

Qur'anic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy:
Mullā Şadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*

by

Mohammed Rustom

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Qur'anic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy:
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2009

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The work of one of Islam's most celebrated philosophers, Mullā Şadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1635 or 1050/1640), is characterized by a unique synthesis of the main strands of Islamic thought. Yet Şadrā's role as a philosopher was not simply to synthesize. His penetrating intellect and ability to cast new light on some of the fundamental problems of Islamic thought ensured that all of his books would be landmarks of intellectual achievement in their own right. Amongst his most significant but seriously neglected writings are his compositions on the Qur'ān and its sciences. Broadly speaking, the present study investigates the manner in which scriptural exegesis, philosophy, and mysticism came together in Şadrā's writings on the Qur'ān. More specifically, this study aims to examine the sophistication of the discussions to be found in Şadrā's Qur'anic works by focusing on his last complete and most mature *tafsīr*, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.

After surveying the history, reception, and content of Şadrā's writings on the Qur'ān and presenting a coherent picture of the theoretical dimensions of his scriptural hermeneutics, we will go on to examine the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*'s structure and sources. This will set the stage for a

careful analysis of the problems in cosmology, metaphysics, anthropology, theology, and soteriology addressed by Ṣadrā in the work. Not only will our study demonstrate the manner in which Ṣadrā reads scripture, but it will also afford us a window into the development of his religious thought, since the Fātiḥa provides him with the opportunity to recast many of his philosophical concerns within the Qur'ān's universe of discourse.

To Nosheen, for all her love and support

عقل جزوی عقل را بد نام کرد کار دنیا مرد را بی کام کرد

- مولوی

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Professor Michael Marmura was my first teacher in Islamic philosophy and theology. I have benefited immensely from the care he has taken in teaching me how to read and translate the likes of Avicenna, Ghazālī, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Averroës. Needless to say, I am honoured to have spent so many years studying under him. Thanks go to Professor Walid Saleh, who introduced me to the field of Qur’anic studies, and whose counsel has greatly assisted me in my transition through academia’s various stages. My teacher in the traditional Islamic sciences, Shaykh Talal Ahdab, taught me classical Arabic logic and introduced me to several other important disciplines. I am grateful to him for the time he has spent with me discussing problems in Islamic thought.

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A Note on Arabic and Persian Transliterations

Arabic and Persian names, words, phrases, and book/article titles have been transliterated in accordance with the system employed by the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES), with the exception that no distinction is made in transliterating consonants shared between Arabic and Persian. The names of authors who write in European languages in addition to Arabic/Persian have not been transliterated.

Introduction

Max Horten's two books on Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1635 or 1050/1640)¹ (commonly known as Mullā Ṣadrā) at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as his other pioneering contributions to later Islamic philosophy, did not receive the scholarly attention one would have expected.² This is partly due to the fact that at the dawn of the twentieth century, the story of the earlier period of Islamic philosophy had not even begun to be told. There were indeed a number of general surveys (now outdated) on the history of Islamic philosophy written from approximately 1850 CE onwards, but the nature and scope of many

¹ Although Ṣadrā's commonly acknowledged death date is 1050/1640, it has recently been pointed out that his grandson, Muḥammad 'Alam al-Hudā (d. 1115/1703-4), records an earlier date for his death, placing him in Basra in 1045/1635-6. It was here that Ṣadrā died *en route* to the Hajj. See Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: his Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28-30.

² Horten's first study on Ṣadrā, *Die Gottesbeweise bei Schirāzi (1640†)* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1912), is a translation and commentary of texts from his oeuvre dealing with proofs for God's existence. The second work, *Das philosophische System von Schirāzi (1640†)* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1913), represents an attempt to explain Ṣadrā's main ideas by summarizing his central teachings (ontology and physics in particular) as laid out in his magnum opus, the *Aṣfār*. For critical remarks on this work, see Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 20 and S. M. Bagher Talgharizadeh, "Einleitung," in Ṣadrā, *Die Risāla fī l-ḥudūth (De Abhandlung über die Entstehung)*, trans. S. M. Bagher Talgharizadeh (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2000), 4. See also Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: Routledge, 2009), 5-7. Despite their criticisms, Rahman, Rizvi, and Talgharizadeh also note this work's importance. In this regard, the latter's point is telling: "Nevertheless, Horten earns the merit for having recognized that aṣ-Ṣīrāzī's work is '[a]s a whole, a first-class accomplishment and a unique work of art with regard to concept-formation [Begriffsbildung] and conceptual-poetry [Begriffsdichtung]. One will not be able to put it aside without admiration. The system is developed magnificently and carried out with consistency in its details'" (Talgharizadeh, "Einleitung," 4-5 citing Horten, *Das philosophische System von Schirāzi*, VI-VII; the translation is mine). For a listing and brief discussion of Horten's many contributions to the study of earlier and later Islamic thought, see Gustav Pfannmüller, *Handbuch der Islam-Literatur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1923), 353-6. It should be noted that before Horten's studies, Muhammad Iqbal's *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London: Luzac, 1908) discussed some of later Islamic philosophy's key figures, but in summary fashion.

early Muslim philosophers' teachings were still largely unknown. Horten's writings on later Islamic philosophy were, therefore, eclipsed by concurrent and later studies on some of the seminal figures in early Islamic thought, such as Fārābī (d. 339/950), Avicenna (d. 428/1037), Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), and Averroës (d. 595/1198).

Yet it was not always an interest in the history and development of Islamic thought which impelled scholars to take up its study. For many of these scholars—and not a few contemporary writers on Islamic philosophy—philosophical thinking in Islam only had life and/or interest insofar as it contributed to the development of Western philosophy. From the late nineteenth century to roughly the 1960s, Islamic philosophy was therefore primarily studied in order to understand its influence on the West. Since such important authors as Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) had not been translated into Latin during the medieval period, they were not known to the Western world. Hence the study of Islamic philosophy came to be equated with the ill-defined sub-discipline of philosophical inquiry known as the “history of philosophy.” Succinctly stated, this meant the following: Muslims had taken knowledge from their more enlightened Greek predecessors and preserved many of their works (albeit in translation), only to pass them on to their true intellectual heirs.³

³ Tim Winter, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. idem, 1-2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) attributes these older Western attitudes towards Islamic thought to Eurocentrism. To be sure, this antiquated approach to Islamic intellectual history was Eurocentric, since Islam's intellectual history was simply an ingredient to the way Western/European scholars understood the development of their own intellectual history. Thus, the value and significance of Islamic thought was gauged through a Western/European lens. At the same time, many Muslims writing on Islamic thought in the later part of the nineteenth and early to mid twentieth centuries, influenced as they were by the works of Orientalists in their representations of Islamic civilization, tended to view their own religion's intellectual legacy through the eyes of their colonial masters. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr's essay, “The Pertinence of Studying Islamic Philosophy Today,” in idem, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), ch. 12, where he

Apart from the question as to why medieval Muslims would want to translate into their own language the writings of antiquity in the first place, this view of the historical role of Islamic philosophy went essentially unchallenged for the first half of the twentieth century. But this old story of Islamic philosophy was slowly approaching its end. Between 1938 and 1952, the French Iranologist and philosopher of religion, Henry Corbin (d. 1978), who had already made a name for himself by introducing Heidegger to the French-speaking world,⁴ published several groundbreaking books on Avicenna and Suhrawardī.⁵ From 1953 to the early 1980s came a steady stream of pioneering publications on later Islamic thought carried out by Jalāl al-Dīn

demonstrates how colonialism determined what brand of “Islamic” philosophy was circulated in the Muslim world, as views of Western philosophy prevailed amongst Muslims in accordance with the brand of philosophy given to them by their colonizers. Thus, in Egypt, because of the presence of the French, philosophy came to be identified with various forms of Marxism; and in India, where the British ruled, philosophy was of the logical positivist type. This phenomenon, in turn, had a devastating affect upon how Islamic philosophy was understood by those Muslims in the east who studied Islamic thought in early post-colonial times (Iqbal being one of them). See also Oliver Leaman, “Orientalism and Islamic Philosophy,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 2:1143-8 (New York: Routledge, 1996); Muhsin Mahdi, “Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1990): 73-98. Cf. Dimitri Gutas, “The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 1 (2002): 5-25.

⁴ See Heidegger, “Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?,” trans. Henry Corbin, *Bifur* 8 (1931): 5-27. Corbin would later be involved in another translation of Heidegger’s work: *Approche de Hölderlin*, trans. Henry Corbin et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).

⁵ Corbin’s seminal study on Avicenna was originally published in 1952 under the title *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire*, and was eventually translated as *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. Willard Trask (Irving: Spring Publications, 1980). For Corbin’s earliest writings on Suhrawardī, see his *Les motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrawardī, Shaykh-ol-Ishrāq* (ob. 587/1191) (Tehran: Éditions Du Courrier, 1946); *Suhrawardī d’Alep: fondateur de la doctrine illuminative (ishrāqī)* (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve, 1939). Corbin’s two volume critical edition of Suhrawardī’s Arabic works, entitled *Opera metaphysica et mystica*, was published in Istanbul in 1945 and 1946. The edition was reissued as the first two volumes of Suhrawardī, *Majmū’ah-yi muṣannafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq*, ed. Henry Corbin (vols. 1-2) and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (vol. 3) (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1976-7, repr. ed.).

Āshtiyānī (d. 2005), William Chittick, Corbin, Toshihiko Izutsu (d. 1993), Hermann Landolt, Mehdi Mohaghegh, James Morris, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), and Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1981). These scholars' contributions made it possible to discuss Islamic philosophical thinking on its own terms, and not just as an offshoot of the wider history of Western philosophy. They also helped pave the way for a substantially different picture of the development of philosophy in the heartlands of post-Averroës Islam.

This resuscitation of interest in later Islamic philosophy ensured that some of Islam's most important and time-honoured scholars would be brought back into the spotlight. Amongst these figures, a good deal of interest was justifiably invested in the writings of Mullā Ṣadrā, whose thought revolutionized the discipline of Islamic philosophy for good.

Over the past three decades, scholarship on Ṣadrā's life and thought in Persian, Arabic, English, French, and German has grown exponentially. Today we have a good idea of the main details of Mullā Ṣadrā's life and times, especially since certain issues concerning his intellectual contacts, whereabouts, and time of death have recently been reconsidered.⁶ A number of studies have been carried out on Ṣadrā's eschatology and psychology,⁷ epistemology,⁸ theodicy,⁹

⁶ See Muḥammad Khamenei, *Mullā Ṣadrā: zindagī, shakhsīyyat wa-maktab-i Ṣadr-i muta'allihīn* (Tehran: SIPRI, 2000); Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, ch. 1.

⁷ For two recent contributions, see Christian Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam: L'au-delà selon Mullā Sadra* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008); Mohammed Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination in Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī's Commentary on the *Ḥadīth* of Awakening," *Islam and Science* 5, no. 1 (2007): 9-22. For a more complete set of references to this aspect of Ṣadrā's thought, see p. 202 n. 51 of the present study.

⁸ See Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect and Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Muhammad Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), ch. 6.

⁹ See Kalin, "Mullā Ṣadrā on Theodicy and the Best of All Possible Worlds," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 2 (2007): 183-207.

doctrine of causality and physics,¹⁰ metaphysics,¹¹ theory of perception,¹² and spirituality.¹³ We are also well-informed of how Ṣadrā's innovative philosophical insights relate to important non-Muslim philosophical figures. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the studies carried out by David Burrell and Alparslan Açıkgenç, which compare Ṣadrā's ontology with the ontologies of St. Thomas Aquinas and Heidegger respectively.¹⁴

¹⁰ For studies on Ṣadrā's treatment of causality, see Rizvi, "Mullā Ṣadrā and Causation: Rethinking a Problem in Later Islamic Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 4 (2005): 570-83. See also the articles in *Mulla Sadra and Comparative Philosophy on Causation*, ed. Seyed Safavi (London: Salman-Azadeh, 2003). For a fine discussion of Ṣadrā's physics, see Kalin, "Between Physics and Metaphysics: Mullā Ṣadrā on Nature and Motion," *Islam and Science* 1, no. 1 (2003): 59-90.

¹¹ The most recent discussions can be found in Cécile Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités: Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī et la structure de la réalité* (Paris: Vrin, 2008); Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, chs. 4-5; Megawati Moris, *Mullā Ṣadrā's Doctrine of the Primacy of Existence (aṣālat al-wujūd)* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2003); Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*. We will return to Ṣadrā's metaphysics throughout the course of this study, particularly in chapters 2 and 4.

¹² See *Perception According to Mulla Sadra*, ed. Seyed Safavi (London: Salman-Azadeh, 2002).

¹³ The survey by Carl Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā," in *Mullā Ṣadrā and Transcendent Philosophy (Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue: The Papers Presented at the World Congress on Mullā Ṣadrā, May, 1999, Tehran)*, 1:173-92 (Tehran: SIPRI, 2001) can be consulted with great profit, as can the following studies: Janis Ešots, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Teaching on *Wujūd*: A Synthesis of Philosophy and Mysticism" (PhD diss., Tallinn University, 2007); Zailan Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra: An Analysis of the al-Hikmah al-'Arshiyah* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002); James Morris, "Civilization as Dialogue: Spirituality and Philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā and Today," in *Mullā Ṣadrā's School and Western Philosophies (Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue: The Papers Presented at the Second World Congress on Mullā Ṣadrā, May, 2004, Tehran)*, 1:261-72 (Tehran: SIPRI, 2005). See also Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, ed. and trans. William Chittick (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ David Burrell, "Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Mulla Sadra Shirazi (980/1572-1050/1640) and the Primacy of *esse/wujūd* in Philosophical Theology," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 207-19; Alparslan Açıkgenç, *Being and Existence in Ṣadrā and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993). For critical comments on the later, see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 9.

Şadrā was also thoroughly proficient in all aspects of what is known as the “transmitted” Islamic sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-naqliyya*).¹⁵ To this effect, he wrote a number of books on the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. Yet when we consider the amount of attention paid by scholars to this aspect of Şadrā’s oeuvre, we notice that very little work has been done. This lacuna in Şadrian scholarship has resulted in a fairly unbalanced view of Mullā Şadrā’s specifically religious worldview. By “religious worldview” we have in mind those questions pertaining to the religion of Islam with which Şadrā’s philosophical writings proper are not concerned. What, for example, is his attitude towards Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the *ḥadīth* sciences,¹⁶ and the Qur’ān? Answering such questions is bound to shed a great deal of light on the relationship between Şadrā’s philosophical views and his “religion.”

Amongst Şadrā’s writings in the transmitted sciences, his work on the Qur’ān is most deserving of serious attention simply because the Qur’ān occupies central importance in his thought and the thought-world of his immediate audience. Although almost all of Şadrā’s major

¹⁵ For Şadrā’s training in the transmitted sciences, see Rizvi, *Mullā Şadrā Shīrāzī*, 5-14.

¹⁶ For studies on Şadrā’s interpretations of *ḥadīths*, see Karim Crow, “Mullā Şadrā on the First Intellect in his *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*,” in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith (Islam-West Philosophical Dialogue: The Papers Presented at the World Congress on Mullā Şadrā, May, 1999)*, 571-90 (Tehran: SIPRI, 2005); Maria Dakake, “The Origin of Man in Pre-Eternity and his Origination in Time: Mullā Şadrā and Imāmī Shī‘ite Tradition,” in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 147-66; Armin Eschraghi, “‘I was a Hidden Treasure’: Some Notes on a Commentary Ascribed to Mullā Şadrā Shīrāzī: *Sharḥ ḥadīth: ‘Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan* (sic),” in *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, ed. Wim Raven and Anna Akasoy, 91-100 (Leiden: Brill, 2008) (thanks go to Anna Akasoy for drawing my attention to this study); ‘Alī Aşghar Ja‘farī, “Sharḥ-i ḥadīth ‘kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan,” *Khīrad-Nāma-yi Şadrā* 32 (1381 Sh/2002): 61-3, which contains the text of Şadrā’s commentary on this *ḥadīth* edited from two manuscripts; Rustom, “Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination.” See also Devin Stewart’s brief inquiry which aims to situate Şadrā’s *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī* within the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī debate in its Safavid context: “Mullā Şadrā’s Commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* as a Response to the Akhbārī Revival,” in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 563-70. Stewart’s argument, made explicit in the title of this article, is not entirely convincing. See p. 113 n. 10.

philosophical writings contain Qur'anic citations, from early on in his career to several years before his death Ṣadrā wrote a number of commentaries on individual chapters and verses of the Qur'ān. He also devoted at least three other books to certain theoretical aspects of his understanding of Islam's sacred text.

