

## THEOSOPHY OF MULLA ŞADRA

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The present article deals with gnosis of Mulla Sadra's thought, the name usually given to Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (1571/1572-1640), also known by the honorific title, "the foremost among the theosophers." Şadra's work<sup>1</sup> (over fifty books, usually in Arabic), represents a rare combination of religious fervor, contemplative wisdom, and rigorous logical mind. His "transcendental theosophy" is derived from many sources, both Islamic and pre-Islamic; yet, as Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr points out, "one can always observe in his doctrines the presence of the element of inspiration and intuition, or a 'vertical cause' which transforms constantly the very substance of the idea received from earlier sages and philosophers into the elements of a new, metaphysical vision of things."<sup>2</sup>

I shall first briefly outline two major themes of Şadra's work: the concept of existence (already discussed in my article on "Prophetic Philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi"), and the principle of substantial or transubstantial motion. The rest of the article will be devoted to a more or less detailed elaboration of these themes as found in the writings of Henry Corbin and other Islamic scholars (Fazlur Raḥmān, Toshihiko Izutsu, James W. Morris, Ḥossein Naṣr). I found it necessary to supplement Corbin's interpretation with insights drawn from other authors mainly for pedagogical reasons. By all accounts, Mulla Şadra is not easily accessible, and the treatment accorded to him by Corbin seldom and only in a cursory manner, places the Iranian sage within the context of a more general philosophical problematique.

The first major theme of Şadra's work has to do with the assertion of the priority of existence (*wujūd*) over essence or quiddity. Existence is the one single and unified Reality, assuming varying grades and stages in terms of intensity and weakness,

perfection and deficiency. The quiddities, or what the essentialist philosophers call "different things," are but different states in which the one single Reality actualizes itself. The process of actualization is a "descent" from the state of an original purity into various stages of limitation and determination. In Ibn 'Arabī, this movement is called the "breath of the Merciful," i.e. the breath of the existential Mercy of the Absolute. Essences do not antedate Being or the Absolute. Rather, they arise in the act of being or existing, and therefore change with the degree of intensification or weakness of the act. Essences arise as a function of existence, and thus have the aptitude of passing through a series of metamorphoses from a lower level to a higher level of being. The world is not evolving, but ascending through various levels of beings, culminating in a Presence that is the act of existence of a spiritual being. The more intense is the degree of Presence, the stronger is the act of being.<sup>3</sup>

The second theme concerns the principle of substantial motion, which Corbin will call "inquietude of existence." All things in the universe, except the separate Intelligences, partake of a continuous, substantial motion. In contrast to the Muslim Peripatetics (followers of Aristotle and his Alexandrian commentators), who believed that motion occurs only in the categories of accidents (quantity, place, position), and not in the substance of things, Ṣadra holds that motion implies *inner becoming within the substance of things*. For example, "the human sperm becomes a child not by casting away the form of the sperm and accepting the new form but by a change in substance in such a way that the form of the sperm is also preserved, and in fact the new form is cast upon a 'matter' which itself consists of the form of the sperm and its matter... Each being takes on new forms as it goes through the process of transubstantial motion rather like wearing one dress over another, without casting away the previous one".<sup>4</sup>

Everything in the universe is subject to continuous development toward higher states of being. There is a vertical evolution in the cosmos, but it must not be understood in the spirit of Teilhard de Chardin. Chardin makes the greater come into being from the lesser, and considers intelligence as the outcome of the evolution of a blind and unconscious matter. His is a "theology that has succumbed to microscopes and telescopes, to machines, a 'fall'..."<sup>5</sup> According to Naṣr, the substantial change and becoming in Ṣadra are "spatial" rather than "temporal" in the sense that a being seeks to

attain a state which is already actualized 'here' and 'now' and not something that will be actualized in some future moment."<sup>6</sup>

The principle of substantial motion is also applied by Ṣadra to his conception of man. The status of man or the status of the body is not constant: it is possible for a man to "be" in many degrees — extending from the degree of a demon with a human face to the sublime condition of the Perfect Man. Depending upon intensifications or attenuations (degradations) in the act of existing, the body passes through a multitude of states from being a perishable body in this world, to a subtle or even divine body. According to Corbin, the postulate underlying this idea of change is that "a corporeality... does not reach completion in this three-dimensional, empirical world."<sup>7</sup> In Rahmān's words, "the movement of 'modal' existence reaches its highest stage in man; man, therefore, is the highest mode of existence. But since 'modal' existence is not the absolute existence, and is therefore imperfect implying some sort of duality between existence and essence, man must strive to attain as absolute and concrete existence as possible when he becomes a member of the Divine Realm... At this apex of evolution stands the Perfect Man, the most concrete differentia of all phenomenal existence."<sup>8</sup>

### *Origin*

Corbin sets the tone for our discussion by stating that Mulla Ṣadra "brought about a revolution in the metaphysics of being by reversing the order of priorities professed by the venerable metaphysics of essences." Essences or quiddities were, in the world of Aristotelian metaphysics, immutable and prior to existence. Ṣadra, on the contrary, gave priority to existence: "It was the act and mode of existing that determined what an essence was. The act of existing was indeed capable of many degrees of intensification or degradation."<sup>9</sup>

Ṣadra's "existentialism", however, must be carefully distinguished from its Western counterpart. In the West existentialism (specially its Sartrean version), is a philosophy of the alienated man — a man who has been thrown into an "incurable isolation" as a result of an all-pervasive assault on nature by the combined forces of modern science and technology. In Izutsu's estimation, "the life-order created by technology is in reality a disorder in the

sense that it is a vast and elaborate system of meaninglessness or absurdity. Man is forced to live in a huge dehumanized mechanism whose meaning he himself does not understand and which, moreover, constitutes a standing menace to his individuality and personality.”<sup>10</sup>

What Mulla Ṣadra and existentialists -- let's say of the Heideggerian kind -- have in common is belief in the reality of existence and the unreality of essences or general notions. The general notions cloud reality rather than reveal it, since *reality* is not something general but something existential, particular, concrete and determinate. However, existentialists (except Heidegger) usually reserve the term “existence” for human beings only. “Existence” has always the character of irreducible “myness”; the paramount concern is with one's own, subjective, personal existence, which is felt to be infected with “anxiety,” “care,” “project,” “death,” “freedom,” and a host of assorted negativities. For Ṣadra, all actual reality *exists*. Of course, thanks to the transubstantial motion a human being can be said to have more of existence than an animal. Nevertheless, Ṣadra holds that even inorganic material objects have knowledge-cum-will *at their own level of existence*.<sup>11</sup>

