SUFISM AND PHILOSOPHY IN MULLA ṢADRĀ[1]

By:

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Abstrak

Perbincangan kajian ini pada dasarnya cuba meneliti persoalan apakah sebenarnya hubungan di antara tasawuf dan falsafah dalam pemikiran Mullā Ṣadrā. Apakah Ṣadrā seorang sufi sehinggakan pemikirannya boleh dilihat sebagai suatu pemikiran tasawuf atau benarkah, sebagaimana yang difahami oleh sesetengah pengkaji, bahawa pemikiran Ṣadrā adalah sebenar-benar falsafah pada maksud istilahnya. Kajian ini meneliti persoalan di atas dengan mengemukakan suatu perbandingan dari aspek sumber dan pandangan sufi dan ahli falsafah yang dinukil oleh Ṣadrā dalam karyanya terutama *al-Asfār*.

When the organizers of this conference graciously invited me to present a paper, they suggested for me the topic "The

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Relation between Ruzbihān Baqlī and Mullā Ṣadrā." Although this is potentially an interesting subject, as soon as I began to investigate it, I realized that it would be a very short paper indeed. As far as I can determine, Mullā Ṣadrā never refers directly to Ruzbihān in any of his writings. Aside from the fact that they both lived in the city of Shīrāz, they appear to have had little in common. Mullā Ṣadrā (1571-1640) was the most prominent philosopher of the Safavid era, while Ruzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209) was one of the outstanding mystics of the pre-Mongol age. Each viewed reality from his own distinct perspective. Mullā Ṣadrā, though he drew upon the insights of mysticism, was critical of institutional Sufism and held philosophical reason to be the ultimate standard. In contrast, Ruzbihān held that mystical knowledge is a gift of divine grace that is not based upon any human accomplishment; he expressed his feelings about the arrogance of philosophers in this passage from his autobiography: "Praise be to God who ennobles by these stations his saints and his prophets without cause or reason, not because of their striving or discipline, not as the philosophers say may God purify the earth of them!"[3] Although Ruzbihān did occasionally quote from philosophers, he was highly critical of their objectives.[4]

While this particular topic does not seem to be a fruitful one, the larger question of the relationship between Sufism

[3] Ruzbihān Baqlī (1997), *The Unveiling of Secrets: Diary of a Sufi Master*, trans. Carl W. Ernst, Chapel Hill NC: Parvardigar Press, p. 37, no. 56. For a general study of Ruzbihān, see my book (1996), *Ruzbihān Baqlī: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*, Curzon Sufi Series. 4. London: Curzon Press; Persian translation by Majdoddin Keyvani (1999), *Ruzbihān Baqlī, 'irfān va shaṭh-i awliyā' dar taṣavvuf-i islāmī*, Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz.

[4] Ruzbihān's treatment of philosophical views of love is discussed in my article "The Stages of Love in Persian Sufism, from Rabī'a to Ruzbihān," in *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi, (1994), pp. 435-55; reprinted as *The Heritage of Sufism*, Volume 1, *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi (700-1300)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, Oxford: One World (1999), pp. 435-55; Persian translation by Mojde-i Bayat, "Marāḥil-i 'ishq dar nakhustin advār-i taṣavvuf-i Īrān, az Rabī'a ta Ruzbihān." in the Persian language edition of the Ni'matullahi magazine, *Sufi* 16 (1371/1992), pp. 6-17.

and philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā's writings is an important one that has occasioned significant debate. Recent scholarship on this question has divided into two opposed camps. On the one hand, S.H. Nasr, Henry Corbin, and James Winston Morris have argued that Sadra is basically an esoteric and mystically inclined thinker. Nasr translates the central symbol of Ṣadrā's philosophy, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyyah*, as "transcendent theosophy," accenting the notion of wisdom as divine knowledge. On the other hand, interpreters such as Fazlur Rahman, Hossein Ziai, and John Walbridge maintain that Ṣadrā must be understood entirely within the technical framework of philosophy, preferably in a manner close to the contemporary presentation of analytical philosophy. Ziai translates *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyyah* simply as "metaphysical philosophy"; in his view, use of terms like "theosophy" (too often associated with the Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky) is misleading mystification.