0.1 – A Survey of Scholarship on Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Works

In contemporary scholarship, one of the first authors to devote a serious study to Mullā Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān was Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In his chapter on Ṣadrā's Qur'ān commentaries,¹⁷ which was reprinted the following year (1998) in an important collection of articles in memory of Izutsu,¹⁸ Nasr discusses the significance of Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān. He also takes stock of Ṣadrā's writings related to the Qur'ān and its sciences, which is a practice that would later be taken up by Ibrahim Kalin and Sajjad Rizvi.¹⁹ In many ways, Nasr's seminal article lays the groundwork for further inquiry into Ṣadrā's scriptural hermeneutics, as it effectively conveys the nature, content, scope, and significance of Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān.

It will be noted that we said Nasr's work was "one" of the first pieces to draw attention to Ṣadrā's function as an exegete in contemporary scholarship. Before his article appeared, several other studies were carried out on Ṣadrā's hermeneutics in English, Persian, and Arabic, but none of which were as successful in demonstrating the importance of his work on the Qur'ān. The first of these was undertaken by Muḥammad Khwājāwī in his Arabic introduction to his edition of

¹⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1997), 123-35. This essay is one of the book's two new chapters.

¹⁸ See idem, "The Qur'anic Commentaries of Mullā Ṣadrā," in *Consciousness and Reality: Studies in Memory of Toshihiko Izutsu*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī et al., 47-57 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

¹⁹ See Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Ṣadrā with a Brief Account of his Life," *Islamic Studies* 42, no.1 (2003): 35-41; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 77-87. We will return to the phenomenon of modern scholarly annotations on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works in ch. 1 (section 1.2) of the present study.

one of Ṣadrā's books on the Qur'anic sciences.²⁰ In this introduction, Khwājawī devotes some attention to Ṣadrā's scriptural hermeneutical methodology and its importance with respect to Ṣadrian metaphysics, while also listing in summary fashion his writings on the Qur'ān. Several years later, Khwājawī returned to the question of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings in his Persian monograph, *Lawāmi' al-ʿarīfīn fī sharḥ aḥwāl Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn*.²¹ But nothing new is presented here which cannot be obtained by reading his fuller exposition of Ṣadrā's hermeneutics in his earlier study.

An early and fairly helpful discussion concerning the nature and scope of Ṣadrā's Qur'ān-related texts is to be found in Muḥsin Bīdārfar's Arabic introduction to Khwājawī's seven-volume uncritical edition²² of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*.²³ Although Bīdārfar devotes some room to Ṣadrā's method (*manhaj*) of interpretation, he also attempts to date the composition of each of his books on the Qur'ān and its sciences based on statements made by Ṣadrā in his vast oeuvre. Some dates are confirmed beyond doubt, but others are somewhat conjectural.²⁴

The earliest study carried out in English on Ṣadrā's scriptural hermeneutics was a brief article published in 1991 by Latimah Peerwani.²⁵ Peerwani lists most of Ṣadrā's writings on the

²⁰ See Muḥammad Khwājawī, "Muqadimmat al-muṣaḥḥih," in Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Tārikh al-ʿArabī, 2002, repr. ed.), 5-74 (from p. 54 in particular). Although not a "study" as such, it is worth noting that in 1971, Mehdi Mohaghegh published a manuscript containing a Persian translation (for its authorship, see p. 40 n. 32) of the introduction and first two parts of one of Ṣadrā's important Qur'anic works. See Mohaghegh, "Mafātīḥ al-ghayb-i Mullā Ṣadrā," in idem, *Bīst guftār* (Tehran: Naqsh-i Jahān, 1971), ch. 8.

²¹ Khwājawī, *Lawāmi' al-ʿarīfīn fī sharḥ aḥwāl Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn* (Tehran: Āriyan Press, 1987), 107-27.

²² Cf. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 80.

²³ See Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," in Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Qum: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1987-90), 1:92, 94, 102-3, 105, 108-11. Khwājawī is commonly mistaken as this introduction's author.

²⁴ See appendix one of the present study for a comprehensive chronology of their order of composition.

²⁵ Latimah Peerwani, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: The Views of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī," *Proceedings of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* (1991): 468-77.

Qur'ān and then goes on to show that Ṣadrā's "method" of interpreting the Qur'ān differs from the approach of the early Twelver Shī'ī exegetes in that he is more philosophical and less concerned with making particular Shī'ī theological arguments. Peerwani is correct to suggest that Ṣadrā's concerns as an exegete are substantially different from other Qur'anic exegetes. She points out that this is because his approach to the Qur'ān is fundamentally philosophical/mystical in its nature, which she seeks to demonstrate by citing a passage from Ṣadrā's commentary on Q 24:35, the famous light verse. Peerwani also notes here how Ṣadrā expounds a four-fold methodology for interpreting the Qur'ān, but bases her exposition on his explanation of different approaches to the Qur'ān's *mutashābih* or "ambiguous" verses. As Peerwani would later realize, an approach which limits Ṣadrā's theoretical hermeneutics to his discussion of the *mutashābih* verses is problematic. This is precisely because Ṣadrā's treatment of the *mutashābih* verses, to which he dedicated an entire treatise,²⁶ belongs to a much wider body of writings in which he lays out his scriptural hermeneutics.²⁷

²⁶ See Ṣadrā, *Mutashābihāt al-qur'ān* in idem, *Siḥ risāla-yi falsafī*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Markazī-yi Intishārāt-i Daftar-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī, 1379 Sh/2000), 255-84 (pp. 285-310 contain the editor's important glosses on the text). Āshtiyānī also places this work in its historical and philosophical context. See Āshtiyānī, "Muqadimma-yi muṣaḥḥih," in Ṣadrā, *Siḥ risāla*, 77-179. David Dakake, "Defining Ambiguity: Early and Classical Commentary on the *Mutashābih* Verses of the Qur'ān" (PhD diss., Temple University, in progress), has translated Ṣadrā's *Mutashābihāt al-qur'ān* as an appendix to his study.

²⁷ This treatise actually forms part of a much larger and significant work by Ṣadrā. See p. 68. For a survey of the reception of the *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* verses in *tafsīr* literature, and a discussion of the fluid nature of the categories of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, see Leah Kinberg, "Muḥkamāt and Mutashābihāt (Koran 3/7): Implications of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis," *Arabica* 35 (1998): 142-72 (reprinted in *The Qur'an: Formative Interpretation*, ed. Andrew Rippin, ch. 14 [Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999]). This article's annotated bibliography (pp. 66-70) discusses modern interpretations of these verses amongst both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars.

Peerwani returns to Ṣadrā's hermeneutics in an article published in 1999.²⁸ In her earlier study she simply lists Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān and its sciences. But in this piece, which is an expanded version of her 1991 article, she devotes several lines to three of his non-*tafsīr* works, in each instance following Nasr's characterizations. As alluded to above, what appeared in Peerwani's earlier study as Ṣadrā's fourfold method for approaching the *mutashābih* verses appears in this updated version as Ṣadrā's fourfold method for approaching scripture in general.²⁹ A key addition to this article is a brief discussion of Ṣadrā's listing of the etiquette (*adab*) one must observe in order to understand the Qur'ān. Peerwani correctly notes that Ṣadrā borrows this material from Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.³⁰ The most significant aspect of Peerwani's revised study is her discussion of some of the prominent features of Ṣadrā's "exoteric" philological, historical, and exegetical sources on the Qur'ān.

It would not be an understatement to say that, of all of Mullā Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs*, his *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr* has received the bulk of attention. This might have something to do with the fact that Ṣadrā's commentary on the light verse was the first of his *tafsīrs* to have been translated into a European language. It was initially translated by Mohsen Saleh as a part of his 1992 Temple University doctoral dissertation, although it was never published.³¹ Peerwani, however, has published her translation of this text.³² Comparatively speaking, Saleh's translation is more careful and accurate than Peerwani's, although her annotations are more useful in that she tracks

²⁸ Peerwani, "Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī on the Hermeneutics of the Qur'ān: his Philosophical Meditation," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 369-90.

²⁹ There is indeed good reason for this, as we will see in chapter two.

³⁰ For Ṣadrā's appropriation of Ghazālī's rules for reciting the Qur'ān, see pp. 80-1 n. 21.

³¹ See Mohsen Mahmoud Saleh, "The Verse of Light: A Study of Mullā Ṣadrā's Philosophical Qur'ān Exegesis" (PhD diss., Temple University, 1992). The translation of the work is on pp. 84-236 of the study.

³² Ṣadrā, *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur'ān*, trans. Latimah Peerwani (London: ICAS Press, 2004).

down a number of Ṣadrā's Sufi sources.³³ At the same time, Saleh's introduction to his translation, which was later reprinted as a separate article,³⁴ attempts to explain the ways in which Ṣadrā develops the symbolism of light and darkness with respect to his major philosophical doctrines. Peerwani's introduction, on the other hand, pales in comparison. Since her introduction is so closely based on her revised article on Ṣadrā's hermeneutics, very little is done here by way of discussing the long history of mystical and philosophical hermeneutics which informs Ṣadrā's approach to scripture in general, and his commentary on the light verse in particular. Not only does Peerwani's introduction to her translation do an insufficient job in conveying the philosophical and mystical depth of Ṣadrā's thought as reflected in the commentary, but she gives readers very little idea of the significance of Ṣadrā's technical discussions in the commentary itself.³⁵ A summary of the long tradition of philosophical and mystical commentaries on Q 24:35 seems to be in order here, since without a detailed historical and philosophical apparatus, a translation of Ṣadrā's writings can say very little to non-specialists.

Two other scholars have devoted meaningful studies to the *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr*, each with their own points of emphasis. Like Peerwani, Marcia Hermansen's study does a good job in situating this work within its Sufi context, but, by the same token, it implicitly downplays the importance of the long philosophical commentarial tradition on this verse.³⁶ Bilal Kuspinar's

³³ See p. 63.

³⁴ Saleh, "Being: The Light of Lights: An Analysis of Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary on the Verse of Light," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 321-42.

³⁵ The same can be said about her annotations to the translation.

³⁶ Marcia Hermansen, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary upon the Light Verse (*Āyat al-Nūr* 24:35)," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 409-28.

study, on the other hand, manages to bring out some of the philosophical significance of this work, although his treatment of the topic is rather short.³⁷

Apart from the scholarship devoted to Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr*, two other short studies examine his insights on particular Qur'anic verses. The first of these studies is Christian Jambet's brief inquiry into Ṣadrā's treatment of Q 2:256, which states that "there is no compulsion in religion."³⁸ Ṣadrā, as one would expect, reveals himself here to be more concerned with an apolitical interpretation of this verse than anything else. Jambet astutely demonstrates how, for Ṣadrā, "religion" is understood in its deepest sense to be an interior matter. As an interior matter, there can be no compulsion in religion because following the interior life depends entirely on one's own initiative, on whether or not one will submit to God's will. It is interesting to note here that Jambet does not address what seems like an obvious question: could Ṣadrā have not been concerned with providing an interpretation of this verse because he himself fell victim to the persecution of the more exoteric 'ulamā' of his time, whose blindness to the inner life he repeatedly criticizes?³⁹

³⁷ Bilal Kuspinar, "Mullā Ṣadrā on the Light-Verse," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 357-68.

³⁸ See Jambet, *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mullā Sadrā*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 420-3, which summarizes the author's argument from a previously-published pamphlet (which I have been unable to obtain): *Pas de contrainte en religion: Une approche de la question de la liberté en Islam* (Paris: ESCP-EAP, 2004). Jambet's *The Act of Being* was originally published in French as *L'acte d'être: la philosophie de la révélation chez Mollā Sadrā* (Paris: Fayard, 2002). *L'acte d'être* does not contain the section on Q 2:256.

³⁹ See, in particular, the introduction to his Persian work on Sufi ethics, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1961). This edition also includes selections of Ṣadrā's Persian poetry. Since the appearance of Nasr's edition of this work, which was reprinted in 1998, another edition by Khwājawī has also been published (see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 90-1). For a translation of the *Sih aṣl*, see Ṣadrā, *Challenging Islamic Fundamentalism: The Three Principles of Mullā Ṣadrā*, trans. Colin Turner (London: Routledge, forthcoming). Although perhaps appealing to contemporary audiences, the title of this translation is certainly misleading.

A second and more substantial engagement with Ṣadrā's approach to a single Qur'anic *āya* is Annabel Keeler's study of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. This study is concerned with Ṣadrā's interpretation of verse four of the *sūra*, in which he tackles the problem of creation in time within the framework of his ontology.⁴⁰ Keeler's article also includes some perspicacious remarks on Ṣadrā's exegetical method. Unlike other scholars who have written on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics, her exposition here, albeit brief, helps situate Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān within the wider tradition of Sufi Qur'ān commentary, and does a good job in bringing out the significance of the rhetorical and exegetical function of this particular work's introduction.

As for other studies on Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān, Sayyid Sadruddin Taheri's study of resurrection in Ṣadrā's Qur'anic commentaries does not focus on a particular *tafsīr* work, but does offer some interesting general observations on problems in his eschatology.⁴¹ He notes, for example, that Ṣadrā addresses a problem in one of his *tafsīrs* about a belief discussed by Avicenna and defended by Suhrawardī concerning the attachment of souls to celestial bodies in the afterlife in order to undergo physical punishment for sins committed on earth. Taheri's observations on Ṣadrā's position in this regard are undeveloped, as he does not explain how Ṣadrā addresses the issue in the context of his *tafsīr*. Significantly, Ṣadrā's response to this long-standing debate in Islamic thought is resolved in one of his *ḥadīth* commentaries in which he draws on the notion of imaginal bodies, as discussed by Ibn 'Arabī and his followers. Ṣadrā later incorporated this commentary into his *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*, perhaps because of the *sūra*'s eschatological nature.⁴²

⁴⁰ See Annabel Keeler, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary on *Sūrat al-Sajda*," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 343-56.

⁴¹ Sayyid Sadruddin Taheri, "A Critical Study of Resurrection in the Qur'ānic Commentary and Philosophical Ideas of Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 45-76.

⁴² See Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination."

The studies carried out by Mudabbir Azizi,⁴³ Hasan Sa'idi,⁴⁴ and Dihqan Mangabadi⁴⁵ approach Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics in summary fashion. Azizi's article offers a sampling of some of his comments on various *āyas*, both in his *tafsīr* and non-*tafsīr* writings. He moves between Ṣadrā's interpretation of the light verse, stories of some Qur'anic prophets, and verses concerning the remembrance of God without any real sense of a unifying theme behind the interpretations presented. Azizi's study, therefore, is a mishmash of different interpretations offered by Ṣadrā of a select number of Qur'anic verses.

Mangabadi's essay, on the other hand, is generally better organized and thematically united. Its most useful discussion is its treatment of Ṣadrā's critique of exoteric approaches to the Qur'ān. But how this aspect of Ṣadrā's hermeneutics ties into Mangabadi's discussion of his understanding of the different levels of scriptural interpretation, or the detached letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'a*), remains unclear. This is because the author does not attempt to draw a connection between these aspects of Ṣadrā's hermeneutics. Mangabadi also considers the influences of earlier commentators on Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*, but confines himself to scholars of *tafsīr* proper. This is indeed misleading, since there are many other source materials for Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* writings.

Unlike Mangabadi, Sa'idi manages to account for some of Ṣadrā's more mystical sources in his *tafsīrs*, and is able to draw a somewhat clearer connection between Ṣadrā's critique of exoteric approaches to *tafsīr* and his insistence upon "unveiling" (*kashf*) as the most superior hermeneutic tool one can employ in understanding the Qur'ān. Yet when it comes to Ṣadrā's

⁴³ Mudabbir Azizi, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Gnostic Approach Towards the Qur'anic Verses," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 445-66.

⁴⁴ Hasan Sa'idi, "Illumination, Unveiling and Intuition in Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Commentary," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 519-38.

