defines vision] as relation. The positional relation concerning physical bodies and what is in them is neither their knowledge nor their perception. The relation of knowledge to intellectual substances cannot be conceived in comparison to the essences of material subjects. We have already pointed to a general demonstration that nothing among the essences of material subjects can be a percipient of anything whatsoever except through a knowledge that encompasses their reasons and causes.¹

The truth in our opinion concerning vision and all other forms of perception is that it comes about through the generation of a luminous and perceptual form from the world of the soul by means of creative emanation (*al-fayḍ al-ibdāʿī*). It is through this [form] that the perception and consciousness of things comes about. When these forms are related to the senses, they are both sensing and sensed in actuality. The forms of vision are neither an external matter nor they are imprinted in the instrument of vision. They are rather hanging [in between], subsisting not in a locus and matter but through an active and luminous principle. As for the existence of the form in the external world, it is one of the conditions and preparatory circumstances for the coming about of this disembodied form at the level of the soul. The argument about this form being a sense, sensing, and sensed is like the argument about the intelligible form being an intellect, intellector, and intelligible. The same holds true for all other kinds of perception, sensible, imaginal, and intelligible.

The First Teacher [Aristotle] has said in the *Theology*: 'It is necessary to know that vision reaches physical bodies outside of it, and it does not reach them until it becomes identical with them. Then it senses and knows them with a sound knowledge in accord with the mode of its capacity [to perceive]. In the same way, when the person who intellects turns his eye to things *in concreto*, he does not reach them until he and the things [he sees] become one and the same thing except for the fact that sight falls upon the external form of things whereas the intellect falls upon the inner reality of things. For this reason, its unity with them is of various kinds. In some cases, it is more intense and stronger than the unity of the sense with the *sensibilia*. Every time the sight fixes its gaze upon a sensible object, what is sensed is affected by it until it becomes external to the sense, i.e., until it does not sense anything anymore. As for the intellectual vision, it is just the opposite.'² (End of his words.)

1. This is a reference to Ṣadrā's view, agreeing with Suhrawardī, that perception does not come about as a result of the juxtaposition of the organ of perception and what is perceived. Perception of sensate objects involves consciousness and goes beyond the kind of mere 'relationality' that Ṣadrā criticizes here.

2. Cf. *Uthūlūjīyā* in 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Afluṭīn 'ind al-'arab* (Cairo, 1955), p. 117. The first part of the quote corresponds, with some variations, to the *Enneads*, 5, VIII, 11.

Know that through this method that we have followed on the question of knowledge—providence is by God the Exalted and His confirmation—many problems are resolved, and the objections that have been raised against the representation of the forms of things in His Essence, the Exalted, and their impressions in Him do not arise. The same holds true for the impression of these forms upon the essences of these intellects in the perception of the intellects. If intellection were through the impression of intellectual forms upon the essence of the intellector, this would lead to horrible consequences for God's knowledge—His name be exalted—which are mentioned in the books.¹ The fact that the form of a substance is impressed upon the intellecting substance would also necessitate the existence of one single form grouped under two categories, the category of substance and the category of quality. In the same way, the impression of quantity, position and relation would of necessity lead to the inclusion of each one of them under two categories, and to many other problems mentioned in their due course.

Section 5

Another Way of Explaining What We Wish to Establish

An established fact among the majority [of the philosophers] is that the faculty of intellection in man obtains the forms of the *intelligibilia* from outside of its essence after having not been an intellector in actuality. [According to them], this takes place without [the intellect] uniting with the forms and transforming into them. This view is simply not tenable. When the soul is devoid of knowledge and ignorant in actuality, has the capacity of being affected by the *intelligibilia*, and meets the intellectual forms and perceives them with an intellectual perception, we say: when this capacity of being affected [by the *intelligibilia*] comes upon an intelligible form, with what does it perceive it and become related to it? Does it perceive an intelligible form by its own essence, which is bereft of knowledge and intellect? I wish I could understand how an essence denuded of [knowledge], ignorant and not illuminated by the light of the intellect can perceive a form outside of its essence, which is in the darkness whereas, in fact, it is a luminous form in itself and a pure intelligible!