This debate over the role of mysticism and philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā has often been carried out in an absolute and non-historical fashion. I would like to recast the question, not in terms of assigning an absolute characterization to Ṣadrā and his philosophy, but instead examining his self-conscious use of earlier Sufi tradition through deliberate quotation. This task is facilitated by the recent publication of Ṣadrā's masterwork *The Four Journeys* (and a number of other philosophical texts) in the form of a CD-ROM with a powerful search engine, which permits the location of names and terms at any point in the Arabic text.[5] On the basis of this material, I would then like to evaluate Ṣadrā's philosophy in terms of the historical conditions of the Safavid Iran, especially in terms of the contested status of wisdom (*ḥikmah*), philosophical mysticism (*'irfān*), and institutional Sufism. Following this demonstration, I will conclude with a brief comparison of the approaches of Ruzbihān and Mullā Ṣadrā to the question of mystical vision.

[5] *Nūr al-Hekma*, CD-ROM published by the Computer Research Center for Islamic Sciences, P.O. Box 37158-3857, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran, available from book distributors such as M. G. Noura in Tehran.

Before examining Mullā Ṣadrā's treatment of Sufi texts, it would be well to rehearse the main outlines of his intellectual genealogy and his distinctive doctrines. It has been often pointed out that the most important sources for Mullā Ṣadrā are five. First, and perhaps most important, was Aristotle, or rather a combination of Aristotle and Plotinus, inasmuch as the latter was known through the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* (a paraphrase of the last three books of the *Enneads* of Plotinus). Second was Ibn Sīnā, who was after al-Fārābī the major interpreter of Aristotle in Islamicate culture. Third was Suhrawardī, the philosopher of Illumination, who insisted on combining the demonstrative proof of the philosopher with the spiritual experience of the mystic. Fourth was Ibn 'Arabī, the premier Sufi metaphysician and exponent of the view of God as pure existence. Fifth is the comprehensive category of the scriptural resources of Shi'i Islam, including the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the sayings of the imams. As far as Sufism is concerned, it may be observed that both Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī (to varying degrees) considered the pronouncements and experiences articulated by Sufis to be important data to be analyzed by philosophical reason, although neither of them can be said to be predominantly a Sufi. In the case of Ibn 'Arabī, however, it is clear that we are dealing with someone who was situated centrally in the Sufi tradition.[6] Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, despite Ibn 'Arabī's clear predilection for the experiential and scriptural basis of Sufism, philosophically-minded intellectuals commonly treated his writings as theoretical expositions comparable to the writings of Ibn Sīnā. Particularly as seen through the commentary tradition of authors like Qaysarī and Kāshānī,

[6] On the relationship between Mullā Ṣadrā and Ibn 'Arabī, see Muhammad Reza Juzi, "The Influence of Ibn 'Arabi's Doctrine of the Unity of Being on the Transcendental Theosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, Volume 3, *Late Classical Persian Sufism (1501-1750)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan, Oxford: Oneworld Publications (1999), pp. 266-272.

Ibn 'Arabī had become a thinker someone could approach primarily on a philosophical basis.[7]

As far as Mullā Ṣadrā's principal doctrines are concerned, they are set forth in a number of treatises, among which the most important is of course *The Sublime Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys*. It will be noted here that, in translating this title, I have avoided the tendentious phrases of both Nasr and Ziai, which suggest either a purely mystical or purely rationalist emphasis. Instead, I have translated *al-ḥikmah al-muta'āliyyah* in a more neutral fashion as "sublime wisdom," using this generic equivalent as a way to signal the widest possible applicability of the term. It is my contention (discussed below) that by this phrase Mullā Ṣadrā and his colleagues intended a discourse meant to be dominant in every possible context, so that it would ultimately include and supersede everything from the mystical to the rational. Even the title of this philosophical treatise illustrates what I take to be Ṣadrā's typical approach to Sufism. "The four journeys" is a theme that has been elaborated in Sufi writings at least since the time of Ibn 'Arabī. These journeys are said to be as follows: (1) the journey from the creation to God; (2) the journey in God; (3) the journey from God to the creation; (4) the journey that brings God to the creation. Characteristically, Mullā Ṣadrā has shifted this symbolism from its mystical origin to a philosophical application. In his masterwork, these journeys are stipulated to be "intellectual," and they consist of the four basic divisions of philosophy: (1) ontology; (2) physics; (3) metaphysics; (4) psychology. In any case, the distinctive doctrines of Mullā Ṣadrā can be summarized under the following four headings:

1. The primacy of existence over essence (quiddity), and the ambiguity of existence;
2. The unity of the intellect and the intelligible (a teaching strongly reminiscent of Plotinus);

[7] James Winston Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his Interpreters, Part II (Conclusion): Influences and Interpretations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 107 (1987), pp. 101-106.