Mulla Ṣadra and Iranian theosophers who belong to his school (Sabzawārī, d. 1878), begin by analyzing all concrete things into two basic conceptual components: quiddity and existence. Quiddities (in Arabic *māhīyā*) refer to all those mental conceptions, paradigms, beliefs, points of view (conscious or unconscious), through which we *ordinarily* view the world. They make up the *selective lenses* through which our experience is refracted. Reality on this level appears to consist of discrete, independently describable objects. But there is also a much deeper level, which can be likened to a sort of invisible background that we ordinarily do not see because it is everywhere, or rather because we see *with* it and ultimately because we *are* it. This “Ground of Being” always *includes* and sustains the level of our ordinary experience. Being of Existence is both One and simple (encompassing all multiplicity and determination), and yet it is manifested simultaneously in the infinity of reflection within that Whole: “the Whole is wholly and timelessly present in *each* of its manifestations.”<sup>12</sup>

Take, for example, a mountain. A mountain is different from a table or any other thing found in the world, because it has its own essence (“mountain-ness”); this is the quiddity of mountain, whereas the mountain's actual presence to us here and now is

“existence.” An actually existing mountain is a combination of its quiddity and its presence. However, this distinction concerns only the *conceptual* structure of things. Things are composed of two factors, quiddity and existence, exclusively on the level of conceptual analysis, which does not say anything definite about the pre-conceptual structure of reality. Now, the Iranian thinkers of Ṣadra’s school take the position that on the pre-conceptual level of things, what is really real is existence. Existence is the sole absolute, all comprehensive Reality encompassing all things in the whole universe. The so-called quiddities are no more than shadows cast by this absolute Reality as it goes on evolving itself; they are “internal modifications” or phenomenal forms, under which the absolute Reality reveals itself in the empirical dimension of human existence characterized by time-space limitations. To say, therefore, that “the mountain exists” means not (as in Aristotelian view) that a thing, a “primary substance” called mountain, ‘having the quiddity of “mountain-ness,” exists here and now but rather that “existence which is the ultimate Reality and which is the absolute Indeterminate is here and now manifesting itself in a particular form of self-limitation called ‘mountain.’ Everything is thus a particular internal modification of the absolute Reality.”<sup>13</sup> In Corbin’s terminology, the mountain is a theophany, and all existing or rather existentiated things are theophanies of the hidden Deity.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly such a view of reality cannot be accessible to human consciousness as long as it remains on the level of ordinary experience. Unlike Aristotelian metaphysics, which is but a philosophical elaboration of this ordinary common sense perception of things, the gnostic view of Existence is disclosed to human consciousness only “when it is inebriated with the vine of ‘*irfānī*’ (gnostic) experience.”<sup>15</sup> The ideal, consciously pursued among the Iranian theosophers, was an organic unification of spiritual training and the most rigorous conceptual thinking — a regimen that is designed to culminate in the immediate experience of “Existence”.

In Mulla Ṣadra, “Existence” is not a common attribute of things, but the unique and irreducible fact which can never be captured by the conceptual mind. Mind can only capture essences and general notions, whereas what exists is uniquely particular and hence ineffable. “Existence” refers to the unique, unanalyzable factor in every thing. Theologically speaking, God cannot be proved by something other than God. Being the ground of all else, He is Himself the proof for

all else. God is His own proof, or, as the Koranic verse has it, "God is His own witness" (3:18). The reality of this groundless Ground is accessible only through "inner witnessing," "tasting," "presence," or "illumination" states in which the empirical selfhood is annihilated (*fana*). But, as we saw in our discussion of Ibn 'Arabi, the experience of annihilation involves the annihilation of annihilation, i.e. the total disappearance of the consciousness of one's disappearance, for even the consciousness of *fana* is consciousness of something other than absolute Reality. The crucial point here is that *fana* is not solely a human experience. The real subject of experience is not man, but the metaphysical Reality itself. In Izutsu's words, "the human experience of *fana* is itself the self-actualization of Reality."<sup>16</sup> "Existence" in its original indetermination can only be realized as the subject of all knowledge in the form of man's self-realization, for it is the Ultimate Subject ("Mind-Nature" or "Mind-Reality" in Buddhism).<sup>17</sup> From the epistemological vantage point, this would mean that we understand only as much of reality or the world as we have developed and realized within ourselves. Truth is not the agreement of our apprehension of an external object with the external object itself, but the agreement of the mind with itself. The mind is his own witness. What we know depends on who we are.

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The very pivot of Sadra's philosophy is his doctrine of substantial motion. The entire field of existence is put into perpetual, systematically ambiguous (equivocal) movement (*tashkik*), with the result that grades of being are no longer fixed and static, but ceaselessly ascending towards higher forms of existence in time. This movement is irreversible: each higher state includes all the lower ones and transcends them. In Rahmān's words: "Every prior form of existence behaves like genus or matter and is swallowed up into the concreteness of the posterior form which behaves like differentia or form."<sup>18</sup> For example, the form of man is his "terrestrial soul," and the form of the terrestrial soul is the angel. The driving force of this universal movement is cosmic love (*'ishq*), compelling everything toward a more concrete form.

Mulla Ṣadra believes that each individual, at the pinnacle of his intellectual and spiritual perfection, becomes a species onto him-

self, for the goal of evolution is not absorption in Godhead, but the realization of a concrete and spiritual selfhood, of a *caro spiritualis* (spiritual body). Existence, although basically the same in all things, is nevertheless in each case different and *sui generis*: "Existents are not like onions, which can be entirely peeled off without a residue, but rather like 'family faces' which have something basic in common yet each is unique."<sup>19</sup>

According to Corbin, Ṣadra's system comprises two fundamental aspects. First, his metaphysics of being (Existence) culminates in a metaphysics of Presence which, rising to the level of a metaphysics of "Witness," finds its fulfilment in a prophetic philosophy. Second, from this summit we are led to a metaphysics of active Imagination, culminating in a metaphysics of the Resurrection. Ṣadra's thought is nourished from the same source as the Shi'ite imāmology — the idea of the *Imām* as the witness of God, who testifies within the soul to an otherwise inaccessible God. Ṣadra professes a metaphysics of "witness" and "testimony," which, in postulating the unity of the contemplator with the object of contemplation, defines the act of existing in relation to the presence of the soul in ever more universes. The theme of substantial mutation, of the movement which reaches to the very substance of a being, opens up to man "the awareness of his immemorial metamorphoses and his future palingenesis ... a horizon more vast by far than that claimed by evolutionism of the Occident."<sup>20</sup> The movement from one universe to another is rhythmical, implying the perception of a constant structure, of a melody that remains the same, not despite but because of the differences in pitch. As the Heraclitean river is river because it constantly changes, so the substantial change does not cancel Being: Being is what it is because it changes; substantial change is itself Being — Being as Event, or Being as time that is "eventing". In Scholastic language, this is called the radical equivocality of Being, implying that our category of being (*ens*) is applicable only to the creaturely being. Being (in the sense of the Unique) escapes every qualification.