If such an essence has perceived the forms with its denuded essence, then it follows of necessity that an ignorant and blind essence has perceived a pure intelligible, which is essentially separate from the essence of the percipient, in which case we have two essences separate from one another, an intellector in potentiality and an intelligible in actuality. But the two subjects of predication, insofar as they are the subjects of predication, have to be in one way or another equal in existence and non-existence and in potentiality and actuality. It is impossible for one of

1. Ṣadrā does not mention the books to which he is referring here. It could be a reference to the books that advocate the view that Ṣadrā criticizes here or to his own books in which he provides his alternative account.

them to be potential and for the other to be actual. How can the blind eye look and see? With what light does it look at the visible lights and colours? Likewise, with which intellective light does the intellect see the intelligible and luminous objects of perception? 'And for whosoever God has not created light has no share of light.'¹

If it has perceived them through an intellective form by which its essence has been illuminated, then the discussion turns into the relation of its [19] denuded essence to these forms, in that its essence would be dissimilar to these forms or subsistent through and united with them. Now, if it is dissimilar, then the difficulty mentioned before comes right back, and the forms are multiplied *ad infinitum*, which is impossible. If it is not dissimilar, then these forms are by themselves intellectors in actuality as they are intelligible in actuality without there being the medium of any other form. This is exactly what we wanted [to establish].

It is not possible for the opponent to say that perhaps these forms are a means to the soul's being an intellector for things other than itself, and that they are intelligible for the soul itself, meaning that everything beyond the soul that has a correspondence with it becomes intelligible for the soul through this form.² We respond by saying that had this form not been an intelligible in the first place, it would be impossible for it to perceive anything other than itself. The mediation of this form is not like the mediation of the instruments of arts and crafts in accomplishing bodily works.³ Their example is rather like the sensible light in perceiving visible objects whereby first the light is seen and then through its medium other things are seen in a secondary and accidental way. We have already explained with a decisive proof that intelligible form is intelligible in actuality, whether an intellect other than itself intellects it or not.⁴ In the same way, one cannot assume a being for the sensible form which is itself not sensible. It is thus sensible in actuality even if there was no substance in the universe to sense it. The existence of intellective or sensate perceptual forms for the soul is not like the existence of a house, various possessions, and children in relation to the owner of the house, the possessions, and the father in that all of these have an existence in themselves and an existence for things other than themselves, and their existence in themselves is not by itself the same being for things other than themselves. Transformation of the soul into an intellector in actuality is not like the transformation of Zayd into having a property, a field and a child, in which case his existence does not change into another existence.

1. Qur'ān 24:40.

2. This is a response to the possible charge of solipsism where the only thing the soul can know is its own being. Ṣadrā rejects the idea of treating perceptual forms as 'conceptual garments' which the mind puts on things in the external world. Instead, he insists on the autonomous intelligibility of substances outside the mind.

3. The kind of work that requires the actual involvement of the body. This point is made clear few lines later in the same paragraph.

4. Cf. *Asfār*, I, 3, p. 315.

Section 6

Repudiating the Objection Against the Unification of the Intellector and the Intelligible, and Resolving the Doubt Mentioned in the Books of the Master [Ibn Sīnā]¹ and Others

Know that the Master stipulated the rejection of this unification in most of his books, and insisted on it in a strong way. In the *Ishārāt*, he said: 'A group among the ancient [philosophers]² held that when the intellecting substance intellects an intellectual form, it becomes [identical with] it. Supposing that an intellecting substance intellects A. According to their view, it itself becomes cognizant of A. Now, has the intellecting substance remained the same before it intellects A or this has not happened to it [i.e., did it remain the same]? If it has remained the same, then it is the same whether it intellects A or not. If it did not happen to it, then it is not valid [to say] that it has changed into A or that it has become [identical with] its essence. If it has changed into A and its essence has remained the same, then this is like the other kinds of transformation, not like what they claim. If it is [identical with] its essence, then its essence has been dissolved and another thing has come about, not that it has turned into something else. When you ponder over this carefully, you will know that this [transformation] requires a common substance and a composite rather than simple renewal.'³

He also said: 'A further warning: when it intellects A and then B, has it remained the same before it intellects A so that it would be the same whether it intellects B or not, or it has become something else? This leads to what was mentioned before.' End [of quotation].