3. "Substantial motion" as a category;
4. The world of the imagination as an independent entity.

Just to comment briefly on these themes, I would suggest that only perhaps in the last of these four items can we find something that resonates strongly with Sufi teachings. Insofar as the world of the imagination is the locus of eschatology according to Ṣadrā, it also can be said to be the site of mystical vision. While one might attempt a comparison between Mullā Ṣadrā and Sufi thinkers on subjects such as the nature of love (though Ṣadrā is probably closer to Ibn Sīnā here), my feeling is that there will be greater degree of approximation between Mullā Ṣadrā and Sufism on the question of mystical vision.

When we examine Mullā Ṣadrā's quotations of Sufi texts, there is first of all a quantitative aspect that must be pointed out (and here I rely upon the indices provided in the CD-ROM version of *The Four Journeys*). With the single major exception of Ibn 'Arabī, whom he quotes more than 200 times, Mullā Ṣadrā only mentions the names of early Sufis rarely, and he does not mention later Sufis at all. I will propose an explanation for this later on, but for the time being it may suffice to examine in tabular form (and in order of increasing frequency) the actual number of citations of early Sufis (Table 1), ancient Greek philosophers (Table 2), and later Islamic philosophers (Table 3) in *The Four Journeys*.

Table 1: Sufis cited in *The Four Journeys*

Name	Number of citations
ʻAbd Allāh Anṣārī	1
Abū Saʻīd Kharrāz	1
Ḥallāj	1
Ibn ʻAṭāʼ	1
Junayd	1
Abū ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī	1
Abū Bakr al-Wasiṭī	1
Abū Yazīd Bisṭāmī	2
ʻAlāʼ al-Dawla Simnānī	9
Abū Ṭālib Makkī	9
ʻAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī	10
Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī	13
Daʼūd al-Qaysarī	14
Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī	38
Ibn ʻArabī	227

It is quite striking to see that many of the Sufis who are quoted by Mullā Ṣadrā are only mentioned a single time. Those who occur more frequently either have a more explicit engagement with philosophy (Ghazālī, ʻAyn al-Quḍāt) or have been in dialogue with speculative metaphysics, particularly in the tradition of Ibn ʻArabī (Simnānī, Qunawī, Qaysarī). Most surprisingly, there is an almost complete lack of reference to any Sufis after the 13th century. Ṣadrā does not even once refer, for instance, to the numerous writings on practical and devotional Sufism by his fellow-townsman of the 15th century, Shah Daʻi of Shiraz.

A quite different picture emerges when we consider the extensive quotations from ancient Greek philosophers whose opinions are cited by Mullā Ṣadrā.

Table 2: Ancient Greek Philosophers cited in *The Four Journeys*

Name	Number of citations
Epicurus	1
Ptolemy	1
Pythagoreans	1
Themistius	2
Hermes	3
Proclus	5
Anaximenes	6
Plotinus	6
Timaeus	7
Hippocrates	9
Anaxagoras	10
Platonists	10
Thales	10
Zeno	16
Socrates	17
Democritus	20
Porphyry	21
Galen	24
Stoics	24
Pythagoras	27
Empedocles	40
Aristotle	55
Alexander of Aphrodisias	67
Plato	133
Theology of Aristotle	188

Here, too, the numbers are somewhat surprising. Both in number of individuals and in frequency of reference, Mullā Ṣadrā refers to ancient Greek philosophers in significantly higher numbers than Sufis.

When one considers the later Islamic philosophers who appear in the pages of *The Four Journeys*, it becomes abundantly clear that they occupy a much more prominent place than the Sufis.