As we mentioned, Ṣadra's transubstantial movement is called by Corbin "the inquietude of being", denoting the aptitude possessed by an essence to pass through a cycle of metamorphoses.<sup>21</sup> For example, the notion of body is not limited to the act of being that characterizes the plane of the physical universe of sensible perception. A body can move from the mineral state to vegetable

state, to animal state, and to the state of a living and speaking body capable of understanding spiritual realities. There is something like an immense *élan* of being, beginning in the inorganic depths and proceeding up to the birth of the human terrestrial form, and even beyond, since the human being in his terrestrial mode is still an intermediary being. It must be stressed again, however, that Ṣadra is not an evolutionist, because for him the mobility of being occurs not on the linear horizontal plane, but in an ascending direction. The orientation of this world is in a gothic style, corresponding to the idea of Origin and Return.<sup>22</sup> Morris explains it in terms of the ascent of a long ladder: "At points along that ascent, looking up and down, one may feel either dizzying confusion or a giddy (and illusory) sense of vast superiority and achievement." Yet "having climbed up beyond the ladder, there is a point, at which one discovers that ... the ladder, paradoxically, has led back to where one first began."<sup>23</sup>

Ṣadra defines the degree of the act of being or existing (*wujūd*) as a function of the Presence (*ḥuḍūr*). Nothing, however, that belongs to the phenomenal world of matter, extension, and spatial distance can be "present" so something else. For example, the astronomical sky is not present to the earth conceived as telluric mass. The presence of a being to another being is only possible to the extent that his being "separates" itself from the conditions of this world. And the more it separates itself from the world of physical extension, the more it liberates itself from occultation, absence, death. For Ṣadra and the Islamic theosophers, the intensity of the act of being is directly proportional to the intensity of its degree of Presence. Corbin compares "presence" to the light of a lamp, which is constant as to radiation, dryness, and heat. The nearer something is to the lamp, the more powerful in its are these things; the further away it is, the weaker they become: until finally the light vanishes and simultaneously these three things vanish.<sup>24</sup>

In Ṣadra's metaphysics, "presence to this world" does not signify a privileged condition (as in Heidegger's "Being-in-the-world"). We are confronted here with a hierarchical universe which allows for various degrees of presence and being. Within such a framework, it becomes possible for man to free himself from the world, because this world is incompatible with the act of true presence. As Corbin points out, Presence in Ṣadra's sense is certainly a committed (*engagée*) presence, but it is committed *hic et nunc* to a posthumous



becoming beyond death. True commitment is possible only toward that which belongs to metahistory and only by him who is conscious of his polar dimension, because it is precisely this dimension that transforms his act of existing into an act of presence to the world beyond death.<sup>25</sup>

All this has nothing to do with philosophical argumentation. We are dealing here with immediately given "facts", which, to put it bluntly, one either perceives (witnesses) or does not perceive. Presence implies witnessing, and a metaphysics of presence must be amplified into a testimonial metaphysics, postulating union between the contemplator and the object of contemplation. Testimonial metaphysics, in turn, culminates in imāmology, since it is the twelve Imāms who are said to be the "God's witnesses" par excellence. Imāmology is essentially testimonial theosophy.<sup>26</sup>

The term "Imām" dominates the form of Islam which is of special for Corbin — Shi'ism (also called Ismā'īlism), in particular the Shi'ite Irān — a *terra incognita* to most people in the West.<sup>27</sup> In Shi'ism, Imāms are the twelve descendents of the Prophet, from 'Alī, the husband of Fāṭima (the daughter of the Prophet), to the twelfth Imām who is in occultation, i.e., invisibly present in this world until the day of his revelation.<sup>28</sup>

Imāms are the esoteric representatives of the Prophet, "persons who in their earthly appearance and apparition were epiphanies of the Godhead, spiritual guides of mankind toward the esoteric and saving meaning of Revelations."<sup>29</sup> The Imām is not God incarnate, and his being cannot be defined in terms of hypostatic union. We have to do here with the idea of theophany in human form, the divine anthromorphosis (celestial assumption of man), filling the gulf left open by abstract monotheism. The Imām in his esoteric aspect is an angelic and divine reality in man, the absolute Subject, and hence the witness of God par excellence. In Ṣadra's thought, every one of the twelve Imāms assumes a double function: they are present to God who, through them is present to men; and they are present to men, for whom God is present through them in the same way as men are present, through them, to God. Presence is conceived here as a *sui generis* union of the knowing subject and the known object: to be present to the Imām is *eo ipso* to be present to God through the Imām, who is himself present to God as His witness. Thus, a metaphysics of Presence gives birth to a metaphysics of Witness, a testimonial metaphysics.<sup>30</sup>

The important point to be brought home in this connection is that in the act of double witnessing the *Deus absconditus* becomes *Deus revelatus*; the Imām is the form and content of all human knowledge of God. If this function of the Imām is not recognized, monotheism falls into the trap of metaphysical idolatry which confuses the Witness with the *Deus absconditus*, for whom the Witness testifies and who is accessible only through his testimony.<sup>31</sup> Imām is the theophanic form, i.e., the Face that *Deus absconditus* inevitably assumes in all human knowledge.

It is, then, in virtue of this reciprocal presence or con-presence that the Imām becomes, in Ṣadra's spirituality, the Witness and interior guide. The idea of con-presence is expressed by the Imāms themselves in the saying: "He who know *us*, knows his Lord." On the other hand, all the spirituals of Islām relentlessly repeat: "He who knows *himself* (his soul), knows his Lord." Thus, says Corbin, he who knows himself, knows his Imām, and he who knows his Imām, knows his Lord. There is alternation or substitution between the notions of Imām and Self: to know one's Imām is to know oneself, to know oneself is to know one's Imām (the Soul of the soul), and to know one's Lord.<sup>32</sup>

Another important motif in Ṣadra's spirituality is that of the Imām as the mystical pole without which the world of man could not endure. There is a mysterious, sacramental bond between the presence of the Imam and the continuance of the terrestrial world of man. Imāmology teaches that the world is never without men who carry the divine secrets, even though they themselves remain unknown to the masses. *Walayāt*, the secret prophecy, continues and will continue. This means that the necessity of the Imām is metaphysical in nature, expressing the inner law of being: every higher degree of being is the goal, the finality of a lower degree; the lower finds its fulfilment and perfection in the higher degree. In Corbin's words, "The degree of lower being presupposes the existence of the higher degree, but the inverse does not follow. More than a law of evolution, it is a law of the *ascension* of being toward the higher degree that is pre-existent in it. The same holds true for humanity. It cannot find its fulfilment except at the degree which marks its supreme perfection."<sup>33</sup>

The degree of Imāmate signifies the Perfect Man (*Anthropos teleios*), who is the king of the terrestrial world. This kingdom, however, has nothing to do with political considerations, with the

idea of temporal political success nor with the idea that majorities are always right under the pretext that they "make" history. Rather, the theme of the Imām as the king pertains to a history which is "made" without the knowledge of majorities, for his kingship is of a spiritual and invisible nature, exercised over the visible world *incognito*. Hence, the relationship of the Shi'ite believer with his Imām as the pole of his being, cannot be a relationship with an institution of this world. Neither is it necessary that the Imām be known as recognized by the masses and the powers of this world. From the Shi'ite point of view, "the concept of the Imām as *pole*, on which depends the coherence and cohesion of being, expresses a metaphysical necessity and corresponds to an esoteric anthropology; the concept is necessary because of its initiatory function and because it opens out upon an eschatological perspective (the 12th Imām as Mahdī).<sup>3 4</sup> In fact none of the twelve Imāms, except the first, ever exercised temporal power. The terrestrial world subsists through the existence of Imām, but it does so for a metaphysical and mystical reason: Imām is the Perfect Man, and since the Perfect Man is the *raison d'être* and the final purpose of the terrestrial world, the world of man could not even continue in being without his existence. And that is precisely the meaning of the mysterious existence of the Twelfth Imām, hidden to the senses but present in the heart of the faithful: he is the mystical *pole* of being.<sup>3 5</sup>