⁴⁵ Dihqan Mangabadi, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Method of Qur'ān Commentary," in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 429-44.

treatment of unveiling, Sa'idi ignores the long tradition of discussions on this topic which influenced him (particularly Ibn 'Arabī). Nor does Sa'idi attempt to explain how Ṣadrā's metaphysics relates to his understanding of the Qur'ān. This last dimension of Ṣadrā's hermeneutics has been ignored by most authors, but is something which lies at the heart of his approach to the Qur'ān.

Apart from the aforementioned studies carried out by Khwājawī and Āshtiyānī, we only have one monograph in Persian which engages Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs*.⁴⁶ Muḥammad Taqī Karāmatī's aim in writing this book was, as its title suggests, to demonstrate the influence of philosophical arguments in Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*. Thus, the work is not concerned with studying Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs* as Qur'ān commentaries proper, a problem to which we will return shortly. Having said that, Karāmatī also does not successfully accomplish the task he set for himself. The work presents us with a fairly superficial discussion of how Ṣadrā makes philosophical arguments (such as proofs for the existence of God and bodily resurrection) in parts of his *tafsīrs*. Since the author does not pay attention to Ṣadrā's use of Qur'anic language in his explications of philosophical concepts within the context of *tafsīr*, the Qur'ān is simply regarded as the locus for Ṣadrā's philosophical reflections. But why would a philosopher be concerned with commenting upon scripture? How does Ṣadrā use scripture to make his philosophical arguments? These are the types of questions Karāmatī should have asked before undertaking such a project.

The questions raised by Karāmatī's monograph are in fact indicative of a much wider problem in current approaches to Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān. A number of scholars besides

⁴⁶ Muḥammad Taqī Karāmatī, *Ta'thīr-i mabānī-yi falsafī dar tafsīr-i Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn* (Tehran: SIPRI, 1385 Sh/2006).

Karāmatī, such as ‘Alī Arshad Riyāhī,⁴⁷ and Taheri,⁴⁸ all favour the position that Ṣadrā comments upon the Qur’ān in order to demonstrate one of his philosophical teachings. As we will see later, this type of characterization creates an unnecessary dichotomy between the activity of philosophy and reading scripture. It also privileges the notion that Ṣadrā is a philosopher first and scriptural exegete second. But there is something much more organic happening when Ṣadrā, as an accomplished philosopher/mystic, draws on the Qur’ān as an exegete. Indeed, a similar point has been made by Muṣṭafā Burujirdī⁴⁹ and, more forcefully, Muḥammad Bīdhandī in his short study of Ṣadrā’s use of *ta’wīl*.⁵⁰ Examining Ṣadrā’s treatment of the relationship between the outer (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) approaches to the Qur’ān, Bīdhandī argues that the basis of Ṣadrā’s esoteric interpretations (*ta’wīl*) is the Qur’ān itself. This means that the Qur’ān is not simply interpreted by Ṣadrā through the lens of his philosophy, thus reading inner meanings out of the text. Rather, it is the Qur’ān which allows him to make his inner readings of its verses.

Like Mangabadi’s study, Abū l-Qāsim Ḥusayn-Dūst’s inquiry into the function of the detached letters in Ṣadrā’s hermeneutics is welcome, but significantly underdeveloped.⁵¹ Although one of the few scholars to have drawn serious attention to Ṣadrā’s treatment of the detached letters, Ḥusayn-Dūst does not fully demonstrate how the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara* (which

⁴⁷ ‘Alī Arshad Riyāhī, “Ta’thīrāt-i muthbat wa-yā manfī-yi falsafa-yi Ṣadrā dar fahm-i ū az āyāt-i qur’ān,” *Khīrad Nāmah-yi Ṣadrā* 35 (1383 Sh/2004): 50-8.

⁴⁸ Taheri, “Guzārashī az tafāsīr,” *Khīrad-Nāmah-yi Ṣadrā* 1 (1374 Sh/1995): 57-63.

⁴⁹ Mustafa Burujirdī, “Ta’thīr-i qur’ān-i karīm dar shaklgīrī-yi ḥikmat-i muta‘āliya,” *Khīrad-Nāmah-yi Ṣadrā* 20 (1379 Sh/2000): 57-60. This article was also published in English in slightly expanded form: “The Impact of the Quran in (sic) the Development of the Transcendent Philosophy,” in *Mullā Ṣadrā and Transcendent Philosophy*, 2:397-407.

⁵⁰ Muḥammad Bīdhandī, “Barrasī wa-taḥlīl-i barkhī ta’ammulāt-i ta’wīlī-yi Mullā Ṣadrā dar kitāb wa-sunnat,” *Khīrad-Nāmah-yi Ṣadrā* 38 (1383 Sh/2004): 4-16.

⁵¹ Abū l-Qāsim Ḥusayn-Dūst, “Ḥurūf-i munqaṭī‘a-yi qur’ān dar ḥikmat-i muta‘āliya-yi Mullā Ṣadrā,” *Khīrad-Nāmah-yi Ṣadrā* 36 (1383 Sh/2004): 58-63.

contains a brief account of the nature of the detached letters) allows Ṣadrā to draw an important connection between God’s Speech and human becoming. Indeed, Ṣadrā’s treatment of the detached letters as laid out in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara* must be read in conjunction with his key discussion in the *Maḥātib*, in which he draws an important link between God’s words in their state of non-deployment and the detached letters of the Qur’ān. This insight, coupled with his ontology, allows Ṣadrā to discuss the intimate relationship shared between the Qur’ān and man.

Two Iranian scholars to have explicitly drawn the connection between Ṣadrā’s ontology and the Qur’ān are Fāṭima Ārānī⁵² and Muḥammad Khamenei, one of Iran’s foremost contemporary philosophers.⁵³ In their studies, Ārānī and Khamenei demonstrate the fundamental importance of the notion of levels (*marātib*) in Ṣadrā’s Qur’anic writings and their connection to his ontology. Human beings increase in perception as they shed their materiality, which means they become more real because they increase in being. The deeper one penetrates being, the deeper one penetrates the Qur’ān, which is the book of being. Khamenei also manages to touch on some of the basic issues relating to Mullā Ṣadrā’s Qur’anic hermeneutics, particularly the ways in which his metaphysics ties into his understanding of the divine Word. But, given the brevity of Khamenei’s two studies, they leave much to be desired with respect to the theoretical development and practical application of Ṣadrā’s scriptural hermeneutics.

⁵² Fāṭima Ārānī, “Mabānī-yi ‘irfānī-yi ta’wīl-i qur’ān az manẓar-i Ṣadr-i muta’allihīn,” *Khīrad-Nāma-yi Ṣadrā* 42 (1384 Sh/2005): 63-74; Taṭābuq-i madārij-i qur’ān wa-ma’ārij-i insān az manẓar-i Ṣadr-i muta’allihīn,” *Khīrad-Nāma-yi Ṣadrā* 32 (1381 Sh/2002): 46-52.

⁵³ Muḥammad Khamenei, “Fahm-i kalām-i Khudā dar maktab-i Mullā Ṣadrā,” *Khīrad-Nāma-yi Ṣadrā* 31 (1382 Sh/2003): 19-25; “Uṣūl-i tafsīrī wa-hirminūtik-i qur’ānī nazd-i Mullā Ṣadrā,” *Khīrad-Nāma-yi Ṣadrā* 18 (1378 Sh/1999): 64-71. The latter work was originally published as *Principles of Interpretation and Qur’anic Hermeneutics According to Mullā Ṣadrā* (London: ICAS, 1999).

Returning to studies in modern European languages which engage Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics, Sasha Dehgani's forthcoming anthology of German translations from Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* is a welcome contribution.⁵⁴ This book promises to offer the first selections of Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān in German. It will be particularly interesting to see what kind of *tafsīr* materials Dehgani includes in his anthology, especially since, as the title of his anthology suggests, he clearly sees in Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings an underlying Shī'ī theosophical perspective. If by "theosophy" Dehgani means an esoteric approach in which philosophy and mysticism are united to expound the deepest truths contained within the Qur'ān, then Ṣadrā would certainly agree that his *tafsīr* is "theosophical." At the same time, a simple perusal of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* reveals very little explicitly "Shī'ī" material. Indeed, answering the question of how Shī'ī (whatever this may mean) Ṣadrā himself is seems to be the first step in determining whether or not we can call his writings in general, and his Qur'anic works in particular, "Shī'ī theosophy" as Dehgani—undoubtedly following Corbin⁵⁵—would like to suggest.⁵⁶

Apart from Peerwani and Dehgani's translations, the only other published work which makes materials from Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings available in a European language is Jambet's recent monograph, *Mort et resurrection en islam*.⁵⁷ In this excellent study of Ṣadrā's eschatology, Jambet offers over sixty pages of select translated passages from Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings. In keeping with the monograph's theme, these translations have to do with death, the

⁵⁴ Ṣadrā, *Schīitische Theosophie: Die Koranexegese von Mullā Ṣadrā*, trans. Sasha Dehgani (Berlin: Suhrkamp Insel, forthcoming).

⁵⁵ For an insightful inquiry into the "Shī'ī" nature of Ṣadrā's works in general, see Hermann Landolt, "Henry Corbin's Understanding of Mullā Ṣadrā," in *Mullā Ṣadrā and Transcendent Philosophy*, 1:172 (reprinted in idem, *Recherches en spiritualité iranienne* [Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 2005], 364).

⁵⁶ Cf. Abū l-Qāsim Nakūdiyān Iṣfahānī, "Dīdgāh-i Mullā Ṣadrā pirāmūn-i nām-hā wa-ṣifāt-i qur'ān," *Khīrad-Nāma-yi Ṣadrā* 24 (1380 Sh/2001): 83-7.

⁵⁷ See Jambet, *Mort et resurrection en islam*, 209-18; 232-89.

day of judgement, resurrection, and Hell. Jambet's introductions and notes to the selected passages help put their ideas in context, although his French translations are somewhat free. Perhaps the greatest merit of these translations is that they allow readers to see how Ṣadrā approaches scripture as a philosopher/mystic through a diverse selection of his comments on several key Qur'anic eschatological texts and symbols.

Jambet's concern with Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān goes back to an earlier, groundbreaking study of Ṣadrā's philosophy. Published originally in French and then refined and translated into English, Jambet's *The Act of Being* goes a long way in relating how Ṣadrā's ontology is an exposition of the self-revelation of being through its different modes (*anḥā'*) of gradation. Jambet is fundamentally concerned in this study with the main outlines of Ṣadrā's metaphysics, psychology, and eschatology. He does a fine job relating all three of these domains to Ṣadrā's teachings on the "movement" or "act" of being and how its devolution relates to man's becoming/destiny. Jambet's approach is certainly to be appreciated, since it helps make the ideas in Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* more widely available. But, like Karāmatī's Persian monograph mentioned earlier, Jambet treats Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* like any of his other writings. Thus, Jambet is not concerned with demonstrating for his reader the manner in which Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* reads as *tafsīr*, nor does he wish to bring Ṣadrā's scriptural concerns into conversation with his ontology. Although Jambet's purpose is not to discuss Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic hermeneutics as such, his book nonetheless manages to draw out the wider cosmological implications of the ways in which being is a form of revelation, and is thus one of the best expositions of the implications of Ṣadrā's ontology available in Ṣadrian scholarship.

Yanis Ešots' forthcoming article on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics is devoted to the theoretical component to his understanding of scripture.⁵⁸ To this effect, he mainly focuses on Ṣadrā's *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. The *Mafātīḥ* has generally been considered to contain a summa of Ṣadrā's scriptural hermeneutics. This is something we affirmed in a recent study, while also noting a further nuance to this general picture, namely the importance of the introduction to this work.⁵⁹ By focusing on some of the *Mafātīḥ*'s central themes, Ešots therefore effectively demonstrates the range of Ṣadrā's concerns as a philosopher/mystic commenting upon scripture. Here we learn of Ṣadrā's understanding of divine and human speech, the reason for God's revealing the Qur'ān, and, once again, the rules for interpreting the Qur'ān, and a typology of different approaches to the *mutashābih* verses. However, there are two fundamental flaws in this study.

Firstly, we are given very little idea of the nature of Ṣadrā's reflections on the relationship between divine and human speech. Secondly, and more substantially, Ešots does not present Ṣadrā's scriptural hermeneutics in its fully developed form. In order to do this, attention must be paid to his understanding of the detached letters (as already discussed) and the "Perfect Words" (*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*). Without a discussion of these concepts, a direct link between Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics and ontology cannot be made. And, without drawing this link, Ṣadrā's understanding of the nature of the Qur'ān, and hence his approach to it in terms of theory and practice, will remain unclear. One example shall suffice. The author discusses Ṣadrā's explanation of the manner in which the Word descends and becomes a book. Apart from missing

⁵⁸ Ešots, "The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Mullā Ṣadrā," in *Esoteric Approaches to the Qur'ān*, ed. Annabel Keeler and Sajjad Rizvi (forthcoming).

⁵⁹ Rustom, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Prolegomenon to the *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2007): 128-33.

several crucial points mentioned in the text of the *Mafātīḥ* itself, we walk away with very little understanding of how the descent of the Word is related to the ascent of man, which has everything to do with the connection Ṣadrā draws between the Qur'ān and being, which itself presumes a thorough discussion of the detached letters and Perfect Words.

One of the most helpful treatments of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* comes from the pen of Shigeru Kamada in his study of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-zilzāl*.⁶⁰ Although Kamada overlooks several important points, his study of Ṣadrā's hermeneutics is clear in its presentation and sound in its interpretations. After taking account of the different approaches to Ṣadrā's thought and noting the relative paucity of thorough studies in Ṣadrian scholarship, Kamada turns to Ṣadrā's *Mafātīḥ*, demonstrating his reflections on the nature of the Qur'ān and the manner in which it should be approached. He does this through citation and careful examination of several of the text's most important passages. This then allows him to discuss Ṣadrā's commentary on the *Sūrat al-zilzāl*, citing passages from this work and analyzing them with respect to Ṣadrā's ontology and psychology. The most important aspect of Kamada's study is the connection he draws between Ṣadrā's understanding of the inner dimensions of scripture and the inner dimensions of man (a more or less classical Sufi trope), which results in an interesting discussion of the correspondence drawn by Ṣadrā between the imprinting of the soul and the unfolding of the text of being.

⁶⁰ Shigeru Kamada, "Mullā Ṣadrā Between Mystical Philosophy and Qur'ān Interpretation through his Commentary on the "Chapter of the Earthquake"," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005): 275-89.

0.2 – The Scope of the Present Study

0.2.1 – Objectives and Argument

The above survey should make it clear that a significant amount of research remains to be carried out on virtually every aspect of Mullā Ṣadrā’s work on the Qur’ān. The next step in the right direction would be to closely study his *tafsīrs*, although it would be counterproductive to attempt to study them all at once. This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, Ṣadrā’s “*tafsīr*” does not, properly speaking, belong to the same genre of *tafsīr* as, for example, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s (d. 606/1210) *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*. Unlike Ṣadrā’s *tafsīr* compositions, Rāzī’s *tafsīr*, as Walid Saleh has pointed out, belongs to the category of encyclopaedic Qur’ān commentaries.⁶¹ Rāzī’s concern when writing his *tafsīr* was not just to comment upon the Qur’ān using the language of philosophical theology, but to expand the borders of what could be operative within the framework of *tafsīr*. He attempted to do this within the confines of the mainstream *tafsīr* tradition, which is how he has always been read. Ṣadrā’s writings in *tafsīr*, on the other hand, function as independent treatises with the explicit intention of producing philosophical *tafsīr* for an intellectual elite. This allowed him to avoid discussing many of the tangential issues taken up by Rāzī in his *tafsīr*.

Secondly, although Ṣadrā envisioned a complete commentary upon the Qur’ān—which was never completed—his *tafsīr* compositions were written at different periods of his life. This means that each of his *tafsīrs* were individual treatises sufficient unto themselves. From his earliest *tafsīr* piece to his last, Ṣadrā takes up many different issues, meaning that each of his

⁶¹ See Walid Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qur’ān Commentary of Al-Tha’labī (D. 427/1035)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 17 ff.

commentaries upon parts of the Qur'ān were guided by different concerns and, by extension, different stylistic considerations.