Table 3: Later Islamic Philosophers in *The Four Journeys*

Name	Number of Citations
Kindī	2
Qushajī	5
Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī	14
Illuminationists	25
Bahmanyār	41
Al-Fārābī	49
Mīr Damād	73
Davānī	153
Ṭūsī	160
Fakhr Rāzī	195
Suhrawardī	253
Ibn Sīnā	767

It is apparent just from these totals that the real dialog partners of Mullā Ṣadrā are the major Islamic philosophers. They are the ones whom he cites most frequently; of that there is no question. So how in fact does Mullā Ṣadrā treat the Sufis whom he quotes?

In some cases, Ṣadrā treats an early Sufi as a mystical authority whose opinion is acknowledged as significant on a major issue. Thus, for example, after a lengthy discussion of divine truth as existence, he reaches the third level of unity, citing (2:338) 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī on "the divine unity of the elite" (*tawḥīd al-khawāṣṣ*), which is defined as the unity that God has reserved for himself. Some of it radiates onto the consciences of the elect, "but the allusion is restricted to the tongues of the masters of this path." Ṣadrā here acknowledges that this level of awareness belongs to ascetics and mystics (*'ahl al-riyaḍah wa arbāb al-'aḥwāl*).

Likewise, there are passages where Ṣadrā provides a gloss and commentary on the saying of an early Sufi, thus providing an interpretation of the relation between mysticism and philosophy. In this way, he discusses a statement by Junayd on the nature of spirit. Ṣadrā states (8:310) that the world is necessarily a living being endowed with intellect. But in order for it to be perfect, God sent souls to this world, causing them to dwell in bodies. Then he introduces the Sufis:

> The ascetics (*mutamassikūn*) have spoken in this true path about the substance of the spirit, some by demonstration and theory, others by experience (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wajdān*), without employing reflective thought (*fikr*). That is how the Sufi masters speak, modeling themselves on the ethics of the Prophet. They only unveil the secret of the soul by way of symbol and allusion (*al-ramz wa al-ishārah*). We also only speak from certain stations of the divine spirit and its potencies and its intellectual and psychic stages, but not from its core, because that is impossible. Junayd said, "The spirit is something that God has reserved for his own knowledge." It is not legitimate to refer this expression to anything more than an existing thing, although perhaps he meant a merely existing thing and pure existence.

Notice how Ṣadrā draws upon and refines a Sufi saying in terms of his own comprehensive philosophical outlook, rather than working within a framework determined by Sufism. Particularly when discussing concepts (like spirit) based in revelation, he feels free to draw upon Sufi sayings as glosses that can be further clarified in terms of his immediate argument.[8] In a similar way, Ṣadrā quotes (9: 287-8) Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī on the different ranks of prophets and saints, the symbolic forms they will take while crossing the bridge on Resurrection Day, and their differing capacities for experiencing the lights of the next world.

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[8] Ṣadrā also quotes Sufi authorities when discussing technical terms (e.g., *ism, 'irādah, ṣifat, wājib*) that overlap the vocabularies of philosophy and mysticism.

Again, he interprets this symbolism through his own eschatological perspective.

Sometimes Ṣadrā will use a poetic quotation from a Sufi as a way to seal a more complicated argument. This occurs in his discussion (1:115) of the view presented by Shahrazūrī (in his *al-Shajarat al-Ilāhiyyah*):

> The necessary existence is the most beautiful and perfect of things — all beauty is a drop, a shadow, and a gleam of its beauty and perfection. It has the highest beauty, and the most beautiful light, but it is veiled by the perfection of its luminosity and the strength of its manifestation. The divine sages who know it testify to it but not to its core, because of the strength of its manifestation and the power of its radiance, and the weakness of our separate human essences, which prevent us from witnessing its core, as the strength of the sun's manifestation and the power of its light prevents our sight from penetrating it . . . .
>
> The meaning of luminous intensity (intellectual or sensible) is a veil over comprehension for the intellect or the senses. It refers to the lack of one of these things and the separation from attaining one's desire. It is possible that its identity can be raised up beyond the vision of witnessing it, but the situation is permanent, as Ḥallāj said:
>
> > Between you and me is an I that fights with me,
> > So raise up, by your grace, this I from in between.

In this context, the quotation from Ḥallāj serves mainly to underscore the metaphysical argument that the divine essence transcends human knowledge. Here Ṣadrā is close to Plotinus in his use of the metaphor of excess light to suggest the inability of the mind to perceive the divine radiance.