Corbin also raises the question of parallelism between the role of imāmology in the return of souls to their Origin and the function of angelology for cosmogenesis and cosmology. According to Mulla Ṣadra there is a rigorous symmetry in the ascending and descending orders of being. Just as the Angels are active causes of the potential existence of creatures, similarly the Prophets and Imāms ("the Friends of God") are causes and intermediaries acting upon the potential angelicity of human beings, and leading them to the actual angelic state. Just as in the cosmological order, the knowledge that God has of this-worldly beings is mediated by His knowledge of their angels, likewise in the eschatological order, God's knowledge of the fidelity of his believers is mediated through the knowledge that He Himself has of the Prophets and the Imāms. It is for this reason that the Prophets and Imāms will be the "witnesses" for on the Resurrection Day.<sup>3 6</sup>

Thus both imāmology and angelology, have their metaphysical foundation in the divine knowledge, culminating in the notion of

Witness, in a metaphysics of Witness and of a witnessing Presence. The point of convergence between metaphysics and spirituality is the Imām, for he is the point at which the Witness, or the Contemplator (*shāhid*), is at the same time the contemplated one. The Imām is witness who "by attesting to men the God whom he himself contemplates ... is also the same whom men contemplate when this God 'shows Himself' to them. He is the eye with which God looks and relates to men because it is with this same eye that man looks at and relates to God.... The Imāms are at once the eyes through which God watches the world and the eyes through which men contemplate the divine Attributes, since the divine Essence is inaccessible to them. The Imām is indeed the contemplator contemplated .... and the knowledge that I have of the Imām is the knowledge that God has of me."<sup>37</sup>

Corbin emphasizes that Ṣadra's interpretation of the Twelve Imāms as witnesses of God is based in the intuition that the act of being (*wujūd*) is the result of and in proportion to presence (*ḥuqūr*) and that the notion of presence is constitutive of the notion of witness (*shāhid*). But then we must ask again: what are the conditions of this presence of one being to another? As we observed earlier, there are numerous things to which no other thing can be present, and which themselves cannot be present to other things. All things that are located in sensory space belong to this category. The world of sensory space is the abode of the unconscious and the dead, for every thing is in darkness and unconsciousness in proportion to its attachment to this world and its remoteness from the world of Light, which is the world beyond, the abode of the living; inversely, consciousness and presence are the result of and in proportion to the Light received from the world of the *Malakūt* (*mundus imaginalis*).

Ṣadra's insight that the degree of *existence* is proportionate to the degree of *presence* has a Heideggerian ring. But Corbin warns that in Ṣadra and the *Ishāqīyūn*, the mode of being in this world is fundamentally different from that of an existence which is abandoned to its "being for death." For Mulla Ṣadra, "the proportional relationship between existence and presence means that the more intense the presence, the more it becomes Presence in other world and the more the being draws away from those determinations which entail unconsciousness, death, and absence. The more the existence of man is Presence, the more also the human

being is the Witness of other worlds and the less his being is 'being for death' and the more it is being-for-beyond-death."<sup>38</sup>

To sum up: without imāmology there would be no alternative save to sink into mystical intoxication expressed in the famous cry of the Ṣūfī al-Ḥallāj, "I am God." The mystic who practices spirituality in a kathenotheistic style is preserved from falling into this kind of Luciferian inflation, because what he can say is found on the lips of the believer from the Gnostic book of the *Acts of Peter: Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*: I saw Him (Christ or God) to the extent that I could apprehend Him. *No more, no less.*<sup>39</sup>

### Return

Aristotle has defined the soul as "the first entelechy (or perfection) of a natural organized body possessing the capacity of life."<sup>40</sup> In this view, the soul is a form or function of the body and is incapable of independent, separate existence. Mulla Ṣadra accepts Aristotle's definition as true only in the sense that the soul emerges on the basis of matter. The material body is merely used as an instrument and constitutes the first step away from the material to the spiritual realm (*Malakūt*). The soul is bodily in its origin, but spiritual in its survival.

Ṣadra's way of conceiving the soul is intimately related to his doctrine of substantial change, which implies a radical departure from the Aristotelian-Avicennian theory of knowledge. In the Aristotelian view, the substance of the soul is not affected by what it knows; while the objects of knowledge — from the sensibles through the imaginables to the intelligibles — change, the cognizing subject, the soul itself, remains the same. In Ṣadra's system, on the contrary, the soul itself undergoes an evolution from its initial embeddedness in the material order to a being of the intelligible (pneumatic) order. The soul becomes what it knows. In Raḥmān's opinion Ṣadra carries to its extreme condition, under the impact of Neoplatonism, the Peripatetic doctrine of cognition that the soul "becomes" its object in the act of knowledge: "The soul's 'becoming' its object is not a temporary affair lasting only during the act of knowledge, but denotes a new level of existence which the soul achieves."<sup>41</sup> In the course of its "return" to its origin, the soul traverses many levels and stations. At first that is, in the

state of connection with the body, the soul is corporeal substance; then, as it gradually becomes more and more intensified, it reaches a stage where it subsists by itself and then, moving from this world to the other world, returns to its Lord. The "other world" is not literally "outside" man; rather, it is a "dimension" (*spissitudo spiritualis*) of man himself.

The external objects, perceived by our senses, are only the occasion for the creation by the soul of a new perceptible form from within itself. This new form has a spiritual character, a form arising from within the soul. In Ṣadra's words, 'the material object is never anything but an object perceived by *accident*; it is actually an outer form imitating, exemplifying the form present in the soul (its archetypal form in the *Malakūt*) which is *essentially* the object of its perception."<sup>42</sup> Essentially, we see and perceive what we are; our *modus cognoscendi* is inseparable from our *modus essendi*.

Ṣadra does not deny that physical organs *are* required for sense perception, but this is so only because of the accidental fact that we exist in a material universe. In reality, whenever a tactible external form affects the tactual organ, it is the soul that creates its own form. Vision consists in the creation, by the power of God, of a form resembling it (i.e., the form of the external object) from within the domain of soul, this form being separate from the external matter, present to the cognizing soul, and related to it as an act is related to its actor, not as something received in relation to its recipient."<sup>43</sup> Ṣadra rejects the doctrine of abstraction propounded by Peripatetic philosophers. The psychic nature of the act of perception requires, not abstraction, but transfiguration of the object of perception. Perception occurs because the soul (the giver of forms) bestows another psychic and luminous cognitive form upon the material objects. However, as Raḥmān points out, this does not mean that we know a different world or a duplicate of the external world. "Indeed, what we know is the external world, the full-blooded real world of sense perception, with all its relationships. That the soul creates its own forms is simply another way of asserting the identity of thought and being, of the existential and the mental. The world, as we know it, is exactly the world as it exists, but its status of being changes and attains a mental quality for knowledge to be possible." Raḥmān characterizes this position as "a kind of idealist realism."<sup>44</sup> which in fact is the same as what Corbin calls spiritual realism.