Thirdly, focusing on more than one commentary at a time will not allow for the depth of each *tafsīr* to emerge. Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* writings tend to be long and involved. They draw upon the views of almost every major Qur'ān commentator in Islam even when discussing minute points of grammar. Sometimes his *tafsīrs* are polemical in nature, presenting a number of possible views on a given doctrinal subject only to reject them at the end in favour of his own view—a practice which is also to be found in some of his other key works.

Despite the fact that Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān span many different periods of his life and reflect different concerns, it is true that there is a great deal of unity to these texts. As this study will demonstrate, this is because Ṣadrā only took up writing on the Qur'ān after his philosophical views had fully matured. Since his work on the Qur'ān is informed by the same philosophical perspective, we can distinguish between the theoretical and practical dimensions of his scriptural hermeneutics. But this is not to suggest that the details of Ṣadrā's theoretical hermeneutics were not more clearly fleshed out later on in his career. Indeed, this was the case, as is evidenced in the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*.

In order to present as thorough a picture as possible of Ṣadrā's theoretical Qur'anic hermeneutics, this study will work its way through his Qur'anic writings, paying particular attention to the *Mafātīḥ*. At the same time, we will be concerned with understanding the practical dimensions of his hermeneutics. In order to come to terms with this aspect of Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān, we will present a source-critical and analytical study of his commentary on the

chapter in the Qurʾān which occupies central importance in Muslim daily life, namely the Fātiḥa.⁶²

By the time Ṣadrā wrote the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, he had already penned over ten independent *tafsīrs*. He also had already written the *Maḥāṭib*, where he was able to give full expression to the theoretical considerations involved in any act of scriptural interpretation. Thus, in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, which is his last complete *tafsīr* composition, we encounter a Mullā Ṣadrā whose thinking on scripture had fully crystallized. His commentary on the Fātiḥa thus represents his most mature attempt to comment upon scripture, a fact which is evident throughout this pivotal text. We find in this book a very comprehensive, internally coherent picture of a number of key cosmological, psychological, theological, and soteriological teachings squarely situated within the Islamic intellectual traditions of Sufism and philosophy.

To say that Ṣadrā's philosophical doctrines are given expression in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is not to endorse the simplistic characterization (which we encountered in our survey of Ṣadrā's Qurʾanic hermeneutics) that reduces his work on the Qurʾān to nothing more than a set of philosophical "glosses" upon scripture. Something deeper is at work here. Ṣadrā does not simply approach the Qurʾān as a philosopher who seeks to justify his philosophical and mystical positions by using the Qurʾān's dicta. Rather, he finds within the Qurʾān the same vision of reality at which he arrived through the long and arduous process of study and self-purification.

⁶² Annemarie Schimmel aptly describes the Fātiḥa as "the true centre." See Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 143 (her treatment of the Fātiḥa, which extends to p. 144 and beyond, is telling in this regard). For the attention the Fātiḥa has received in Muslim daily life, as well in Islam's rich exegetical traditions, see also *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. "Fātiḥa" (by William Graham).

Thus, Ṣadrā's approach to the Qur'ān is philosophical because his philosophy is Qur'anic.⁶³ The difference between his strictly-defined philosophical writings and his *tafsīr* compositions is that the former (although not entirely) are more concerned with explicating the nature of reality in purely philosophical terms. But when Ṣadrā approaches scripture, he is able to discuss the same themes he takes up in his philosophical works in more familiar "religious" language, as he is now operating, qua exegete, within the framework of the Qur'ān's universe of discourse. As this study will demonstrate, it is here that the significance of Ṣadrā's philosophical doctrines find their most eloquent articulation. This is why our study of his work on the Qur'ān is as much concerned with delineating his function as a scriptural exegete as it is with demonstrating his concerns and methods as a religious thinker.

0.2.2 – Method and Approach

Chapter one of this study seeks to outline the history of the reception of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works in Safavid, Qajar, and Pahlavid learned circles. It then provides the most comprehensive overview to date of the chronology, scope, and contents of each of his writings on the Qur'ān and its sciences. After discussing the history behind, and the nature and scope of, Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān, in chapter two we will be concerned with the theoretical dimension of his Qur'anic hermeneutics. We will see that, although Ṣadrā wrote several theoretical works on the Qur'ān towards the end of his life, his thinking on the nature and function of scripture had already begun to crystallize at an earlier phase in his career. This consideration helps explain the conceptual consistency present in his *tafsīr* in general.

But this is not to say that Ṣadrā does not lay out his hermeneutical theory in one given work. As will be made clear in this chapter, his theoretical hermeneutics is most articulately

⁶³ Cf. Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy*, 71.

presented in the *Mafātīh*. While Ṣadrā makes explicit his intention that the *Mafātīh* is a theoretical exposition of the Qur'ān's inner meanings, he also spends a good deal of time discussing the nature of the Qur'ān itself. Indeed, such a discussion seems almost necessary given the nature of his project in the *Mafātīh*. For both Ṣadrā and the long line of Sufīs and Islamic philosophers before him, there is an intimate correspondence between the Qur'ān and the human self. Since being (*wujūd*) is a prototype of man, the Qur'ān is also a prototype of man. How this idea relates to Ṣadrā's understanding of the Qur'ān and his hermeneutical theory is significant. Paying attention to this question will provide us with the occasion to trace the development of Ṣadrā's understanding of the nature of scripture, his conception of revelation, and his self-perception as an exegete.

Chapter three will bring this study's concern with Ṣadrā's practical hermeneutics to the forefront, as we will turn our attention to his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. This chapter will subject the text to very close source-critical analysis, taking account of the sources and various intellectual traditions which inform it and, in a sense, shape its discourse. We will also be concerned with outlining the form and content of this *tafsīr* work. This chapter, therefore, will set the tone for the remaining two chapters, which will be concerned with critically assessing the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*'s most salient teachings.

In the fourth chapter, we will offer a close reading of the teachings in metaphysics, cosmology, and anthropology as laid out in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. We will begin with a demonstration of the manner in which Ṣadrā employs the structure and language of the opening verses of the Fātiḥa to mould his famous thesis of the fundamentality of being (*aṣālat wujūd*) and

its gradation (*tashkīk*) into what Jambet calls the “theophanic model”⁶⁴ of God’s divine essence and attributes, closely following—whether consciously or subconsciously—the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers. The section on metaphysics will set the stage for a discussion of Ṣadrā’s unique cosmology of praise (*ḥamd*) and anthropology (taking their lead from the second and third verses of the Fātiḥa respectively), both of which admirably demonstrate the operative or practical dimension of Ṣadrā’s theoretical hermeneutics.

The verses of the Fātiḥa also prompt within Ṣadrā answers to two important questions, which will be the focus of the final chapter of this study. The first of these questions leads him to inquire into the nature of idolatry and its relationship to religious belief. We situate Ṣadrā’s response within the framework of similar discussions in later Islamic thought from Ibn ‘Arabī onwards, demonstrating how his meditations upon Q 1:1 allow him to articulate his position concerning the “God created in beliefs.” Not only does Ṣadrā show himself to be a faithful student of an important doctrine in later Islamic thought, but he also manages to tie this teaching into his explanation of the diversity of approaches to the Qur’ān.

The other issue which Ṣadrā attempts to tackle in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is the question of whether or not God’s mercy is open to all human beings in the afterlife, and, if so, how such a teaching relates to other scriptural statements which seem to indicate otherwise. The problem of soteriology, which Ṣadrā discusses in several of his other books, is the most important feature of this particular *tafsīr* work. After discussing Ṣadrā’s treatment of this issue in his other philosophical writings, we then turn to his argument as laid out in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, demonstrating the manner in which his ecumenical stance is a corollary of his doctrine of the

⁶⁴ That is, le modèle théophanique. See Jambet, *L’acte d’être*, 402; idem, *The Act of Being*, 403. Jambet employs this phrase with specific reference to what can be called the Ibn ‘Arabization of Ṣadrā’s ideas.

fundamentality and oneness of being, especially when this idea is cast in the language of the Qur’ān in general, and the Fātiḥa in particular. Ṣadrā enlists the help of Ibn ‘Arabī to solve the dilemma, but with important adjustments and an argument more congruent with his psychology as discussed in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.

Four appendices accompany this study. The first appendix presents, in two tables, the most updated (but tentative) chronology of the order of composition of Ṣadrā’s writings on the Qur’ān: table one lists their order of composition with respect to themselves, and table two with respect to Ṣadrā’s other writings which are datable. Appendix two presents the core texts from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* which were reworked by Ṣadrā into the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. By juxtaposing, in translation, Ibn ‘Arabī’s originals with Ṣadrā’s renditions, this appendix aims to demonstrate (1) how significant Ibn ‘Arabī’s presence is in this *tafsīr* work, and (2) how carefully Ṣadrā recasts Ibn ‘Arabī’s points in his own unique style and language. This appendix serves as an effective aid to the argument made in chapter five of this study.

Appendix three presents over forty key texts from the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* in translation. Many of these passages are also to be found in chapters four and five within the context of much larger and developed arguments. Apart from the obvious usefulness of making excerpts of an important commentary upon the Fātiḥa available in English,⁶⁵ re-presenting Ṣadrā’s most salient

⁶⁵ For English translations of commentaries on the Fātiḥa—either in part or whole—see, in particular, Ibn ‘Abbās, *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*, trans. Mokrane Guezzou (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae in association with the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009); Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984-92), vol. 1; Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941-1980)*, trans. Hamid Algar (London: Keagan Paul International, 1981), part five; Rustom, “Forms of Gnosis in Sulamī’s Sufi Exegesis of the Fātiḥa,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 16, no. 4 (2005): 327-44 (pp. 340-4 contain select translations of important early Sufi glosses upon the Fātiḥa); Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Keys to the Arcana: Shahrastānī’s Esoteric Commentary on the Qur’ān*, trans. Toby Mayer (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009) (this work includes a complete

points in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* in one place allows us to see his ideas in this work in their raw form, that is, as they immediately present themselves to readers. Appendix four contains a glossary of the Arabic technical terms found throughout the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. The purpose behind presenting this glossary is to demonstrate the range of philosophical/mystical vocabulary employed by Ṣadrā in this *tafsīr* work.

translation of the author's Ismā'īlī commentary on the Fātiḥa); Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, trans. Feras Hamza (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae in association with the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009); Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, trans. Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae in association with the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009), passim. There are also several *tafsīrs* of the Fātiḥa written in the English language, amongst which is an important Sufi commentary. See Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 13-20. It can also be noted that we have a text in English which summarizes and translates remarks upon the Fātiḥa by over twenty important Sunnī exegetes (both classical and modern). See Abū Rumaysh, *The Spiritual Cure: An Explanation to (sic) Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* (Birmingham: Daar us-Sunnah Publishers, 2006). Despite the impressive range of sources consulted in this anthology, it avoids the important theological, philosophical, and mystical discussions addressed in the very *tafsīr* works which it consults, consequently confining itself to a presentation of the Fātiḥa's most basic interpretations.

Chapter 1

An Overview of Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Works

Although Mullā Ṣadrā dedicated many individual works to the Qur'ān and its sciences, we only have a relatively good idea of what they are about. This is because no attempt has been made thus far to produce a thorough annotated list of his work on the Qur'ān. The absence of such a research tool is a serious stumbling-block in understanding Ṣadrā's broad mystical and philosophical concerns as an exegete. In order to remedy this lacuna in Ṣadrīan scholarship, this chapter will outline the structure, contents, and scope of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān and its sciences.¹ This will allow us to better situate his Qur'anic hermeneutics in terms of both theory (to which we will turn in chapter two) and practice (which is the subject of chapters three to five).

Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings can be divided into four categories: commentaries on individual *sūras* (section 1.3), commentaries on individual *āyas* (section 1.4), theoretical works on the Qur'ān (section 1.5), and Qur'anic works of doubtful authenticity (section 1.6). However, before turning to the annotated list of these compositions on the Qur'ān, some comments are in order concerning earlier characterizations (or the lack thereof) of these writings.

¹ To some extent, my approach in this chapter has been influenced by the general method employed by Etan Kohlberg in his *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and his Library* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 25-69.

1.1 – The Historical Reception of Ṣadrā’s Qur’anic Works

1.1.1 – Ṣadrā’s Followers and Opponents

The intellectual activity of the school of Isfahan² continued after the death of Mullā Ṣadrā, largely through such influential figures as his sons-in-law ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (d. 1071/1661-2)³ and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680).⁴ Although Kāshānī and Lāhījī

² For the school of Isfahan, see Corbin, *En islam iranien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 4:9-201; idem, *La philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1981); Gerhard Endress, “Philosophische Ein-Band-Bibliotheken aus Isfahan,” *Oriens* 36 (2001): 10-58 (pp. 17-30 in particular); Kamal, *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendent Philosophy*, ch. 2; Leonard Lewisohn, “Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān: *Taṣawwuf* and *‘Irfān* in Late Safavid Iran,” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (vols. 1-3) and David Morgan (vol. 3), 3:63-134 (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999); Nasr, “The School of Isfahan,” in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:904-32 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1966) (reprinted in Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, ed. Mehdi Aminrazavi, ch. 21 [Richmond: Curzon, 1996]); Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 209-21; idem, “The Place of the School of Iṣfahān in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism,” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, 3:3-15. Despite the fact that the school of Isfahan produced thinkers of very different spiritual and intellectual persuasions, Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 140 seems to accept the term on account of these thinkers’ “family resemblances” and “common contextual possibilities.” Cf. Andrew Newman, “The Legacy of Mullā Ṣadrā in the Writings of Western Scholars in Iranian and Shī‘ī Studies: Use or Abuse?,” in *Mullā Ṣadrā and Transcendent Philosophy*, 1:193-4. Newman’s earlier article, “Towards a Reconsideration of the ‘Isfahān School of Philosophy’: Shaykh Bahā‘ī and the Role of the Safawid ‘Ulamā (sic),” *Studia Iranica* 15, no. 2 (1986): 165-99 demonstrates how Shaykh Bahā‘ī (d. 1030/1620-1), himself a teacher of Mullā Ṣadrā, was actively engaged in Safavid political and courtly life, as well as the consolidation of the Shī‘ī scholarly class. This, Newman argues, demonstrates that the Shī‘ī ‘ulamā’ of the early Safavid period were not, as suggested by Corbin and Nasr, apolitical figures only concerned with mysticism and philosophy (cf. Newman, “The Legacy of Mullā Ṣadrā,” 1:196 ff). Newman seems to misinterpret Corbin and Nasr’s position here. See, in particular, Nasr, “The School of Isfahan,” 2:910 (reprinted in Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, 244).

³ For Lāhījī, see Horten, “Die philosophischen und theologischen Ansichten von Lahigi (um 1670),” *Der Islam* 3 (1912): 91-131; Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 96-115; idem, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shī‘ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 171-5; Lewisohn, “Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān,” 3:101-12; *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī” (by Wilfred Madlung); Nasr, “Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safavid Period,” in *The*

had the same teacher, their backgrounds and interests were quite different. Having been a student of Mājīd Baḥrānī (d. 1028/1619), the possible founder of Akhbārī teachings in Shiraz,⁵ Kāshānī's intellectual perspective was infused with the Akhbārī penchant for the transmitted sciences, which is evidenced in some of his principal books, such as his *Maḥajjat al-bayḍā'*—which is a Shī'ī reworking of Ghazālī's famous *Iḥyā'*—and his important Qur'ān commentary, *al-Ṣāfi*.⁶

Cambridge History of Iran, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, 6:690-2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Rizvi, “A Sufi Theology Fit for a Shī'ī King: The *Gawhar-i Murād* of 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (d. 1072/1661-2),” in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh, 83-100 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

⁴ For Fayḍ Kāshānī, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Fayz-e Kāshānī” (by Hamid Algar); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī” (by William Chittick); Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 179-86; Robert Gleave, “Scriptural Sufism and Scriptural Anti-Sufism: Theology and Mysticism amongst the Shī'ī Akhbāriyya,” in *Sufism and Theology*, 167-72; Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa-siyāsāt dar dūra-yi Ṣafawī* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Anṣariyān, 1991), 148-292; Lewisohn, “Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān,” 3:112 ff.; Nasr, “Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology,” 6:688-90. For a study of Kāshānī's life and thought, see Todd Lawson, *Philosophy and Fundamentalism: Introduction to the Life and Work of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, d. 1680* (Oxford: Oneworld, forthcoming).