In other cases, one can find passages in which Ṣadrā makes a partial compliment to Sufism, at least in comparison with people who badly misunderstand philosophy. At one point (1:78), Ṣadrā follows the example of Suhrawardī in

presenting an elaborate excuse for presenting and refuting an argument that he regards as self-contradictory and wrong at face value. Suhrawardī had similarly apologized (*al-Muṭārahāt*, 1:209) for even discussing the absurd view of those who hold that non-existence is a thing (*shay'iyyāt al-ma'dūm*). Ṣadrā reflected that it was just that kind of thinker who gave philosophy a bad name.

> These are the people who dwell in the Islamic community, who have an inclination to intellectual subjects, without much firm thinking, but who have not attained the experiences attained by the Sufis. What happened to them is like what transpired in the age of the Umayyad dynasty, with books by people whose names resemble those of the philosophers. These people imagine that every Greek name was the name of a philosopher. In these books they found sayings they approved of, which they carried and spread in their enthusiasm for philosophy. These books were publicized, people enjoyed them, and they were followed by some of the moderns (though they differed from them on some things), but they all were in error on account of [following] the Greek names they had heard, and because of those who wrote these books in which they imagined there was philosophy, though it was nothing of the sort. They had predecessors before them, and successors after them. But philosophy did not emerge until after the dissemination of the sayings of the vulgar Greeks, their discourses, and their popular acceptance.

While this brief positive reference cannot be called a detailed account of Sufism, it points again to Ṣadrā's tendency to treat Sufism in relation to the primary categories of philosophy, just as it signals his implicit willingness to assume for the sake of argument that the mystical experiences of the Sufis are real.

But in other cases, Ṣadrā reveals a readiness to reject the anti-philosophical habits of Sufis. In discussing a passage from Ibn Ṣinā's *De Anima* (6.5.6), Ṣadrā confesses (3:323) his puzzlement at the notion that the essence of the soul can

become the categories, i.e., that a thing can become another thing. After working out the contradictions in this proposition, Ṣadrā reflects that most people unfortunately think in this way, as noted in the *Isagoge* (of Porphyry), and that this is like "talking in the imaginative poetic sayings of the Sufis." So Ṣadrā is certainly capable of making negative passing references to Sufism as well. There are in fact a number of passages in which Ṣadrā refers to "vulgar Sufis" and condemns their defects. His is a critical position in which everything depends on the precise issue at hand. Sufism as such does not have an unquestioned value for Ṣadrā.

Beyond the particular passages in which Mullā Ṣadrā refers to Sufism, there lies the larger issue of the relation between philosophy and mysticism in the Safavid age. There is an historical context for Ṣadrā's philosophy, and it is framed by the rise of the Safavid dynasty and the institutionalization of Twelver Shi'ism as the dominant religion in Iran. As mentioned above, there has been a sharp divergence between those who regard Ṣadrā's philosophy as an esoteric philosophical mysticism and those who see it as a rational and analytical philosophy. Nowhere is this tension more sharply exhibited than in a recent multi-authored handbook entitled *History of Islamic Philosophy*.[9] Articles in this collection by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Hossein Ziai, in particular, present diametrically opposed interpretations of figures such as Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā, and there are other contributors such as Ḥamīd Dabāshī who have their own distinctive perspectives. I find this debate fascinating, not least because it is being carried out by expatriate Iranian intellectuals in an English-language publication printed in London. It might be said that, in some respects, premodern philosophers have become a contested ground for resolving the major issues of cultural identity for modern Iran; why else, indeed, is the present conference being convened with the support of the Iranian

[9] Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, ed. (1996), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Routledge History of World Philosophies, 2 vols., London: Routledge.

government? In any case, I would like to draw here in part on the "discourse analysis" of Dabāshī, which he develops in his study of the philosophy of Ṣadrā's teacher Mir Damad; although I do not subscribe to all of the epistemological presuppositions of Dabāshī's presentation, it has the virtue of including the political and ideological aspects of Safavid Iran in the study of philosophy.[10]