To say, then, that we perceive what we are, should mean that the soul "receives" its forms (images) by summoning them forth out of itself. In this view our so-called "creativity" has to do not with producing something new and novel, but with remembrance of an essential part of ourselves that has been dismissed, forgotten. Greater potentials are not so much created as re-membered. To "remember" is to re-member, to re-collect, to join together again that which has been dis-membered and dis-joined. For Ṣadra, all acts of knowledge and perception, including even the external sense perception, are ultimately a sort of "recollection" or *anamnesis*.

It is also significant in this connection that the verb "re-collect," as used by Ṣadra, is from the Arabic root *dh-k-r*. The word *dhikr* (literally, "remembrance") refers to the fundamental Ṣūfī practice of silent or open "invocation" of divine names and ritual formulae — a practice that is similar to the "Prayer of the Heart" in Eastern Christian monasticism and to the function of *mantra* in many forms of yoga. For Plato, it is precisely the failure to remember that drags down from the heights the soul that has walked with God and has had some vision of the truths, but cannot retain it.<sup>45</sup>

In essence, Ṣadra's position is that a being endowed with imagination is independent of natural matter, even though it is not independent of a certain kind of immaterial matter possessing extension and quality. Images (as spiritual bodies), belong to a separate and autonomous world of imagination (*ʿĀlam al-mithāl*), situated between the spiritual (intelligible) world of pure ideas and the world of coarse matter and material bodies.

Ṣadra distinguishes between the ontological world of Images, or the world of objective Images, and subjective Images which are creation of the soul. The soul can and does create all kinds of grotesque and false imagery, which cannot be attributed to the *ʿĀlam al-mithāl* or the "Greater World of Images," but belong to the "Lesser World of Images." The images created by the soul in this world are weak and unstable compared to the perceptual objects, because the soul in this life is immersed in matter. Only when the soul has left the material realm, does it become capable of creating stable, "real" images. In the after-life, images will be representations of the deeds and acts of the agent himself; they will be literally visibles, tactibles, etc. To use Corbin's expression, images in the post-mortem state (in the *mundus imaginalis*) are

"concrete spiritual" figurations. What is commonly called "abstraction" for Sadra does not mean any privation, but a "higher level of existence which, far from excluding ... the lower level of existence, contains it in a unitary and more meaningful way. Indeed, even the body is not excluded on this higher level, only it is not coarse, material body, but body of a different nature..."<sup>46</sup>

Şadra's basic principle is that images in their pure state are inseparable from the creative activity of the soul itself. The realities contemplated by man in the "other" world — castles, garden, green vegetation, as well as their horrifying opposites in Hell — are not extrinsic to him or to the very essence of his soul; none of them is distinct or separate from his own act of existing. Quite to the contrary, it is precisely because these things are created by the soul that their reality is stronger, more permanent and stable than in the case of material forms of our sensory world, which are subject to continuous change.

The "other" world is situated neither inside nor outside of our cosmos; it is another "dimension" of existence, belonging to the esoteric and spiritual plane of being. Words like "Paradise" and "Hell," therefore, refer not to literal location, but to "something inner, something hidden under the veils of this world." As a consequence, the epistemological question of how something which is inner ("spiritual") can correspond to something which is outer ("material") does not arise. In the *mundus imaginalis*, "everything to which man aspires, everything he desires, is instantaneously present to him, or rather one should say: to picture his desire is itself to experience the real presence of its object." The mere conception of a thing is the very same as its presence. Our acts and intentions assume bodily shapes. All behavior, every habit rooted in the soul, has a certain mode of extramental existence. For example, anger becomes a devouring fire; evil passions and possessive ambitions become stinging scorpions, biting snakes. In a word, Paradise and Hell, good and evil, "have no other source than the essential 'I' of man himself, formed as it is by his intentions and projects, his meditations, his innermost beliefs, his conduct."<sup>47</sup>

The word "soul" in Şadra refers not to a substance, but to a distinct, universal, self-subsistent "world," or modality of being, which is more comprehensive than physical reality. Şadra himself explains: "None of the things that a man sees and directly witnesses in the other world — whether they be the blessings of Paradise...



or the opposite sorts of punishments in Hell — are outside the essence of the soul and separate from the soul's being. Indeed ... these forms in the soul are more strongly substantial, more firmly established, and more permanent in their reality than material forms."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to our world, where living bodies have only an accidental and ephemeral life, in the other world, each body is animated. Whereas the bodies of this world receive their souls when they are ready to receive them, "the souls of the *world beyond* themselves produce their bodies in accordance with their own needs."<sup>49</sup> Or again: "Here below, virtuality is chronologically antecedent to an act, while the act is ontologically antecedent to virtuality. In the world beyond virtuality is ontologically, and ontically, antecedent to the act. Here, the act is nobler than virtuality because it is its fulfilment. There, virtuality is nobler than act because it is that which produces the act."<sup>50</sup>

As to the kind of matter (*hyle*) that constitutes bodies in the Beyond, i.e. the matter through which actions and intentions take shape, Ṣadra holds that it is nothing other than the human soul itself. The soul, which in this world begins by being the *form* of the elemental body, becomes the *matter* of the forms of the world beyond. In the imaginal world, the souls are the originating principles of bodies. However, the matter which constitutes the souls is not the material, dense and opaque matter perceptible by the senses, but a spiritual, subtle, diaphanous and incorruptible matter which can receive forms in a subtle, suprasensory state, perceptible to the senses of the world beyond. The soul, says Ṣadra, is "the divider standing between this world and the other world, because it is the form of every potency in this world and the matter for every form in another world. According to the Koran, the soul is "*the junction of the two seas* (18:59) which means that the "locality" of the soul is that of "isthmus" or *barzakh* between the material and noetic realms of being, or that "the soul is in actuality a mere mortal man but potentially (realized) Intellect."<sup>51</sup> *Barzakh* is a Koranic term of Arabic origin (23:100), with the basic sense of a "barrier" or "boundary." In popular belief, it refers to the "interworld," or the shadowy realm in which disembodied souls exist after death and before the universal resurrection ("lesser Rising"). Ṣadra uses this term in reference to the universal reality of transubstantiation ("greater Rising") or the psychic modality of being. Esoterically, therefore, "Rising"

here means "the passage from the inner assumption of self-subsistent, separate reality of material and psychic forms to the enlightened awareness of these phenomena as subsisting within and manifesting the divine 'Presence'."<sup>52</sup>