⁵ For this figure and his relationship to Fayḍ Kāshānī, see the important study by Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shī'ī School* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 152-4. Gleave's conclusions concerning the late crystallization of the Akhbārī school and Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī's (d. 1036/1626-7) relationship to the Mu'tazila, amongst other things, has justifiably been called into question by Wilfred Madelung. See Madelung, review of *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shī'ī School*, by Robert Gleave, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 3 (2008): 398-400.

⁶ See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Fayz-e Kāshānī.” At the same time, he also wrote a number of important Shī'ī mystical texts, such as the *Kalimāt-i maknūna*. For studies of this important text, see Kamada, “Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's *Walāya*: The Confluence of Shi'ī Imamology and Mysticism,” in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy, and Mysticism in Muslim Thought: Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt*, ed. Todd Lawson, 455-68 (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005); Lawson, “The Hidden Words of Fayḍ Kāshānī,” in *Iran: Questions et Connaissances*, ed. M. Szuppe et al., 427-47 (Louvain: Association pour l'avancement des Études Iranienne, 2002). For Kāshānī's teachings on imagination, see Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, 176-9; Lawson, “Akhbārī Shī'ī Approaches to *tafsīr*,” in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, ed. G. R.

Along with his Akhbārism, Kāshānī also managed to assimilate Ṣadrā’s intellectual and spiritual perspective into his worldview.⁷

Unlike Kāshānī, Lāhījī appears to not have been interested in the transmitted sciences, primarily evidenced by the fact that he is not known to have left behind any significant works in *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, or *tafsīr*.⁸ Lāhījī was a much more serious poet than Kāshānī, and was even given the penname “Fayyād,” it is said, by Mullā Ṣadrā.⁹ Lāhījī was also more concerned with the philosophical sciences than Kāshānī, and a number of his most important writings are squarely within the tradition of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophical theology.

Despite their differing intellectual perspectives, which could be one reason for the supposed rivalry between the two,¹⁰ Kāshānī and Lāhījī had different fates with respect to the ruling establishment. Although Kāshānī was accused of heresy in his own lifetime, he was nonetheless a favourite of Shāh ‘Abbās II (r. 1052-77/1642-66), and rose to considerable prominence during his reign.¹¹ Lāhījī, on the other hand, seems to have fallen out of favour with

Hawting and Abdul-Kader Shareef, 173-210 (London: Routledge, 1993) (reprinted in *The Koran: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, ed. Colin Turner, 4: ch. 63 [London: Routledge, 2004]).

⁷ Ṣadrā’s influence on Kāshānī has been most recently discussed in Gleave, “Scriptural Sufism and Scriptural Anti-Sufism: Theology and Mysticism amongst the Shī‘ī Akhbāriyya,” in *Sufism and Theology*, 170-1.

⁸ *Ṭabaqāt* writings note that he was not known for having been a master of the standard transmitted sciences. See Rizvi, “A Sufi Theology,” 89. For discussions of Lāhījī’s writings, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī”; Rizvi, “A Sufi Theology,” 89-90.

⁹ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī.” It is also said that Ṣadrā gave Kāshānī his penname. See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Fayz-e Kāshānī.” But cf. Lewisohn, “Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān,” 3:113.

¹⁰ The nature of this “rivalry” remains unclear. See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī”; Rizvi, “A Sufi Theology,” 89.

¹¹ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Fayz-e Kāshānī.” For a translation of Kāshānī’s *Āina-yi shāhī*, a book on political leadership fused with philosophical and Sufi teachings, see Chittick, “Two Seventeenth-Century Tracts on Kingship

Shāh ‘Abbās II at some point, despite the fact that he dedicated his important theological work, the *Gawhar-i murād*, to him.¹² Lāhījī would continue his activity as a theologian and poet in Qum, whereas Kāshānī would eventually leave Isfahan for Kashan after the Shāh’s death.

Unlike Kāshānī, Lāhījī is not only clearly more Avicennan than Ṣadrīan on a number of important philosophical issues, but also disagrees with his teacher on some of his principle ideas, like his innovative doctrine of substantial motion (*al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya*).¹³ Both Kāshānī and Lāhījī were concerned with Sufism, although Kāshānī appears to have been a much more ardent supporter of Ibn ‘Arabī than Lāhījī. Despite the fact that both Kāshānī and Lāhījī had a common teacher, neither of them helped usher in a commentarial tradition upon Ṣadrā’s writings, as was the case, for example, with the founders of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī.¹⁴

One of Kāshānī and Lāhījī’s students, Qāḍī Sa‘īd Qummī (d. 1107/1696), wrote at least two treatises critiquing Ṣadrā’s position on the univocal (*mushtarak ma‘nawī*) nature of the term “*wujūd*”—which itself forms the basis of Ṣadrā’s key doctrine of the fundamentality of being (*aṣālat al-wujūd*)—and substantial motion respectively.¹⁵ Qummī’s anti-Ṣadrīan stance is largely

and Rulers,” in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi‘ism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand, 269-83 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

¹² Rizvi, “A Sufi Theology,” 88-9. A study of this work can be found at *ibid.*, 90-5.

¹³ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī.”

¹⁴ For the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Chittick, “The School of Ibn ‘Arabī,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 1:510-23. For examples of commentaries upon Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* carried out by members of his school, see the annotations to Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, trans. Caner Dagli (Chicago: Kazi, 2004). See also Rustom, “Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī: Notes on His Life, Influence and Reflections on the Muḥammadan Reality,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 38 (2005): 51-64.

¹⁵ For Qummī, see Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 4:123-201; *idem*, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 245-91; Rizvi, “(Neo)Platonism Revived in the Light of the Imams: Qāḍī Sa‘īd Qummī (d. AH 1107/AD 1696) and His Reception of the *Theologia Aristotelis*,” in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. Peter Adamson, 176-207 (London: The Warburg Institute, 2007); Rizvi, “Time and Creation: The Contribution of Some Safavid

due to the fact that his major philosophical influence was Mullā Rajab ‘Alī Tabrīzī (d. 1080/1669-70), a first-rate philosopher and mystic who was directly opposed to Ṣadrā’s teachings.¹⁶ In his dense Arabic treatise, *al-Aṣl al-aṣīl* (also known as *al-Uṣūl al-āṣāfiyya*), Tabrīzī takes issue with Ṣadrā (and his followers) on their positions concerning the fundamentality of being, the related issue of mental existence, and substantial motion. In his Persian work, *Ithbāt-i wājib*, Tabrīzī argues for an equivocal conception of the term *wujūd* (*ishtirāk lafzī*), and draws on a number of important Sufis and philosophers, as well as the Shī‘ī Imams, to prove that the terms “*wujūd*” and “*mawjūd*” are not applicable to God.¹⁷ What is particularly interesting to note is that in neither the *Aṣl* nor the *Ithbāt* does Tabrīzī mention his opponents by name.¹⁸

One of the earliest “commentators” upon Ṣadrā’s works, and whose link to his thought remains somewhat ambiguous, was the famous “founder” of the Shaykhī school, Shaykh Aḥmad

Philosophies,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 62 (2006): 713-37 (particularly pp. 731-37). Lāhijī’s criticisms of Ṣadrā’s doctrine of substantial motion also cannot be counted out as having shaped Qummī’s philosophical perspective.

¹⁶ For Tabrīzī, see Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 83-96.

¹⁷ See *ibid.* for summaries of these two texts’ main arguments. Our annotated translations of the *Ithbāt* and *Aṣl* can be found in *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi, vol. 5 (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, forthcoming).

¹⁸ Consider the following statement, made in the context of Tabrīzī’s defence of the equivocal nature of the term *wujūd*: “Up to now, the opinion of the majority of people has been that nobody would adhere to this [position, i.e., that *wujūd* is an equivocal term], and if there were such a person, his name would not be recorded amongst the famous scholars because of the weakness—according to them—of this position. They have spoken vulgarities, since the foundations of religion and belief are based upon proofs, not upon following famous men!” (Tabrīzī, “On the Necessary Being,” forthcoming).

Aḥsā'ī (d. 1241/1826).¹⁹ Having already critiqued Fayḍ Kāshānī in his *Risālat al-ʿilmiyya*,²⁰ Aḥsā'ī went on to comment upon at least two of Ṣadrā's books: first the *Mashā'ir*, which is a veritable summation of his ontology, and then the *ʿArshiyya*, a late work primarily concerned with eschatology and psychology.²¹ In these commentaries and elsewhere, Aḥsā'ī is very critical of Ṣadrā on a number of key points, such as his position on the oneness and gradation of being. Reminiscent of Mullā Rajab's radical apophasis, Aḥsā'ī's critique of Ṣadrā's ontology is based on the position, as Corbin puts it, that "no creature has access to the *Wājib* (Necessary)."²² Yet

¹⁹ For Shaykh Aḥmad, see Juan Cole, "Casting Away the Self: The Mysticism of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī," in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, ed. Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende, 25-37 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 4:205-300; Idris Samawi Hamid, "The Metaphysics and Cosmology of Process According to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1998).

²⁰ For which, see Lawson, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Twelver Shī'ism: Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī on Fayḍ Kāshānī (the *Risālat al-ʿIlmiyya*)," in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. Robert Gleave, 127-54 (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).

²¹ Aḥsā'ī must have written his commentary on Ṣadrā's *Mashā'ir* first, since he mentions the work in his commentary on the *ʿArshiyya*. See Aḥsā'ī, *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya* (Kirman: Chāpkhāna-yi Sa'ādāt, 1361 Sh/1942), 1:9. For translations from Aḥsā'ī's commentary on the *ʿArshiyya*, see Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, 203 ff.

²² See Corbin's note in Ṣadrā, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, trans. Henry Corbin (Paris: Verdier, 1988, repr. ed.), 180. Cf. Aḥsā'ī, *Sharḥ al-ʿArshiyya*, 1:50 ff. Cf. Morris' explanation of Aḥsā'ī's hostility towards Ṣadrā in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, trans. James Morris (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 71 n. 81. For a more contemporary and unfavourable assessment of Ṣadrā's espousal of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see the entry on him in Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A'yān al-shī'a* (Beirut: Dār al-Ta'āruf li-l-Maṭbū'āt, 1983), 9:321-30 (especially pp. 326-8; pp. 328-9, which deal with Ṣadrā's statements on Ibn ʿArabī). Apart from his disagreement with Ṣadrā's position on *waḥdat al-wujūd* or "the oneness of being," the author takes particular issue with his condemnation of the *ʿulamā'* (see pp. 329-30). For favourable appraisals of Ṣadrā's treatment of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Muhammad Reza Juzi, "The Influence of Ibn ʿArabī's Doctrine of the Unity of Being on the Transcendental Theosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, 3:266-72; Nasr, "Mullā Ṣadrā and the Doctrine of the Unity of Being," *The Philosophical Forum* 4, no. 1 (1973): 153-61. See also Morris, "Introduction," in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 64-75. Cf. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 118-23. Extensive treatment of Ṣadrā's teachings on *wujūd*,

Aḥṣā'ī falls under Ṣadrā's influence as well, which is clearly evidenced in his eschatology, especially with respect to his understanding of the nature and function of imagination and imaginal bodies in the process of resurrection.²³ Partly because of his critical attitude towards Ṣadrā and partly because his own writings ushered in a new era of Shī'ī thought within its early modern Iranian context, Aḥṣā'ī was never considered to be a follower of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, nor did his commentaries help shape the mainline of interpretation within the Ṣadrian tradition, although they did provoke responses by some of Ṣadrā's followers.

We only notice a philosophical commentarial tradition (in the sense defined by Robert Wisnovsky)²⁴ some two centuries after Ṣadrā's death. Beginning in the thirteenth/nineteenth

although downplaying Ibn 'Arabī's influence in this regard, can be found in Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités*, 13-156.

²³ For which, see Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, 180-221. Cf. Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination."

²⁴ Wisnovsky challenges the widely held dogma that the philosophical commentaries in post-Avicennan Islamic theology represent a "stagnation" of philosophical thinking in Islam. He argues that such a view is symptomatic of an ill-informed dichotomy between "philosophy" and "theology" in later Islamic thought. The exegetical nature of later Islamic theological texts itself represents further developments in philosophical and theological thinking. Thus, theological and philosophical commentaries in post-Avicennan Islamic thought actually function as philosophical texts in their own right. See Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (CA. 1100-1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen, and M. W. F. Stone, 2:149-91 (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2004). For the "stagnation" argument, see, in particular, Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: An Extended Survey*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), ch. 17. For two pieces which complement Wisnovsky's essay (treating as they do the development of post-Avicennan Shī'ī philosophical theology), see Ahmed al-Rahim, "The Twelver-Šī'ī Reception of Avicenna in the Mongol Period," in *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, ed. David Reisman with the assistance of Ahmed al-Rahim, 219 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Rizvi, "The Developed Kalām Tradition (Part II: Later Shī'ī Theology)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, 93-4. To be sure, this phenomenon is not unique to the development of Islamic thought. As Pierre Hadot argues, from early antiquity to the end of the "middle ages," exegesis and philosophy came part and parcel

century, and undoubtedly due to the newly emerging religio-political climate in Qajar Iran,²⁵ we find a resuscitation of the school of Isfahan in the figures of Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830)²⁶ (himself once a student of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā’ī) and Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī (d. 1289/1873).²⁷ Both of these figures were major commentators upon Ṣadrā’s principal philosophical works, and their own writings would go on to serve as important philosophical and gnostic texts within the

with the development of philosophy proper. See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 71-7. As Niketas Siniossoglou argues, in late antiquity, it was the act of exegesis (or, as he would have it, the “(mis)appropriation”) of Plato’s eschatology and cosmology that allowed for Platonism to be integrated into a Christian philosophical framework. This tendency spurred serious Neoplatonic counter-responses, thus allowing philosophy to further develop along “exegetical” lines. See Siniossoglou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁵ Rizvi, “Being (*Wujūd*) and Sanctity (*Wilāya*): Two Poles of Intellectual and Mystical Enquiry in Qajar Iran,” in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, 115, sees a link between the social and religious threat of millenarianism in thirteenth/nineteenth century Iran and the resurgence of Ṣadrian metaphysics (which received government support for the establishment of *madrasas*). See also Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present*, 237.

²⁶ For Nūrī, see idem, “The Metaphysics of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran,” in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Change, 1800-1925*, ed. Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand, 190 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983) (reprinted in Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy*, ch. 6).

²⁷ For Sabziwārī, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971), part four (this section of the book was originally printed as a separate monograph: idem, *The Fundamental Structure of Sabzawari’s Metaphysics* [Tehran: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, 1968], which itself was reprinted along with the metaphysics section of Sabziwārī’s famous *Ghurur al-farā’id/Sharḥ-i Manzūma* in Sabziwārī, *Sharḥ-i Manzūma*, ed. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu [Tehran: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, 1969]); Nasr, “Renaissance in Iran: Ḥājjī Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī,” in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 2:1543-56 (reprinted in idem, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, ch. 23). For a translation of the metaphysics section of Sabziwārī’s *Sharḥ*, see Sabziwārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzawārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (Delmar: Caravan, 1977).

Şadrian tradition.²⁸ Both Nūrī and Sabziwārī had a lasting influence on the following generation of scholars who would come to form the “school of Tehran.”²⁹ The school of Tehran flourished under such *ḥakīms* as Mullā ‘Alī Zunūzī (d. 1307/1889), Mullā Riḍā’ Qumshā’ī (d. 1306/1889), and Mīrzā Abū l-Ḥasan Jilwa (d. 1314/1896), who was also a critic of Şadrā, and who seems to have taken after Mullā Rajab.³⁰ These and other philosophers following in their wake into the fourteenth/twentieth century ensured Şadrian metaphysics a permanent home on Iranian soil.