The rise of an authoritarian Safavid dynasty in Iran after 1504 had serious consequences for the intellectual disciplines. What Dabashi calls the "nomocentric" character of Safavid Shi'ism took the form of a revival of Shi'i legalism.[11] There was a consequent disruption of the activities of Sunni thinkers and a significant exodus from Iran, particularly to India. Dogmatism and sectarianism with state support was aimed against Sunnis, philosophers, and Sufis. The seriousness of the new mood was demonstrated by the murder of the philosopher Maybudī in 1504, and by the systematic extermination of the dervish orders. Dabāshī argues that a furious struggle was taking place between anti-intellectual clerics and philosophers, whose very existence was now challenged in a society where theological institutions were the main objects of patronage and charitable trusts. Indeed, patronage by rulers like Shah `Abbās became critical to the support of philosophy. A staple theme in the rhetoric of Shi'i mujtahids was the ridicule of the pretensions to knowledge of classical philosophers in comparison with the divinely sanctioned Imams. To be sure, Ziai points to evidence that the study of philosophy was pursued fairly widely in the madrasas that were the training grounds for Shi'i theologians, since there were over 400 philosophers in Safavid Iran who were educated in such academies.[12] Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that overall, there was a challenging environment for philosophy.

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10 Ḥamīd Dabāshī, "Mīr Damād and the founding of the `School of Isfahan,'" in Nasr and Leaman, 1:597-635.

11 Dabāshī, 1:598-602.

12 Ziai (1980), "The Illuminationist Tradition," in Nasr and Leaman, 1:482, citing Manuchehr Sadugh Soha, *A Bio-bibliography of Post Ṣadr-ul-Muta'alihīn Mystics and Philosophers*, Tehran.

The response among philosophers was the creation of what has generally been called "the school of Isfahan." This was a synthesizing response to Shi'i legal criticism. Wisdom (*ḥikmah*) was the unifying symbol that cut across all intellectual disciplines, including philosophy, mysticism, and Shi'i theology. As Dabāshī puts it, this wisdom teaching emerged in "the context of the Safavid state and the self-assuring confidence it engendered and sustained in the Shi'i intellectual disposition . . . [These intellectual disciplines were] the supreme cultural products of a confident, prosperous, and self-assertive Safavid state."[13] As an institution, this school (if it may be so called) was probably at its peak in the time of Mīr Damād (d. 1631), who received significant court patronage. Mullā Ṣadrā, in contrast, was persecuted by jurists, and he was for a time exiled to the village of Kahak. His own frustration is evident from his frequent criticism of both hidebound jurists and wild Sufis.

As far as mysticism was concerned, the new "wisdom" synthesis accompanied the decisive separation of theoretical mysticism (*'irfān*) from practical Sufism in its institutional form (*taṣawwuf, darvishī*). The Safavid dynasty found Sufi orders to be unacceptable rivals, despite its own origins in a dervish order, and so the Sufi orders were suppressed; sainthood (*wilāyah*) was reserved for the Imams. The extensive tradition of disciplined mystical philosophy developed in Sufi circles over centuries was in effect cut off. Philosophers in this age returned to the kind of intellectual analysis of mystical experiences pioneered by Ibn Sīnā in his *Ishārāt*. They recognized the necessity for meditation and even a certain amount of philosophical asceticism; as Dabāshī puts it, for both the Peripatetic and the Illuminationist, "separation from the physical body, in this meta-epistemology, becomes the necessary precondition of conceptual cognitions."[14] But this was a privatization of mysticism, and the end of a tradition of organized spiritual training. In this context, it is not surprising that Ṣadrā does not cite any Sufis later than Ibn 'Arabī and his immediate

[13] Dabāshī, 1:625; see also 1:621-28.

[14] Dabāshī, 1:627.

commentators. For Safavid thinkers, speculative Sufism was no more than a classical intellectual and spiritual repertoire of the distant past, and Sufi poetry was assimilated into the category of classical literature.