Ṣadra projects the posthumous becoming of man in terms of an anthropological triad: physical man (*jism*, *soma*); psychic man (*nafs*, *psyche*); spiritual man (*ruh*, *pneuma*). Following the principle of substantive change, the soul first emerges as vegetative, then as perceptive and locomotive at the animal level, and finally as active Intellect. "The soul has its being at all these levels and at each of these levels it is the same in a sense and yet different in a sense because the same being can pass through different levels of development."<sup>53</sup>

The development (ascension) of the soul through these successive stages is marked by increasing unity and simplicity. But again, the highest stage (Intellect, *pneuma*) does not negate or exclude the lower faculties and forms. For Ṣadra, the evolutionary movement is cumulative: true unity and simplicity includes the lower levels of being. And that is why the soul, at the pinnacle of its development, resembles God in that it comprehends everything. Such a soul "begins to function like God and creates forms from within itself: indeed, at this stage, the Perfect Man becomes the ruler of all the worlds — physical, psychic, and intelligible — as Ibn 'Arabī has it."<sup>54</sup>

In the Peripatetic tradition, the end of knowledge is not the transformation of the soul into a new level of being, but cognition. As a consequence, higher forms of knowledge are achieved by elimination of what is lower, particularly of matter and its concomitants — shape, color, etc. This led the Aristotelians to the conclusion that an intellectual concept or the universal man (the Perfect Man) can have no body since body (matter) is precisely that which makes up a particular man. Hence, when the soul becomes pure intellect, it sheds all bodily faculties. Within the framework of substantial movement, however, the spiritual does not exclude the bodily component. The higher realm of the intellect contains everything that is below in a higher and nobler manner; all the faculties of life, perception, imagination and intellection continue to exist in a superior octave.

According to Raḥmān, the dictum that higher realms of existence *contain* and do not negate the lower scales is the very

meaning of continuous evolution. "It is evolution because it involves a new emergent; it is continuous because it contains the previous stages 'in a higher form'."<sup>55</sup> This is also the meaning of the primacy or the absolute reality of existence over against essence, for whereas essence are multiple, static and mutually exclusive, Existence is simple, unitary and inclusive.

In view of what we have said so far, it should not be surprising that Sadra rejects transmigration of souls (*tanāsokh*) or metempsychosis. The argument is based upon his conception of substantive change: since the movement of both soul and body through a gradual perfection to a new status of existence is irreversible, it is absurd to suppose that a developed soul, after leaving its own body, can enter in a new undeveloped body and then start developing once again from scratch. There are, however, statements in the Koran to the effect that a group of human beings, because of their evil deeds, were changed into monkeys and pigs by God. Sadra obviates this difficulty by pointing out that all undeveloped souls, or souls which have done evil deeds in this life, will create in the world of Image a body for themselves by projecting their inner psychic habits and states, acquired in this life. (For example, a stubborn soul will become an ass). In fact, even in this life, says Sadra, certain people can come to resemble, in their appearance, certain animals with whom they have affinity.

Life in this world cannot be repeated. More fundamentally, transmigrationists assume that there is a change in locus and person as if the soul separated itself from the material body so as to be joined to another body waiting for the soul as a receptacle. The principle of substantial movement calls for a change in the *status of the mode of being*, while the person remains the same. The same person grows from an embryo into a man and keeps its identity after death. Thus the evolutionary movement of the soul, besides being unidirectional and irreversible, is characterized by continuity.<sup>56</sup> "Bodily resurrection" for Sadra means that each individual is "resurrected" in a spiritual body or psychic form which he creates in accordance with his essential character. Corbin calls this process "transfer as to the substance" or metamorphosis. The soul acquires for itself a body representing the new mode of being to which it is transferred. We must imagine, says Corbin, a continuous succession of metamorphoses of being, a progression in the manner of *progressio harmonica* — from weak intensity to

growing intensity. In other words the idea of resurrection goes hand in hand with the idea of transubstantiation. Every soul, by reason of its comportment, love, habits, etc., creates for itself a mode of being, an act of existing independent from the material body which is dissolved and disappears. The new mode of being is called "acquired body" (*jism muktasab*). In accordance with the axiom that the soul is the principle of individuation, the "acquired body" (the body of resurrection) will be the same as the present body insofar as its form is concerned (which is precisely its soul), while at the same time different insofar as its matter is concerned. Both propositions are true: the acquired body is the same, and it is not the same.<sup>57</sup>

To recapitulate, all evolution of existence proceeds from the general and less differentiated (pure potentiality of matter) through an ascending order of genuses, differentia and species, until it reaches man. The species man, in turn, will, in the after-life, behave as genus destined to undergo further differentiation, until we reach a point where every human being will become a species in himself.<sup>58</sup> It must be emphasised, however, that after-life is not located at a point of time and at a point of place. Rather, it is a "new creation," a new level of being, a new form of existence which is radically different from the earthly existence; it is the 'inwardness' (*bāṭin*) of this external existence and is beyond astronomical space and time.

Ṣadra's conception of after-life is analogous to the purely psychic states experienced in dreams. There are no counterparts to things experienced in dreams and in the after-life. However, in the after-life our experiences will be much more intense and enduring, because the complete manifestation of the images present in the world of Soul occurs only after death. "This is true to such a degree," says Ṣadra, "that compared to the forms man will see after death, the forms he sees in this world are like dreams. This is why the Commander of the truly faithful (the Imām 'Alī) — peace be with him — said: 'Mankind are sleeping: when they die, they awaken.'" <sup>59</sup> According to Ṣadra, this is the secret of the "Return" i.e., of the resurrection of the body.

Another fundamental difference between dream-life and *post mortem* states is that whereas dreams in this life come and go as they please, experiences in the next life will be consciously controlled by the "agent." The agent is a "Man of soul,"

intermediate between the physical and purely noetic worlds, possessing all of his organs, senses and powers. Šadra's position in this respect is similar to that of Plotinus, who said that the "bodily man is only an image of the First, True Man." The powers of life in the bodily man are weak, while the First Man has "strong, clear senses that are more powerful, clearer, and more manifest than the senses of bodily man..."<sup>60</sup> Šadra is referring to the process of transubstantiation which, in Morris's words, consists in "the gradually increasing awareness of the soul... as a reality intrinsically subsuming and transcending the bodily 'state of being'."<sup>61</sup>