This is a specific argument for refuting the unification between the intellector and the intelligible. They also have a general argument for rejecting any kind of

1. Ṣadrā uses Ibn Sīnā's conventional title *al-Shaykh* throughout the treatise as he does in his other works. I kept to the word 'Master' to translate it. Ṣadrā occasionally uses Ibn Sīnā's full title *al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs*, which I have rendered as the 'Chief Master'.

2. In the above quotation from the *Shifā'*, Ṣadrā uses the word *mutaqaddimīn* rather than *mutaṣaddirīn* which is the word used in the *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, vol. 3, p. 292. *Mutaṣaddir*, which Ibn Sīnā uses only when referring to a specific group of people, comes from the root 'ṣ-d-r' meaning to come forth, to put forward, to emanate, etc. Goichon translates it as those 'philosophers who advance things that have not been proven' and more specifically those who believe, contrary to Ibn Sīnā, that the soul becomes the object of its intellection. See A. M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā* (Paris, 1938), p. 177. Massignon translates it as simply 'professors of philosophy'. See Louis Massignon, *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'Islam* (Paris, 1929), p. 189.

3. For the quote see *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihāt*, with the commentaries of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūṣī and Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī (Tehran, 1958), vol. 3, pp. 292–293. This is a reference to Ibn Sīnā's denial of change in the category of substance. It is to be remembered that for Ibn Sīnā, when a substance is transformed, it does not 'evolve' into another substance while preserving its essential identity. Instead, it undergoes generation and corruption (*kawn wa fasād*) and thus becomes something new.

unification between two things which the Master and others have mentioned in their books. It can be stated as follows: 'If two united things are two separate existents, then there is no unification. If one of them has ceased to be what it is and a new being has emerged, then there is no unification. If the two together have become non-existent and a third being has come about, then again there is no unification.'

Then he said in the *Ishārāt*: 'There was a man among them known as Porphyry who wrote a book on the intellect and the *intelligibilia*, which is highly praised by the Peripatetics. All of it is gibberish. And they know very well that neither they nor Porphyry himself understand it. Someone among his contemporaries contradicted him, and he criticized this contradiction with [an argument] lower [i.e., weaker] than the first one.'¹

He said in a section of the *Shifā'* on the science of the soul: 'One cannot say that the soul becomes the *intelligibilia*. In my opinion, this is something impossible. I have never understood their claim that something transforms into something else, and never figured out how this takes place.'

Then he mentioned the general argument for rejecting the unification [of the intellect with the *intelligibilia*], and began to slander and repudiate anyone who has accepted this unification by saying that 'the man who has explained² to people this matter the most is the person who has composed the *Isagoge* for them. He [i.e., Porphyry] was bent on speaking words of fantasy and Sufi poetry and contenting himself and others with imagination. For this, the people of discernment point to his books on the intellect and the *intelligibilia* and his other writings on the soul. True, the forms of things inhere in the soul and contain and embellish it. And the soul becomes like an abode for them through the medium of the material intellect. Now, if the soul were to become a form for an existent in actuality and this form an intellect, which is in actuality by its essence, and furthermore if the form were to have no capacity to receive anything, for the capacity of reception is in the receiver, then it would follow of necessity that the soul has no ability of accepting another form or any other thing. But in fact you see it receiving a form other than this one. If this other [i.e., first form] does not contradict this [i.e., second] form, then this is really strange for in this case receiving and non-receiving become one and the same thing. If it does contradict it, then the soul, if it is the intelligible form, has become something other than itself. And this is of no avail.'³

I say: this is another proof of his for the repudiation of this view. Its answer will come to you shortly. Thus we say: there are two points we have to know before

1. Cf. *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, vol. 3, p. 295.

2. The Raḥmān edition of *Kitāb al-Nafs* (Avicenna's *De Anima*) has the word *ḥawwāsa* instead of *bayyāna* which is what we have in Ṣadrā's quote here. I used Ṣadrā's quote for the translation above rather than the original passage from the *Shifā'*.