If we now turn to the way that Mullā Ṣadrā approaches the nature of mystical vision, perhaps the best example is in the short Persian text *The Three Principles*. This work is formulated as an ethical treatise along philosophical lines. According to Ṣadrā, the three principles of the title are the three obstacles to attaining knowledge: (1) ignorance of psychology and philosophical anthropology; (2) love of wealth, power, desire, and pleasure; and (3) the lust for domination, which, combined with demonic deception, confuses the distinction between right and wrong. Here is the relevant section on mystical vision:[15]

> Now you should know that the wayfarer sometimes treats the creation as the God-revealing mirror and the means for gazing at the divine attributes and names, and sometimes he makes God the mirror for gazing at things, the world-revealing mirror. The first journey is "from creation to God," and the second journey is "from God to creation." The allusion to the first is found in "We shall show them our signs on the horizons and in their souls, so that it shall be clear to them that he is the Truth."
>
> Go and look carefully, for every grain of dust
> Is a world-revealing cup when you gaze upon it.
>
> The allusion to the second journey is: "Is it not sufficient for your lord that he witnesses everything?"
>
> One who sees with knowledge from the light of purity,
> Sees God first in everything he sees.
>
> "I never saw anything without seeing God before it." Both of these sciences are sciences of reality. The first one is called "the science of unity in the

[15] Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (1997), *Risāla-i sih aṣl*, ed. S. H. Nasr, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, pp. 153-6.

language of the Sufis, and theology and universal knowledge in the language of the scholars of divinity. The second is called "the science of horizons and souls" among the Sufis, and among the natural scientists it is divided into two sciences, one being astronomy and cosmology, and the other being psychology. Both of these, in their goal and result, refer back to the science of unity.

My dear, people at this time know nothing of the science of unity and the divine science, I myself in my whole life have seen no one who exuded even a fragrance of this knowledge. And regarding the second science, two (the science of horizons and the science of souls), the business of intellectuals has not been productive enough to help anyone else. Most people believe in nothing but the senses. "They know the outer aspect of the life of this world, but of the next they are heedless." They are heedless of divine wonders and the angelic realm of the heavens and the earth.

You who are happy with this life are like a cow or donkey with its fodder
Heedless of this turquoise circle, unconnected to this center, the turning sun.

Those who have insight have responsibility; fools have no regrets about the day.
Those who are in sympathy with heaven and earth see with this eye; they think there is nothing more than this, which anyone could see or know as roof or floor, with the same eyes that cows and donkeys share. "We made heaven a roof preserved, but they turn away from our signs."

This passage is rich in allusion to the Qur'an and tags of Persian poetry. It evokes the theme of the four journeys, and it marks equivalences between Sufi and philosophic terminologies. It is mystical in tone, but even in this small Persian text, far from the austere scholastic argumentation of the *Asfār*, Ṣadrā remains a philosopher.

In contrast, I will close with a comparison from an Arabic text by Ruzbihān Baqlī (*Sayr al-arwāḥ*), in which he

sets forth his own understanding of mystical vision.[16] This occurs in a fairly analytical passage, in which he has refuted the theological school of the Mu'tazila, which rationalistically concluded that the beatific vision of God in the afterlife could not possibly be seen with the physical eye, but must be internal or psychological metaphor; thus they maintain that it is all the more impossible to see God in this world.

> The existence of the believer, in paradise, is all vision, because spirit and body here are a single thing, like the sun and its heat. One sees God most high with all the limbs. Just as it is possible for the heart to see the emanation of God most high without spatial dimension, it is possible for the eye to see God most high without spatial dimension. For the eye and the heart are both created, and there is no difference between them in terms of createdness. The aim of these theologians in connection vision to the heart is to deny vision altogether, for they define the vision of the heart as increase of certainty. Their knowledge of God is not real vision; this is a great error and a false analogy.

There is, perhaps, a real affinity between Mullā Ṣadrā and Ruzbihān on questions like mystical vision. It is not so much an exact verbal correspondence, or a precise conceptual equivalence, as it is a kind of underlying tone, which is similar to the positive attitude toward mystical experience that characterizes the philosopher Plotinus and many of his philosophical successors. But for Safavid Iran, Sufism in its institutional form was no longer an active component of philosophy; mysticism had become deprived of its public and social expressions. The question of the relation between philosophy and Sufism in Mullā Ṣadrā's writings can only be meaningfully discussed if we rephrase it as the relation between philosophy and private intellectual mysticism.

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[16] Ruzbihān (1998), *Sayr al-arwāḥ*, ed. Paul Ballanfat, *Quatre traités inédits de Rûzbehân Baqlî Shîrâzî*, Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, para. 37, pp. 36-37 of the Arabic text.