The first stage after death, according to Šadra, is that of the "grave," which is the intermediate level between bodily death and "resurrection." In this state the soul is still connected with the world of matter. All higher animals whose imagination and memory are developed survive as individuals and remain perpetually in the "grave" stage of *'Ālam al-mithāl*. As to ordinary humans (including medical men), who constitute the bulk of humanity, their stay in the *'Ālam al-mithāl* depends on the extent of their immersion in the physical dispositions. The souls of these people will instantaneously create for themselves image-bodies, real yet not material bodies, and their main function will be to mirror the soul's dispositions acquired on this earth. The good souls, after a period of chastisement by the fire of purgatory, will join the intellectual realm; if, however, they had no taste of intellectual life in this world they will simply enjoy the sensual-imaginative pleasures. The same applies to the bad souls: they will project awesome and horrendous images. They will become pigs, tigers, wolves, etc., according to their greedy, pugnacious, licentious, etc., dispositions. Šadra is not saying that these souls will become real, material animals, for reversion or transmigration is impossible. What he means here is that the bad specimens of the human species will "*see themselves as real animals* of various kinds."<sup>62</sup> These people, after burning a long time in the fire of animality, will generally be delivered, except for the few who were incurably evil. Eventually, even these may be transformed or lose their desire for intellection altogether. Essentially then, what survives in the other world, is the imaginative power of the soul. In Šadra's words. "... every individual is gathered up according to the form of his inner being. For the repetition of activity necessarily brings habits into being, and the habitual states of character of the soul

lead to the changing of the forms and shapes perceived in the world of soul. Hence every state of character that becomes predominant in man in this world is conceived in the other world in an appropriate form.”<sup>63</sup>

As Corbin points out, Ṣadra did not have to make a choice between two conceptions of after-life: resurrection of an elemental physical body or resurrection in a purely spiritual sense. He refused the dilemma, because he had at his disposal an ontology of the interworld *symbolizing with the sensible and the intelligible universes*.<sup>64</sup> The *‘Ālam al-mithāl* (the celestial Earth) is the realm of “subtle spiritual matter, the world of substantial and autonomous active Imagination, which is separable from the material body. Imagination is not an organic faculty bound to the physical body and perishing with it, but a spiritual organ that belongs to the soul. The soul, even when separated from this world, still possesses individual perceptions: hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch. In other words, all these faculties of the soul become concentrated into one unique faculty, into the power to configurate and typify. Imagination has become itself sensible perception. For, if *externally* the sensible faculties are five, each having its organ localized in the body, *internally* all of them constitute a unique *synaesthesia*.”<sup>65</sup> According to Ṣadra, our imaginative faculty sheds all aspects of virtuality, deficiency, and imperfection at the moment when the soul leaves this world. In the Beyond, imagination becomes itself the principle of visual perfection, the principle of auditive, tactile, etc., perfection. The plurality of various organs is no longer needed. Moreover, the perception of desirable things and the power to make them exist become identical. The wish is the king, because active Imagination does not depend on external circumstances or the so-called objective reality. Imagination is reality.

A while ago we referred to Ṣadra’s belief that there is an interval (*barzakh*) between the minor Resurrection (“lesser Rising”)—the passage of the soul from the sensible world to the suprasensible inter-world — and the major Resurrection (“greater Rising”), which is the birth of the body of resurrection (passage to the world of spirit). This interval is the time of growth of the subtle body acquired by the soul during life. The subtle body is the soul’s acquired body, and it is this body that must grow and reach full maturity. It is important to keep in mind that the subtle body is acquired through and for the soul in accordance with the maxim

that the soul is the principle of individuation. It is also thanks to this principle that Ṣadra can affirm the identity between the physical body and the body of resurrection. For example, the body of Zaid in Paradise is the same body he had in this world, but only because it is a body individuated by the *same* soul. To be sure, we are not speaking here about identity in the *material* sense; materially, Zaid who is in Paradise is not the same Zaid who lived in the world. What makes them identical is the persistence of the active principle, the soul.

The process of bodily metamorphosis, according to Ṣadra, is comparable to the transmutation of lead into gold.<sup>66</sup> In Corbin's opinion, this is as much as saying that resurrection takes place not in the quantitative, measureable time, but in the interior time of the soul, a time which is "differentiated into pure intensity"<sup>67</sup> — the intensity of the lived psychical time. In the last analysis, resurrection is *theomorphosis* of the human form. Everything, every being, returns to its origin. For the human being, resurrection is the moment when he assumes the fulness of his theophanic form, i.e., when he has become pure mirror without stain, and when the *Forma Dei* manifests itself in him as an image appears in the mirror.<sup>68</sup>

Such, according to Corbin, is Ṣadra's ultimate vision. The subtle body, separated from the material body, remains the source of sensible perceptions, but in a *spiritual* state, for sensible perception as such presupposes spiritual perception. To surmise, therefore, as certain theologians do, that the soul, separated from the body and material organs, experiences deprivation and torment, is to misunderstand the gnoseology of Ṣadra and other theosophers; it is to ignore that for them the sensible is already spiritual, and that imagination freed from all physical constraints which becloud it in this world, is capable of participating in the divine freedom and all-powerfulness.<sup>69</sup>

To sum up, first, the human body, leaving the womb of its mother is resurrected in the sensible world; this is the birth of the physical carnal man (*jism*, *hyle*). Next, the soul is resurrected in the interworld (minor Resurrection), with its subtle body constituted by the soul's actions during its life in the world; this is the birth of the psychic man (*nafs*, *psyche*), the "time of *barzakh*," or the "time of the cradle." Finally the subtle body attains the stature of the spiritual man (*rūh*, *pneuma*), and the theme of

resurrection is heard in a superior octave (major Resurrection); this is the passage from the interworld of the soul of the world of cherubic Intelligences. The soul, after a period of growth in the interworld, "dies" (as in an initiatory experience), to this world in order to be reborn in the world of Spirit.

What we have here is a truly grandiose vision embracing all planes of the universe — from the elements and minerals to the world of the Angel and beyond. All this is set in motion by the inquietude of being, by the one and identical act of Existence in perpetual ascension. It is in this sense that Ṣadra's philosophy, as well as Shi'ite philosophy as a whole, is essentially prophetic and eschatological in character. There is no common ground between this kind of philosophy and a theology that has "succumbed to microscopes and telescopes." For Mulla Sadra and his spirituals, it is impossible to speak of a "cosmic dimension," "cosmic consciousness," and the like as long as one remains in the domain of sensible experience and physical existence. Something like "cosmic consciousness" may be understandable only in conjunction with the idea of resurrection in suprasensible world and in relation to man's commitment to a world beyond death.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Post-scriptum: Corbin on Resurrection*

The "place" of resurrection is *utopia* (a term created by Thomas More as an abstract concept to denote the absence of any localization); it is a country of no-where, a "place" that is not contained in any other place, making it possible to answer the question "where." To leave the world, therefore, is not to go somewhere else, but to be able to see through the outer appearances which envelop the hidden, interior realities; it is to move from the exoteric (*zāhir*) to the esoteric (*bāṭin*). For the gnostic, it is to return home. However, once this passage is accomplished, we find that the roles are reversed: now it is the inner reality that envelops, surrounds, and contains the outer and visible reality. The "where" (the *ubi*) of all things is now embraced by spiritual reality or rather, the spiritual reality, the soul, is the "where" of all things. The place of the soul is a placeless place: it is nowhere because it is everywhere.<sup>71</sup>