Despite the fact (or perhaps because of the fact) that the commentarial tradition upon Şadrā’s writings came about relatively late, no attempts were made to catalogue his oeuvre, much less his writings on the Qur’ān and its sciences. But there are some noteworthy exceptions to the general lack of interest in Şadrā’s work on the Qur’ān. In an anonymous Persian commentary on the Fātiḥa written some time after Fayḍ Kāshānī’s death, passing references are made to some of Şadrā’s Qur’anic works.³¹ It is also well-known that Sabziwārī wrote a

²⁸ That is, what is conventionally referred to as “*ḥikmat*” in its later Shī’ī milieu. One fine example of a work within the *ḥikmat* tradition is Sabziwārī’s commentary upon Rūmī’s famous *Mathnawī*. For this work, see John Cooper, “Rūmī and *Ḥikmat*: Towards a Reading of Sabziwārī’s Commentary on the *Mathnawī*,” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, 1:409-33.

²⁹ See Corbin, with Nasr and Osman Yahia, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986, repr. ed.), 476-81; Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present*, 236-7. Nasr argues that while the school of Tehran represents philosophical continuity with the school of Isfahan, it also represents a discontinuity with the latter on account of the fact that the school of Tehran belongs to a new phase of the Islamic philosophical tradition, namely its first encounter with Western thought.

³⁰ Summaries of the teachings and influence of these and other related figures can be found in idem, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present*, 237-47; idem, “The Metaphysics of Şadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran,” 190-2; Rizvi, ““Being (*Wujūd*) and Sanctity (*Wilāya*),” 116-22. For the activity of the school of Tehran from the fourteenth/twentieth century onwards, see Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present*, 247-56.

³¹ For an edition of this work, see Āshtiyānī (ed.), *Tafsīr Fātiḥat al-kitāb* (Mashhad: Chāpkhāna-yi Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1357 Sh/1978).

commentary on Ṣadrā's *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (see section 2.5.2 below) which was, in turn, translated into Persian in the late Qajar period by the courtier Ḥusām al-Dīn Shīrāzī.³² But it is really Mullā 'Alī Nūrī's writings which are most noteworthy in this regard, as he is the author of a series of glosses (*ta'līqāt*) upon a number of Ṣadrā's books on the Qur'ān. These glosses are particularly helpful for shedding light on difficult phrases and concepts which appear in these texts. However, Nūrī does not attempt to explain the logic behind Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings as a whole, nor do his glosses assist one in determining the scope and contents of Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān and its sciences.

1.1.2 – *Biographical and Historical Sources*

Biographical and historical materials written during the Safavid, Zand, Qajar, and Pahlavi periods also reveal very little information concerning the scope and content of Ṣadrā's writings in general.³³ One biography contemporaneous with Ṣadrā is Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī's (d. 1019/1606)

³² See Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography," 37; Rizvi, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī*, 78 (I have followed Rizvi in identifying Shīrāzī as a courtier). We cannot rule out the possibility that the manuscript discovered by Mohaghegh in the Kitābkhāna-yi Millī, which contains a Persian translation of the introduction and parts of Ṣadrā's *Mafātīḥ*, is by this same figure. See Mohaghegh, "*Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*-i Mullā Ṣadrā," 137 for Mohaghegh's comments on the anonymous nature of the manuscript, and pp. 138-50 for the text of the Persian translation of the *Mafātīḥ*'s introduction and opening chapter.

³³ For a useful discussion of biographical, bibliographical, historiographical, anthological, and travel sources pertaining to the Safavid era, see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 154-76. See also Īraj Afshār, "*Maktūb* and *Majmū'a*: Essential Sources for Ṣafavid Research," in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew Newman, 51-61 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Mansur Sefatgol, "*Majmū'ah 'hā* (sic): Important and Unknown Sources of (sic) Historiography of Iran During the Last Safavids (sic)—The Case of *Majmū'ah-i Mīrzā Mu'īna*," in *Persian Documents: Social History of Iran and Turan in the Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Kondo Nobuaki, 73-83 (London: Routledge, 2003). A helpful survey of the purpose and function of biographical literature in Islamic civilization can be found in Wadad al-Qadi, "Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance," in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. George Atiyeh, 93-122 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). Al-Qadi's more

Majālis al-mu'minīn.³⁴ Since this work is likely to have been written before Ṣadrā rose to prominence, it does not include an entry on him. To be sure, we would have to wait nearly a century for Ṣadrā's name to appear in *ṭabaqāt* literature, the first instance of which appears to be Ibn Ma'sūm Shīrāzī's (d. 1118/1707) *Sulāfat al-ʿaṣr*.³⁵ Ibn Ma'sūm's entry in the *Sulāfat* is significant, not because of what it says about Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works (neither of Ibn Ma'sūm's books mention Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān), but because it would become one of the standard sources for contemporaneous and later biographical writings. This is clearly evidenced in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī's (d. 1104/1692) famous *Amal al-āmil*, which, citing

recent study examines the manner in which Islamic biographical literature functions as history-making from the perspective of the *ʿulamā'*: "Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community," in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. Gerhard Endress, 23-76 (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For the construction of religious authority in early Shī'ī biographical literature, see Liyakat Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shī'ite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006). In dating the biographers and historical writers of these three periods, I follow the dates provided by Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 40-60; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 154-76. For the evolution of Safavid historical writing in the context of the Safavids' attempts at negotiating their legitimacy, see Sholeh Quinn, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah ʿAbbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000), particularly chs. 3-5.

³⁴ Sayyid Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-mu'minīn* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Islāmī, 1956). Nasrollah Pourjavady groups Shūshtarī amongst those *ʿulamā'* who were favourable towards theoretical Sufism, but opposed to the Sufi orders. See Pourjavady, "Opposition to Sufism in Twelver Shiism," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke, 620-1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999). For an overview of the relationship between Sufism and Shī'ism in Safavid Iran, see Cooper, "Some Observations on the Religious Intellectual Milieu of Safavid Persia," in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, ed. Farhad Daftary, 146-59 (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2000).

³⁵ Sayyid ʿAlī Khān b. Aḥmad Shīrāzī Ibn Ma'sūm, *Sulāfat al-ʿaṣr fī maḥāsīn al-shu'arā' bi-kull miṣr* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wafd, 1906), 499.

his source, reproduces Ibn Ma‘šūm’s entry *in toto*,³⁶ as does the other Safavid biographer, Mīrzā ‘Abd Allāh Afandī (d. 1130/1717) in his *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’*.³⁷ What also makes Ibn Ma‘šūm’s entry in his *Sulāfat* important is that it only mentions Ṣadrā’s *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfi*.³⁸ Between ‘Āmilī and Afandī’s sole mention of this commentary in their verbatim entries from Ibn Ma‘šūm, the earliest Safavid biographical sources—whether conscientiously or not—tended to recycle the image of Ṣadrā as a famous philosopher who was in some sense concerned with “scripture,” but only in terms of *ḥadīth* and not necessarily Qur’anic exegesis.

The Akhbārī scholar Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Baḥrānī’s (d. 1186/1772) *Lu’lu’at al-Baḥrayn* does not have a separate entry on Ṣadrā.³⁹ Rather, he mentions him in passing in an entry on Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, which is not surprising, given the aforementioned influence of Akhbārism upon Kāshānī’s thought. Interestingly, Baḥrānī’s brief mention of Ṣadrā is quickly followed up with a longer note on Ṣadrā’s son, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī (d. 1070/1659). As would be expected of an Akhbārī, Baḥrānī is quick to note that this son of Ṣadrā’s was opposed to his father’s

³⁶ Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Andalus, 1965), 2:233 (# 796). For ‘Āmilī, see Rula Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 130-3.

³⁷ Mīrzā ‘Abd Allāh Afandī, *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’ wa-ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā’*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maṭba‘at al-Khayyām, 1981), 5:15. Afandī also lists amongst Ṣadrā’s writings the *Asfār*, his glosses on Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī’s *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, and the *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*. Afandī’s other work, the well-known *Takmilat Amal al-āmil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh Mar‘ashī, 1989), contains no glosses on the Ṣadrā entry.

³⁸ Ibn Ma‘šūm, *Sulāfat al-‘aṣr*, 499.

³⁹ I did not have access to this text, although this particular entry is reproduced in Ma‘šūm ‘Alī Shāh’s *Ṭarā’iq al-ḥaqā’iq*, ed. Muḥammad Ja‘far Maḥjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanā‘ī, 1960), 1:181-2. For the entry on Ṣadrā in the *Ṭarā’iq*, see p. 44. For the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī conflict in Baḥrānī’s *Lu’lu’* and another biographical text, see Gleave, “The Akhbārī-Uṣūlī Dispute in *ṭabaqāt* Literature: An Analysis of the Biographies of Yusuf al-Baḥrānī and Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbihānī,” *Jusur* 10 (1994): 79-109. I have not seen this study.

mystical and philosophical teachings.⁴⁰ Significant for our purposes here is Baḥrānī's attribution of a Qur'anic work to Ṣadrā's son which would traditionally come to be associated with Ṣadrā himself, namely the so-called *Tafsīr al-ʿUrwat al-wuthqā*.⁴¹

Just as there is no entry on Ṣadrā in ʿAbd al-Nabī Qazwīnī's (fl. 12th/18th century) *Tatmīm* (which is a supplement to ʿĀmilī's *Amal al-āmil* similar to Afandī's *Takmila*), so too is there no entry in Muḥammad Tunkābunī's (d. 1302/1884-5) *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*.⁴² Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī's (d. 1313/1895) Persian biographical work, the *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, contains the largest listing of Ṣadrā's writings thus far considered.⁴³ It relies upon the *Amal al-āmil* and the *Mutammim al-amal* (another supplement to the *Amal*) by a certain Sayyid Ibrāhīm Qazwīnī. We learn from Khwānsārī that Qazwīnī's *Mutammim* lists a number of Ṣadrā's books, the ones

⁴⁰ Incidentally, Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, 2:202, points out this fact in the entry on Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī. Given the *Aʿyān*'s general attitude towards Ṣadrā, its inclusion here may have a polemical function. Cf. al-Amīn's entry on Ṣadrā in the *Aʿyān* with Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq*, 1:182, which seeks to exonerate certain of Ṣadrā's statements (not specified here) of any charges of *takfīr* by the ʿulamāʾ. In connection to this, Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh says the following: "Because of these words, he has met with the bad opinion of a group of jurists. Indeed, they issued a *fatwā* condemning him of *kufr*. For example, one of them said, with respect to [his] *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī*, 'The first person to comment upon it with statements of *kufr* was Ṣadrā' [*ba-wāsiṭa-yi īn kalimāt sūʿ-i ḡann barāyi jamʿī az fuqahāʾ ba-ham rasīda bal-ki fatwā ba-kufrash dādand chunānchi baʿdī dar ḥaqq-i sharḥ-i uṣūl-i kāfī gufta awwal man sharaḥahu bi-l-kufr Ṣadrā*]."

⁴¹ ʿAbd al-Nabī Qazwīnī, *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh Marʿashī, 1987), 51 seems to attribute this work to Ṣadrā's son as well, but refers to it as *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*. Al-Amīn, *Aʿyān*, 2:202, follows Baḥrānī in titling the work. There is a very good reason for why the *Tafsīr al-ʿUrwat al-wuthqā* is sometimes referred to as the *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*. See pp. 61-2.

⁴² See Muḥammad Tunkābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ* (Tehran, lithograph, 1888), 124. See also, Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 159-60. For a study of this text, see Gleave, "Biography and Hagiography in Tunukabuni's *Qisas al-Ulama*," in *Mediaeval and Modern Persian Studies (Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies held in Cambridge, 11th-15th September 1995)*, ed. Charles Melville, 237-55 (Wiesbaden: Reichart, 1999).

⁴³ Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-sādāt* (Tehran: Kitābforūshī-yi Islāmī, 1976-81), 4:240-1.

pertaining to the Qurʾān being the *Asrār al-āyāt* and the *tafsīrs* on *Āyat al-nūr* and *sūras* Jumuʿa, Ṭāriq, Wāqīʿa, and Yāsīn.⁴⁴ Khwānsārī also makes mention of Ṣadrā’s *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfi*⁴⁵ and adds to the list of his Qurʾanic compositions with a passing reference to the *Mafātīḥ* and *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*.⁴⁶ He also seems to be the first biographer to discuss Ṣadrā’s *tafsīrs* as a single corpus: “A sizeable volume of his grand Qurʾān commentary [*mujallad-i dakhīmī az tafsīr-i kabīr-i ū*], which he wrote employing Illuminationist language [*ba-zabān-i ishrāq*], is with us.”⁴⁷ One other source worthy of mention is the Niʿmat Allāhī Sufī Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh’s (d. 1344/1926) *Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*, despite the fact that the historical accuracy of its reports has been called into question.⁴⁸ The author makes good use of the major sections of the entries on Ṣadrā to be found in Baḥrānī’s *Luʿluʿ*, Qazwīnī’s *Mutammim*, and Khwānsārī’s *Rawḍāt*. Thus, it provides a convenient listing of Ṣadrā’s writings on the Qurʾān, but does not speak of his “grand Qurʾān commentary” in the manner of Khwānsārī.⁴⁹

By the beginning of the fourteenth/twentieth century, therefore, Ṣadrā’s writings on the Qurʾān were known through two mediums. Thanks to Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī’s glosses on many of his Qurʾanic works, followers of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā would presumably have had a fairly good

⁴⁴ Ibid., 4:240.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4:240-1.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4:241.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 160.

⁴⁹ For Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh’s discussion of Ṣadrā’s work on the Qurʾān, see *Ṭarāʾiq*, 1:181-2. I have been referring to Qazwīnī’s glosses on the *Amal* as the *Mutammim al-amal*. Khwānsārī does not give this book a title, but at *Rawḍāt*, 2:240, simply refers to it as a set of glosses on the *Amal* (*ḥāshiyā-yi Amal al-āmil*). Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh refers to it by its proper name at *Ṭarāʾiq*, 182. It is interesting to note that although Khwānsārī and Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh both rely upon the *Mutammim*, Khwānsārī, unlike Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, fails to mention that Qazwīnī lists the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-qadr* as one of Ṣadrā’s works (Qazwīnī seems to be the first to do so). In all likelihood, Ṣadrā did not author such a work. For more on this title, see p. 69.

idea of the nature and contents of these writings, even if they did not attempt to catalogue them. And, thanks to the more popular *ṭabaqāt* literature, there was some vague notion that he was a scriptural exegete.

1.2 – Modern Annotations on Ṣadrā’s Qur’anic Works

It was not until the fourteenth/twentieth century, largely in the wake of the Ṣadrian revival discussed in the introduction to this study, that annotated lists of Mullā Ṣadrā’s writings began to appear. Because of this renewal of interest in Ṣadrā’s teachings, we have several useful bibliographies of his works in general, be they lists or annotated bibliographies. What we have by way of annotations on Ṣadrā writings on the Qur’ān form a part of the existing annotated bibliographical literature on his writings. We can, therefore, classify these entries on Ṣadrā’s Qur’anic compositions into three broad categories: (1) brief entries on most of his Qur’anic works which attempt to date their order of composition⁵⁰; (2) brief entries on most of his Qur’anic works (usually treating his *tafsīrs* in a single entry) which do not include attempts at dating their order of composition⁵¹; and (3) individual entries on all of his Qur’anic works which contain descriptive and/or structural details for each work.⁵²

⁵⁰ The following works fall under this category: Bīdārfar, “Taqdīm,” 1:92, 94, 102-3, 105, 108-11; Ešots, “The Qur’anic Hermeneutics of Mullā Ṣadrā”; Christian Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 20; Muhammad Khamenei, *Hikmat-i muta’āliya wa-Mullā Ṣadrā* (Tehran: SIPRI, 2004), 32. Although they do not attempt to date them, Jambet and Khamenei list what they deem to be the order in which Ṣadrā composed his *tafsīrs*. On p. 34, however, Khamenei goes on to give dates for two of Ṣadrā’s Qur’anic compositions. Yet in his article, “Zindagī, shakhsīyyat, wa-maktab-i Ṣadr al-Muta’allihīn,” *Khīrad-Nāma* 32 (1382 Sh/2003) 29, Khamenei does attempt to date Ṣadrā’s *tafsīrs* in the context of a general dating of other compositions within his oeuvre.

⁵¹ The following representative works fall under this category: Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl wa-arā’-yi falsafī-yi Mullā Ṣadrā* (Mashhad: Chāpkhāna-yi Khurāsān, 1962), 211-2, 222-3; Corbin, “Introduction,” in Ṣadrā, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 35-6; 39-40; Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhū, “Fihrist-i Nigārish-hā-yi Ṣadrā-yi

The titles belonging to categories one and two do not have much to offer by way of annotations on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings. By contrast, the titles in the third category do. Therefore, when referring to "annotations" on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings, we have in mind books which belong to the third category, to which we will now turn.