3. The quote is from Avicenna's *De Anima*, pp. 239–240 with slight variations.

delving into the critique of what the Master and others have said in rejecting the unification between the intellector and the *intelligibilia* in a general and specific way. The first is that existence in everything is the principal reality in existention, and it is the principle of its particularity, the source of its quiddity, and the measure of its essence. Existence belongs to the category of things that allow intensification and diminution in terms of perfection and imperfection, and it has essential qualities and modes in every degree of intensification and diminution as it was different from its previous state.

The second [point]: as motion and transformation take place in quality and quantity, it also occurs in the formal substance, which is connected to matter in a certain way. Motion in every category is necessitated by a single being that is continuous, individual and gradual. [Such a being] has a specific delimitation among the delimitations of existence in every presumed moment of this motion. And it has [this specific delimitation] neither before nor after this [moment].

Once these two principles are established, whose investigation and defence we have presented in detail in our longer books, we say that unification between two things is considered to be of three kinds:

First is the unification of an existent with another existent after it becomes multiple or in such a way that the beings of two things become one single being. As the Master and others have mentioned among their proofs for the rejection of unification, this is not plausible, and its impossibility is obvious.¹

The second [kind of unification] is that a quiddity among quiddities and a meaning among meanings becomes another quiddity by itself and another meaning through essential primary predication.² This is also impossible because separate concepts cannot become one single concept. Hence no quiddity *qua* quiddity can be another quiddity by itself unless the existence of one of the quiddities ceases to exist and another existence comes about.

The third is that something becomes existent insofar as an intellective meaning and universal quiddity apply to it. This [meaning and universal quiddity] is not applicable to it in the first place because of an intensification that has occurred in its existence, and because of a perfection that has come about in its continuous

1. Like Ibn Sinā and Suhrawardī, Ṣadrā considers unification between two corporeal objects as a physical impossibility. In a section of the *Asfār* where he gives an elaborate discussion of love and its kinds, Ṣadrā reiterates his arguments against the essential unification of two objects, and applies them to love as unification between lover and beloved. He mentions this particular view of love as correct but in need of qualification. Since love, like intelligence, is a quality of the soul not the body, unification between the lover and the beloved can only be spiritual and 'metaphorical.' Lest we think of 'metaphorical' as unreal, Ṣadrā hastens to add that 'metaphor is the bridge to reality' (*al-majāz qanṭarat al-ḥaqīqah*). Cf. *Asfār*, II, 3, pp. 175–177.

2. As mentioned before, essential primary predication (*al-ḥaml al-dhātī al-awwalī*) is a kind of predication that is true in both concept and reality. Ṣadrā is referring to particular objects that can be distinguished from one another both conceptually and in reality. 'Man is rational animal' and 'water is wet' are such two propositions, and they cannot be collapsed into each other.

individual identity through conjunction (*ittiṣāl*). Now, this is not impossible. Don't you see that the form of a single man is the subject of numerous modes, from the state of embryo and even sperm all the way to the state of being an intellect and intelligible? [Don't you see also] that all intelligible meanings whose different instances are found in inanimate beings, plants, and animals are found together in man in a simple manner?

One cannot say that these multiple meanings are found in man because of the multiplicity of his capacities or because of a single capacity [in him]. We argue that this is because of the form of his essence, which is already one and implied in his capacities. All of man's perceptual faculties and animal and natural motion emanate upon the matter of the body. The subjects of sense organs come from one single source, and it is [the person] himself and the reality of his essence. All of these faculties are derivatives of this principle, and it is the sense of senses and the actor of all actions, just as the simple intellect, which the philosophers have firmly established, is the principle of the *intelligibilia* conjoined with the human soul. In this tract, it will become clear to you that the active intellect in our souls is all of the meanings that exist in caused beings (*ma'lūlāt*) in terms of veracity (*ṣidq*) and verification (*taḥqīq*).

In short, it is not impossible for a single essence to be the subject of a meaning which it did not have before. By the same token, it is not impossible for an essence to be transformed in such a way that what is applicable to dissimilar and multiple essences becomes applicable to it also.

As it was said:

It is not to be denied for God
To gather the entire universe in one.

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