Corbin believes that the concept of placeless space (*mundus imaginalis*) is essential for any understanding of the topography of



visionary experiences as well as for distinguishing them from all that the modern vocabulary ranges under the rubric of "imagination" or even utopic deliriums. As far as the latter are concerned, the situation, in Corbin's opinion, must be reversed: it is the modern man who, having deprived the imaginative power of its noetic function, rigorously centered (*axée*) between intellect and senses, is virtually "de-centered" (*desaxée*), deranged, paranoid, hallucinating, schizophrenic, etc.<sup>72</sup>

In terms of a phenomenology of visionary experience, "to leave the paradise" and "to come into this world" is not a local displacement, but a *change* in state, a passage from the esoteric meaning to exoteric meaning. Inversely, to leave this world and to gain access to the esoteric meaning has nothing to do with the biological phenomenon of death. Survival is not a matter of prolonging physical existence. The true meaning of life and death is spiritual. Consequently, it is incorrect to say of the dead that they have "passed away" or the like. In fact, many of them were spiritually dead and have never left this world, for the *dead souls* cannot leave this world. To "depart from this world is to be regenerated at the source of life; it is to become a stranger to the world of exile." In short, "first it is necessary to be alive, to be resurrected to spiritual life in order to *experience* the phenomenon of death as an *exitus*, for death as an *exitus* means that the soul leaves this world alive..."<sup>73</sup>

The modern world has lost its axial, polar orientation, its "Orient" which alone guarantees the cognitive function of the *vera imaginatio*. It is only because the *mundus imaginalis* has been replaced by the imaginary that we are witnessing the triumph of the fantastic, the horrible, the obscene, macabre, sordid, monstrous. But it is the sacrosanct conviction of Corbin and his final warning that these flights into the imaginary, our home-made, plastic utopias and science fiction including the sinister "Omega point" (Teilhard de Chardin), will never succeed in enabling us to leave this world and to reach the country of "nowhere." There is simply no alternative to the real imaginal *ou-topia*.

## NOTES and REFERENCES

1. Sadra's major epitome of ontology *Kitāb al-mashā'ir* is part of Corbin's *Le livre des penetrations metaphysiques* (Teheran-Paris, 1964). See also Corbin's two essays: 1. *La place de Molla Sadra Shirazi dans la philosophie iranienne* (in *Studia Islamica*, fasc. XVIII, Paris 1962, pp. 81-113); 2. *Le thème de la resurrection chez Molla Sadra Shirazi, commentateur de Sohrawardi* (in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Sholem, on his Seventieth Birthday*, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 71-116). The essence of these two studies is found in Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien IV* (Gallimard, 1972), pp. 9-123.
2. Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Teheran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978), p. 69. cf. Naṣr's article on Ṣadra in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co. Inc., 1967), pp. 411-413.
3. See Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien IV*, pp. 79-81; *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 204-205.
4. Naṣr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany State University of New York Press, 1981), pp. 162-63.
5. Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1981), p. 32, note. 2.
6. Naṣr, *Islamic Life and Thought*, p. 100.
7. Corbin, "The Question of Comparative Philosophy," *Spring* 1980, p. 15; cf. pp. 11-12.
8. Fazlur Raḥmān, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 266.
9. Corbin, "The Question of Comparative Philosophy," p. 11.
10. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971), p. 26.
11. See Raḥmān, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 268.
12. James W. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne, an Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 68.
13. Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, p. 29.
14. This view of reality goes back in Arabic philosophy to Ibn 'Arabī. In the modern West, it is mainly Martin Heidegger who makes a strict distinction between the principal form of Being (*mawjūd*), "that-which-is" or "existent" (*das Seiende, ens*), and the verbal form of Being (*wujūd*), "to-be" or "existence" (*das Sein, esse, actus essendi*).
15. Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, p. 30.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
17. See *ibid.*, p. 42.
18. Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 36.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
20. Corbin. *En Islam iranien* I, p. 302. C. Adam's trans.
21. See Corbin. *ibid.*, IV, p. 78.
22. See *ibid.*, p. 79.
23. Morris. *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 265.
24. See Corbin. *Spiritual Body*, p. 205; cf. *En Islam iranien* IV, pp. 79-81; 103, 112.
25. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, p. 80.
26. See *ibid.*, p. 81.
27. In Sunnism, the Imām is simply the officiant in the mosque, a function which is quite unrelated to the individual's moral and spiritual qualities.
28. Occultation and invisibility of the Twelfth Imām implies the idea of an essentially spiritual community. The eschatology of this kind, according to Corbin, makes impossible socialization and secularization of *res religiosa*. The Imām is hidden because men have made themselves incapable of seeing him by paralyzing their organs of theophanic perception (see *En Islam iranien* I, p. 35 ff.; IV, pp. 274-84).
29. Corbin. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 258.
30. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, p. 81.
31. See *ibid.*, p. 82.
32. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* I, p. 312.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 305. Adam's trans. Cf. pp. 249-50.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 307. Adam's trans. Cf. p. 306.
35. See *ibid.*, p. 309; cf. pp. 310-13; Corbin. *Le livre des penetrations metaphysiques*, pp. 186-87.
36. See *ibid.*, p. 314.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 315. Adam's trans.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 322. Adam's trans.
39. See *ibid.*, p. 329.
40. Aristotle. *De Anima*, II, 1. 412 a 27; 412 b, line 5.
41. Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 234; cf. p. 197, 203-204.
42. See Corbin. *Spiritual Body*, p. 165.
43. Mulla Ṣadra. *Asfar*, IV, 2, p. 71, lines 12-13, cited in Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Ṣadra*, p. 223.
44. Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, pp. 224-25.
45. See Plato. *Phaedrus* 248c; Plotinus. *Enneads* IV, 4, 7 ff.

46. Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 227.
47. See Corbin. *Spiritual Body*, p. 166.
48. See Morris. *The Wisdom of the Throne*, pp. 162, 163.
49. See Corbin. *Spiritual Body*, p. 166.
50. *Ibid.*, 166-67; cf. Roberts Avens. *Imaginal Body* (University Press of America, 1982), p. 135.
51. Morris. *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 149.
52. *Ibid.* p. 206, note 221; cf. Corbin. *Spiritual Body*, pp. 160-63.
53. Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 205.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
56. See *ibid.*, p. 248 ff.
57. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, pp. 89-90.
58. See Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 248.
59. See Morris. *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 138; cf. Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, p. 100.
60. See *ibid.* p. 143.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 138, note 91.
62. Raḥmān. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, p. 261.
63. See Morris. *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 182; cf. p. 242.
64. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, pp. 85-86.
65. See *ibid.*, p. 98.
66. See *ibid.*, pp. 110-11.
67. Corbin. *En Islam iranien* III, p. 235. Adam's trans.
68. See *ibid.*, p. 248.
69. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, p. 114; cf. pp. 98, 117.
70. See *ibid.*, p. 117; cf. pp. 118, 121-22.
71. See *ibid.*, p. 379.
72. See *ibid.*, pp. 378, 380.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 381. Author's trans. Similar ideas are found among the masters of "spiritual Protestantism": Valentin Weigel, Jacob Boehme, Gottfried Arnold, Emanuel Swedenborg, etc. See Corbin. *En Islam iranien* IV, p. 381, note 59.