1.2.1 – Category # 3

We find a number of entries on Ṣadrā's works devoted to the Qur'ān in Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī's (d. 1391/1970) monumental *Dharī'a*.⁵³ These entries can be categorized as follows: (1) "basic *tafsīr* entries," that is, individual entries which simply list the *tafsīrs* attributed to Ṣadrā⁵⁴; (2) "isolated *tafsīr* entries" which treat each *tafsīr* work individually⁵⁵; and (3) "isolated non-*tafsīr* entries" which treat Ṣadrā's other writings on the Qur'ān individually.⁵⁶

Like the other entries in the *Dharī'a*, Āqā Buzurg's remarks on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings rarely go beyond basic descriptions. Of the twenty respective entries, eleven are straight-forward,

Shīrāzī," in *Mullā Ṣadrā Commemorative Volume*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 108-9, 113, 117 (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1961); 'Alī al-Ḥājj Ḥasan, *al-Ḥikma al-muta'āliya 'inda Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn al-Shīrāzī* (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī, 2005), 31-3 (for some reason, the author fails to include the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* amongst Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works, but is aware of its existence, as is evidenced on p. 42); Muḥammad Taqī Karāmatī, *Ta'thīr-i mabānī-yi falsafī dar tafsīr-i Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn*, 46-7; Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar, "Muqaddima," in Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār al-arba'a al-aqliyya*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar et al. (Tehran, 1983), ṣād, shīn-tā'; Talgharizadeh, "Einleitung," 10. The discussion of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works in Āshtiyānī, "Muqaddima-yi muṣahḥih," 55-7, 71-73, also falls under this category, although the editor's introduction to Ṣadrā's *Mutashābihāt al-qur'ān* (pp. 77-179, which precedes the edition of the work itself, to be found on pp. 257-284) is one of the most thorough studies of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān available.

⁵² Entries in this category may include attempts at dating some or all of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works.

⁵³ For this work, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "*al-Darī'a elā taṣānīf al-šī'a*" (by Etan Kohlberg).

⁵⁴ See Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-shī'a* (Najaf, 1939-87), 4:278-9 (# 1283), 20:76 (# 1992).

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 4:331 (# 1409); 334 (#1428); 336-8 (#s 1445, 1447, 1452, 1457, 1461, 1466-7); 340 (# 1482); 343-4 (#s 1503, 1512); 15:252 (# 1625).

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 2:39 (# 150), 16:400 (# 1883), 19:62 (# 328), 21:305 (# 5198), 337 (# 5361).

in that each work's contents and structural descriptions are omitted, although its opening lines may be given.⁵⁷ Of the remaining nine entries, seven of them provide the respective work's content and/or structural descriptions, and two provide both. Yet Āqā Buzurg's entries on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings are helpful for two reasons. Firstly, they represent the earliest attempt at describing these works in modern scholarship. Secondly, and more important for our purposes here, they provide us with a fairly reliable list of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān which can, for the most part, safely be attributed to him.⁵⁸

After Henry Corbin's brief remarks on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings,⁵⁹ Muḥammad Khwājawī attempted to describe his Qur'anic works as a whole in his *Lawāmi' al-ʿarīfīn*.⁶⁰ Khwājawī's annotations form part of a larger annotated list of the Ṣadrian oeuvre, and thus remain somewhat brief. When his entries on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic compositions do go beyond basic structural entries, they essentially amount to "bare bones" sketches of the respective title's contents. Thus, they remain effective summaries of what some of the books contain, but they have next to nothing to say about such things as Ṣadrā's exegetical method, the development of doctrinal issues amongst his different Qur'anic works, and his sources.

⁵⁷ Like other Arabic and Persian mss./book catalogues, twelve of the *Dharīʿa*'s twenty entries on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings give us the opening lines of the work in question—a feature which is indeed helpful for those engaged in archival research, but which does not reveal a great deal of information concerning the respective work's structure and content.

⁵⁸ For exceptional cases, see pp. 69-72.

⁵⁹ See Corbin, "Introduction," 35-6; 39-40.

⁶⁰ See Khwājawī, *Lawāmi'*, 107-27.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's essay on Ṣadrā's Qur'ān commentaries includes concise annotations on each of his *tafsīrs*.⁶¹ Elsewhere in the same book, Nasr summarizes three of his compositions on the Qur'anic sciences.⁶² Taken together, these summaries form the first set of annotations on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings in a European language.

One of the ambitious projects of the Tehran-based Ṣadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute (SIPRI) was to produce a manuscript catalogue of Ṣadrā's extant writings. With the publication of the *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmi'i Mullā Ṣadrā*, SIPRI's goal was realized.⁶³ This research tool describes each item in Ṣadrā's oeuvre, gives both their opening and closing lines, and then goes on to list where manuscripts of these titles are to be found in Iran's major libraries. Sajjad Rizvi notes that this book is not as exhaustive as it claims to be.⁶⁴ This appears to be the case, especially with respect to its entries on Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings. Taken as a whole, the annotations on these works are more adequate than most others.

Although Latimah Peerwani's descriptions⁶⁵ of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings closely follow Nasr, Kalin⁶⁶ and Rizvi's⁶⁷ annotations are the most useful. Both Kalin and Rizvi's descriptions form part of their larger, annotated bibliographies of books by Ṣadrā. Concerning Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works, Kalin and Rizvi usually provide each title's structural details and discuss its

⁶¹ See p. 7 for an appraisal of this essay in the context of our discussion of scholarship on Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān.

⁶² Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy*, 40, 43, 45.

⁶³ Nahīd Bāqirī Khurramdashī (with the assistance of Fāṭima Aṣgharī), *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmi'i Mullā Ṣadrā* (Tehran: SIPRI, 1999).

⁶⁴ Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 51 n. 186.

⁶⁵ Latimah Peerwani, "Translator's Introduction," in Ṣadrā, *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur'ān*, 11-2.

⁶⁶ Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography," 35-41.

⁶⁷ Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 77-87.

philosophical and mystical content. Building on Kalin's bibliography of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'an, Rizvi also provides extensive manuscript details for these books, dates many of them, lists and/or discusses their editions and (where applicable) translations, takes into consideration a number of titles whose ascription to Ṣadrā is questionable, and addresses some of the hermeneutical issues which are raised by Ṣadrā in his function as an exegete.

1.3 – Commentaries on Individual *Sūras*

1.3.1 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*⁶⁸

This book is Ṣadrā's last complete commentary upon a Qur'anic *sūra*. Appended to the Khwājawī edition of this *tafsīr* are Mullā 'Alī Nūrī's glosses.⁶⁹ In both its philosophical and mystical content, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is one of the most profound of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'an, as he brings to bear in his function as an exegete of this *sūra* the entire range of his learning, synthetic abilities, and original insights. See chapters three to five of the present study for a detailed discussion and analysis of this commentary's chronological placement, structure, sources, exegetical method, and theoretical content.

1.3.2 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*⁷⁰

This *tafsīr* work is likely Ṣadrā's last commentary proper.⁷¹ Although the commentary is incomplete (it stops at the end of the *sūra*'s sixty-fifth *āya*), it is Ṣadrā's longest work dedicated

⁶⁸ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:1-183/*Majmū'at al-tafsīr*, ed. Aḥmad Shīrāzī (Tehran, lithograph, 1322 AH/1904), 2-41. The first time I mention one of Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs*, where applicable, I provide the page numbers to both the printed and lithographed editions. But subsequent references to the *tafsīr* work in question are to the printed edition only.

⁶⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:451-96.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:187 to the end of vol. 3/*Majmū'at*, 41-289. Selections are translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 209-18.

to the Qurʾān, comprising over 1100 pages. Like the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, this commentary is also appended with Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī's glosses.⁷²

More than any of his other *tafsīrs*, Ṣadrā is, in a sense, the most “polemical” in this commentary: in a manner not unfamiliar to his method in several sections of the *Asfār*, he dedicates a good deal of time to refuting a number of the theological positions held by the Ashʿarites and Muʿtazilites, particularly with respect to the question of the temporal origination of God's Speech (*kalām*) and its mode of existence.⁷³

Ṣadrā's concern with theology is evident in this *tafsīr* in the detailed section devoted to *īmān* or “faith,” which forms part of his commentary on Q 2:4. After explaining the inadequacy of several of the definitions of *īmān*, he divides its contents into fairly standard and broad categories: sayings (*aqwāl*), states (*aḥwāl*), and actions (*aʿmāl*). What is interesting in his discussion here is how he relates these three categories to what he calls “the levels and ranks of faith” (*darājāt al-īmān wa-marātibuhu*). Although his general discussion of faith can be traced back to the standard texts on theology with which he was familiar,⁷⁴ Ṣadrā seems to have a unique understanding of what constitutes *īmān* as such. Here, he makes it clear that everyone is a person of faith (*muʾmin*).⁷⁵ What distinguishes them is the level of their understanding (*fiqh*). It is

⁷¹ At *Tafsīr*, 1:349, Ṣadrā explicitly makes mention of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, which, as the present study will demonstrate, is his last complete commentary on a Qurʾanic *sūra*.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1:496-513; 2:377-413; 3:475-528.

⁷³ As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, Ṣadrā's concern with this question is related to his understanding of “the modality of revelation” (*kayfiyyat inzāl al-waḥy*), and thus to his scriptural hermeneutics.

⁷⁴ For an annotated listing of Ṣadrā's remarkable library, see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 117-35.

⁷⁵ In rendering *īmān*, I follow Chittick's nuanced discussion of the term in his *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 1-23. See also Izutsu, *The*

to the degree of one's understanding of his faith that he will be characterized as more or less faithful.

Important for Ṣadrā's understanding of the Qur'an is the section devoted to its inimitability (*ijāz al-qur'ān*), which he is prompted to discuss based on the challenge made in Q 2:23 to produce "a *sūra* like it" (*sūra min mithlihi*). Also, there is one particular section in this commentary in which Ṣadrā discusses the "detached letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-muqatta'a*) of the Qur'an. The treatment of the topic is not as important here as it is in one of his other writings.⁷⁶

1.3.3 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*⁷⁷

In the introduction to this commentary, Ṣadrā lists eight *tafsīrs* which he had previously written. Based on Rizvi's recently published archival research and Muḥsin Bīdārfar's observations, we can specifically date four of them.⁷⁸ These dates, along with some internal evidence in one of Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs* (see the entry on the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-zilzāl* below), allows us to safely conclude that the earliest this *tafsīr* could have been written is 1037/1628. The latest it could have been written is 1042/1632, when Ṣadrā wrote his *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (see section 2.5.2 below).

The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda* is 135 pages long. It offers a commentary on each of the *sūra*'s verses, and contains an introduction and conclusion, but lacks chapter divisions. More than anything else, it is structured as a running commentary on Q 32. Although there are subheadings throughout the work, as is the case with a number of Ṣadrā's other *tafsīrs*, they do not seem to

Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Islām (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1965), chs. 4-6 in particular.

⁷⁶ See pp. 104-6.

⁷⁷ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:1-135/*Majmū'at*, 375-457. Selections translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 232-44.

⁷⁸ Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," 1:110-11; Rizvī, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 77-87. For Ṣadrā's list, see *Tafsīr*, 6:6.

play a significant role or have any discernable linguistic/stylistic unity. Rather, they appear to simply divide Ṣadrā's arguments as he proceeds with his points.

Although Ṣadrā is concerned with questions of eschatology in this work, his meditations on the nature of the Qur'ān and its mysterious letters are amongst its unique features. Several verses prompt him to elaborate on his cosmology, especially as it relates to the temporal incipience (*ḥudūth*) of the world and God's attributes—which leads to some interesting discussions on psychology, such as the nature of the heart and its relation to the divine Throne, the levels of the “Folk of God” (*darājāt ahl allāh*), and the function of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

1.3.4 – *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*⁷⁹

This commentary was written in 1030/1621. It is essential for dating Ṣadrā's other writings and for its incorporation of earlier materials, both by himself and, surprisingly, Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. 610/1213-4).⁸⁰ Over 450 pages in length and accompanied by Mullā 'Alī Nūrī's glosses,⁸¹ there are no real divisions in this work, although it does have a number of generic subheadings. By virtue of the eschatological content of the *sūra* in general, the most significant aspect of this *tafsīr* is its treatment of bodily resurrection and the states of the afterlife. Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn* is, in fact, more concerned with issues of eschatology than any of his other books on the Qur'ān. He presents here his fully mature views on the modality of the afterlife with particular reference to the becoming of the soul and the forms it will experience in its

⁷⁹ Ibid., 5:10-480/*Majmū'at*, 457-93.

⁸⁰ See the entry on the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a* below. For an introduction to Kāshānī's life and thought, as well as a translation of more than half of his published works, see Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Writings of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁸¹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 5:482-514.

posthumous states. Ṣadrā's psychology and eschatology as detailed here parallel some of his discussions in his *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād* and his treatment of the states of the afterlife in the *Asfār*.

One of this *tafsīr*'s unique features is its heavy reliance upon the work of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers. Although this is clearly the case in Ṣadrā's other works, this particular book demonstrates the effectiveness of the formulations of the school of Ibn 'Arabī in discussing some of the most vexing and age-old philosophical problems. In particular, Ṣadrā attempts to address the belief, discussed by Avicenna and defended by Suhrawardī, concerning the attachment of souls to celestial bodies in the afterlife in order to undergo physical punishment for sins committed on earth.⁸² As mentioned in the introduction, although Taheri's study of resurrection in Ṣadrā's Qur'anic commentaries notes the presence of this discussion in the *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*, he does not explain Ṣadrā's solution. A close reading of Ṣadrā's response to his predecessors reveals that, through the lens of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers, he offers a remarkable solution which is entirely consistent with his philosophical perspective.⁸³ Indeed, Ṣadrā's position here sheds a great deal of light on his understanding of the creative aspect of imagination in the next life.

1.3.5 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḥadīd*⁸⁴

This book was written between 1022/1613 and the composition of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. Mullā 'Alī Nūrī's glosses are also appended to the work.⁸⁵ This *tafsīr* is over 280 pages

⁸² Winter rightly notes that this is a Neoplatonic conception. See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghāzālī, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, trans. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989), 122 n. A.

⁸³ The discussion is prompted by the famous *ḥadīth* of awakening. See Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination."

⁸⁴ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:140-327/*Majmū'at*, 518-65.

long, and contains an introduction and a conclusion. Like the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*, it does not consist of chapters as such. Unlike the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*, however, it makes consistent use of subheadings throughout the work, each of which is entitled *mukāshafa* (“unveiling”).

This commentary contains a fine example of how Ṣadrā’s transcendent philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-muta’āliya*) relates to the Qur’anic message. His doctrine of substantial motion is briefly discussed here, and is linked to his treatment of the increased levels of perception human beings experience in this world and in the next. Consequently, a good deal of this commentary is devoted to matters of psychology and eschatology.

Significantly, Ṣadrā draws on several well-known Qur’anic symbols, such as the “preserved tablet” (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*) and the “inscribed book” (*al-kitāb al-maṣṭūr*), to discuss how the soul’s descent into the world, its subsequent development and return to God, and God’s foreordainment of its destiny tie into one another. Here, again, we clearly notice the influence of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī upon Ṣadrā’s formulations, especially with respect to his identification of the heart as the locus of the name Allāh, and his understanding of the function of the divine names in the *telos* of the cosmos.

1.3.6 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-wāqī’a*⁸⁶

The date of this work’s composition is not known, but we can certainly place it between 1022/1621 and some time before Ṣadrā penned his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*.⁸⁷ This *tafsīr* is over 120 pages in length and comes with an introduction, subheadings (but no chapter headings), and a

⁸⁵ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 6:331-89.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 7:8-134/*Majmū’at*, 495-518. Selections translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 245-63.

⁸⁷ At *Tafsīr* 7:93, Ṣadrā alludes to his *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*, which was written in 1022/1621 (see pp. 52-3 and pp. 55-6). The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda* is also one of the eight *tafsīrs* listed by Ṣadrā in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*.

conclusion. It is a straight-forward running commentary on the *sūra*'s principal themes: the final day and the afterlife.

Ṣadrā makes it clear in his introduction that one cannot understand these eschatological realities without “direct mystical experience” (lit. “tasting” (*dhawq*)) and “consciousness” (*wijdān*).⁸⁸ Consequently, this commentary contains fairly detailed discussions concerning the states of the grave, the resurrection, and the ranks of souls in the afterlife. As in a number of his other books, Ṣadrā states that the forms of knowledge souls will have in the next life will be commensurate with their levels of knowledge in this life. In his treatment of the function of imagination and its relation to the levels of *wujūd*, Ṣadrā bases himself on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ*.⁸⁹ Perhaps the most interesting features of this commentary are Ṣadrā’s interpretations of the many eschatological symbols mentioned in the *sūra*. In this sense, this work resembles sections of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḥadīd* and the later parts of the *Asrār al-āyāt* and *‘Arshīyya*.

1.3.7 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jum‘a*⁹⁰

The exact date of this work’s composition is not certain. Bīdārfar considers it to have been written between 1041/1631 and 1050/1640 (Ṣadrā’s commonly acknowledged death date),⁹¹ while Rizvi dates its composition between 1041/1631 and 1043-4/1634 (a year before Ṣadrā’s newly proposed death date).⁹² In the introduction to his translation of Ṣadrā’s *Iksīr al-‘arīfīn*, William Chittick argues that the *Iksīr*, itself a significant reworking of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī’s *Jāwidān-nāma*, was written in 1030/1621 or perhaps earlier, since the *Tafsīr Sūrat*

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7:10.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 7:36-7.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 7:136-305/*Majmū‘at*, 565-89.

⁹¹ Bīdārfar, “Taqdīm,” 1:110.

⁹² Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 84. For Rizvi’s argument in favour of Ṣadrā’s earlier death date, see p. 1 n. 1.

yāsīn, definitively composed in 1030/1621, contains an expanded version of material already contained in the *Iksīr*. This leads Chittick to conclude that the *Iksīr* must have been written some time before the *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*. This is significant, Chittick argues, because the *Iksīr* itself contains an expanded version of material from Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a*.⁹³ If Chittick's observations are correct, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a* would have to be placed before the *Iksīr* and thus in an earlier phase of Ṣadrā's career as opposed to a later phase. Bīdārfar and Rizvi, on the other hand, do not consider this particular *tafsīr* to be early, most likely because Ṣadrā does not mention it in the introduction to his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. But there seems to be another good reason to not consider the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a* an earlier work, namely Ṣadrā's explicit mention of his *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn* in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a* itself.⁹⁴

Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a* is a complete commentary on this *sūra*. The commentary contains an introduction, twelve chapters called "dawning places" (*maṭla'*),⁹⁵ and a conclusion. Mullā 'Alī Nūrī's glosses (and apparently some of Khwājawī's as well) are appended to the work.⁹⁶ Each of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a*'s *maṭla'*s are centred around one verse of the *sūra*, the

⁹³ See Chittick, "Translator's Introduction," in Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, xix-xx.

⁹⁴ See idem, *Tafsīr*, 7:218. Moreover, some other internal evidence seems to suggest that this book was written after the *Aṣfār* (see *ibid.*, 7:256), which was completed in 1037/1628 (see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 54). Ṣadrā also explicitly refers to his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḥadīd* at *Tafsīr*, 7:251, although this does not help us in dating the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a*, since we do not have an established date for the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḥadīd*.

⁹⁵ Those familiar with the Sufi commentarial tradition will immediately recognize the (Qur'anic) term *maṭla'*, since it functions as one of the "senses" of Sufi Qur'anic exegesis. It can be translated in several ways: anagogic sense, lookout point, transcendent perspective. The way Ṣadrā employs the term here indicates that we should understand it within the context of his treatment of hierarchies (both cosmological and psychological), which are developed throughout the *tafsīr* work. Thus, in this context, I have translated the term as "dawning place." For a discussion of this term within the context of the Sufi Qur'anic exegetical tradition, see Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'ān in Classical Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8-12.

⁹⁶ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:446-67.

exception being the sixth *maṭlaʿ*, which contains comments on verses six and seven, and *maṭlaʿ*s nine and ten, which, combined, do the same for verse ten. The chapters are composed of the generic subheadings characteristic of a number of Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs*. Each *maṭlaʿ* generally contains several *ishrāqāt* (illuminations) and any one of a number of subheadings, with names such as “moonlight” (*nūr qamarī*), “earthly shadow” (*ẓill farshī*), “moon-shadow” (*ẓill qamarī*), and “Throne-light” (*nūr ʿarshī*).

The opening lines of *Sūrat al-jumuʿa* say that “All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify [*yusabbiḥu*] God.” This verse allows Ṣadrā to introduce the well-known distinction between necessary and contingent being, since the fact that all things glorify God is itself an indication that they are contingent. Yet not all existents are the same, as some are less dense than others by virtue of their detachment from matter. Thus, the more an existent is characterized by materiality the less intense its glorification of God, and the less it is characterized by materiality the more intense its glorification.

Although Kalin and Rizvi seem to imply that this commentary has to do with questions of ontology more than anything else,⁹⁷ this is only true with respect to the first *maṭlaʿ*. The remaining *maṭlaʿ*s discuss in some detail the divine wisdom behind God's sending prophets to humankind, the nature of knowledge and wisdom, and the meaning of death and eschatology. As a corollary of the latter, some attention is paid to questions of psychology. Characteristic of some of his other writings, such as the *Sih aṣl*, Ṣadrā also spends a good deal of time contrasting people who love this world (especially worldly scholars) with those who love the next world.

⁹⁷ Cf. Kalin, “An Annotated Bibliography,” 39; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 84.

This commentary's main area of focus is the "levels of faith" (*marātib al-īmān*), which is in keeping with Ṣadrā's pronouncements in his introduction to the text, where he states that this work contains "the mothers of the objectives of faith" (*ummahāt al-maqāṣid al-īmāniyya*).⁹⁸ Perhaps more than his other *tafsīrs*, in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-jumu'a* Ṣadrā has a lot to say about that aspect of the religious life which complements faith, namely practice (in all of its dimensions, whether it be ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), intimate conversations (*munājāt*), or religious actions in general (*a'māl*)). Ṣadrā's concern with religious practice comes out best towards the end of the tenth *maṭla'*, where he dedicates a profound discussion to the "levels of invocation" or "remembrance" (*marātib al-dhikr*).⁹⁹

1.3.8 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭūriq*¹⁰⁰

This is the second shortest of Ṣadrā's commentaries. It was composed in 1030/1621. Just over 50 pages in length, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭūriq* comes with an important introduction, several subheadings with various titles, and a brief concluding paragraph. In his introduction, Ṣadrā's language betrays its indebtedness to the Sufi Qur'anic exegetical tradition, as he speaks of his unveiling the "beauty of the brides" (*jamāl al-ʿarāʿis*) and "virgins" (*abkār*) of the Qur'ān's *sūras* and *āyas*.¹⁰¹ He also alludes to the function of the bestowal of divine mercy in comprehending the Qur'ān.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:139.

⁹⁹ To the best of my knowledge, the only scholar to have dealt with this question in Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* is Mudabbir Azizi in his "Mullā Ṣadrā's Gnostic Approach Towards the Qur'ānic Verses." For more on this work, see p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:308-59/*Majmū'at*, 589-98.

¹⁰¹ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 7:308.

¹⁰² Ibid., 7:309.

Thematically, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭāriq* is similar to parts of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-wāqī'a*. The most interesting section of the commentary is its discussion of cosmology and how the existence of the heavens (*samā'*) mentioned in the opening verse of *Sūrat al-ṭāriq* point to the existence of God. Here Ṣadrā attempts to establish the contingency of the heavens, and, in doing so, goes on to show how that which is contingent necessarily points to that which is beyond itself, namely the Necessary (*al-wājib*). One aspect of this commentary not to be found in Ṣadrā's other *tafsīrs* is his treatment of the stages of man's development (prompted by verses six and seven of *Sūrat al-ṭāriq*), beginning with his being a sperm drop (*manī*) to his physical formation, and finally to his psychological and spiritual constitution. This point is a perfect complement to Ṣadrā's doctrine of substantial motion, although he does not draw the connection here.

1.3.9 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-a'lā*¹⁰³

Like several of the other *tafsīrs* described above, this work was most likely written after 1022/1613, and certainly before the composition of Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. A relatively short treatise, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-a'lā* is the most structured of all of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān. It contains an introduction, seven chapters,¹⁰⁴ and a very short concluding paragraph. Each chapter is entitled *tasbīḥ* ("declaration of transcendence" or "glorification"), and each *tasbīḥ* is devoted to one or more of the *sūra*'s verses.

The *sūra* begins in the imperative, commanding readers to glorify the name of God (*sabbih ism rabbika l-a'lā*), and this is the reason Ṣadrā names the chapters of his commentary *tasbīḥs*. He begins his commentary by explaining that the primary denotation (*al-maqṣūd al-aṣlī*)

¹⁰³ Idem, 7:362-407/*Majmū'at*, 598-607.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography," 38; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 85.

of the root *s.b.h.* is God’s transcendence and exaltedness. Although the root denotes “glorification,” it does so as a result of stating how other and far removed God is. Thus, each chapter begins with God’s transcendence and then attempts to tackle a variety of issues, such as God’s providence and solicitude for His creatures, His attributes, and the types of damnation and felicity people will experience in the afterlife.

1.3.10 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-zilzāl*¹⁰⁵

By far the most modest of Ṣadrā’s commentaries on the Qur’ān—both in size and scope—this thirty-four page work contains a short introduction, generic subheadings, and a brief conclusion. We know that this *tafsīr* was written some time before 1042/1632, since Ṣadrā refers to it by name in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-sajda*. And, more significantly, he explicitly mentions his famous *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* in this *tafsīr*.¹⁰⁶ As Rizvi correctly observes, the *Shawāhid* must have been completed before 1041/1631, since in this text Ṣadrā speaks of his esteemed teacher, Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041/1631), as still alive.¹⁰⁷ The *Shawāhid* is a very mature work and was the subject of a number of important commentaries, the most important of which is by Sabzawārī. According to Rizvi, the *Shawāhid* was completed between 1030/1621 and 1040/1630, but certainly before 1041/1631. Since the *Asfār* was completed in 1037/1628 and the *Shawāhid* was in all likelihood written after the *Asfār*’s completion, it would be safe to date the *Shawāhid*’s completion somewhere between 1037/1628 and 1041/1631. Since the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-zilzāl* mentions the *Shawāhid*, the earliest it could have been written is 1628. We can therefore locate the date of this *tafsīr*’s composition somewhere between 1037/1628 and 1041/1632.

¹⁰⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:410-44/*Majmū‘at*, 607-13.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 7:435.

¹⁰⁷ Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 59.

There are a few instances in this *tafsīr* where Ṣadrā directly links the notion of “scripture” to his ontology and cosmology.¹⁰⁸ Some interesting points also emerge through his exposition of the nature of the scrolls (*ṣuḥuf*) of peoples’ deeds which will be brought forth on the final day. Although this particular *sūra* does not mention these scrolls, its last two verses speak about people “seeing” their good and evil actions. The notion of “seeing” in the afterlife is therefore one of the major themes which runs through this commentary.

1.4 – Commentaries on Individual *Āyas*

1.4.1 – *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*¹⁰⁹

As Ṣadrā notes,¹¹⁰ this work was written in 1022/1613. It is most likely the first of his books devoted to the Qur’ān. Contrary to what the work’s title indicates, it is not only a commentary on the Throne verse (Q 2:255). Half of the work is actually a commentary upon the two verses which follow it. The text is divided into an introduction, twenty discussions (*maqāla*) with different generic titles, and a conclusion. The first eleven discussions are devoted to commenting upon the Throne verse, discussions twelve to fifteen to Q 2:256, and discussions sixteen to twenty to Q 2:257. Like his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara*, Ṣadrā’s comments on this *sūra*’s other three verses also prompt him to discuss questions such as the meaning of faith and unbelief. The central concern of this commentary, at least the first eleven discussions, is

¹⁰⁸ See Kamada, “Mullā Ṣadrā Between Mystical Philosophy and Qur’ān Interpretation through his Commentary on the “Chapter of the Earthquake”” for a helpful discussion. Our assessment of this work can be found on p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:8-342/*Majmū’at*, 290-357. Selections translated in Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 264-85. For representative exegeses of Q 2:255 in medieval and modern Islam, see Feras Hamza, Sajjad Rizvi with Farhana Mayer (ed.), *An Anthology of Qur’anic Commentaries (Vol. 1: On the Nature of the Divine)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008), ch. 2.

¹¹⁰ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:342.

ontology and theology. Here, Ṣadrā deals in depth with the nature of God’s mercy, being (his clear espousal of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is expressed here), and the divine names and attributes. Ṣadrā will go on to develop the relationship between being and God’s mercy in several places, most prominently in the course of his disquisition on Q 1:3, which forms part of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.

The mention of “intercession” in Q 2:255, “the firm handle” (*al-ʿurwat al-wuthqā*) in Q 2:256, and God’s *walāya* in Q 2:257 prompts Ṣadrā to discuss the institution of the Imamate and its legitimacy as well as the reality of “intercession” on the day of judgement, concerns which he does not display in his other *tafsīrs*.¹¹¹ It is difficult to determine why the distinctly Shīʿī character of this book almost disappears by the time we reach Ṣadrā’s final *tafsīr*. At the same time, his last work on “scripture,” the *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfi* (completed in 1043-4/1634), is just as Shīʿī as the *Tafsīr Āyat al-kursī*.

1.4.2 – *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr*¹¹²

Completed in 1030/1621, Ṣadrā’s commentary on the light verse contains an introduction, six sections (*fuṣūl*, often divided into subsections with various generic subtitles), and a concluding statement (*khātima wa-waṣīyya*). Of all of his works on the Qur’ān, this *tafsīr* has received the most attention in modern scholarship. There seems to be good justification in

¹¹¹ One of the alternative titles of this work is *Tafsīr al-ʿUrwat al-wuthqā*, which is inspired by a Qur’anic phrase. This term may be linked with the intercession granted by the Imams and the well-known *ḥadīth* of the “ship of Noah” (*saḥībat Nūḥ*). See Khwājāwī’s introduction in Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:5. As we saw earlier, the same title is attributed to Ṣadrā’s son.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 4:345-427/*Majmūʿat*, 358-75. Various medieval and some modern Muslim interpretations of Q 24:35 can be found in Feras Hamza, Sajjad Rizvi with Farhana Mayer (ed.), *An Anthology of Qur’anic Commentaries*, ch. 4.

this, since this particular *tafsīr* represents Ṣadrā's central concerns as a "philosopher/mystic" (*ḥakīm ilāhī*) commenting upon scripture.

Since there is a fairly long commentarial tradition on the light verse, Ṣadrā devotes some room to discussing previous views on the subject, citing the commentaries on this verse by Avicenna, Ghazālī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274). Apart from his citations from the Imams, he also demonstrates his familiarity with the sayings of the Sufis, citing figures such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Kharrāz (d. 286/899), Dhū l-Nūn (d. 245/860), Baṣṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875), Shiblī (d. 334/946), and, indirectly, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 526/1131).¹¹³

As would be expected, Ṣadrā clearly identifies light with being in this commentary and brings it to bear upon the verse's pregnant symbology. This then allows him to relate the fundamentality of light and the verse's symbols to his psychology, cosmology, and anthropology. The nature and cosmic function of the Perfect Man is brought out particularly well here. Unlike Ṣadrā's other *tafsīrs*, there seems to be more emphasis here on the question of self-knowledge, which may once again evince the influence of the work of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī.

¹¹³ For a discussion of Ṣadrā's relationship to Sufism, see Carl Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā." See also Ešots, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Teaching on *Wujūd*: A Synthesis of Philosophy and Mysticism." Cf. Pourjavady, "Opposition to Sufism in Twelver Shiism," 621. For the presence of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's *Tamhīdāt* in Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr*, see Ṣadrā, *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur'ān*, 49, 51, 53, 86-8, 90-4, 126, 128-9, 131, 133, 135, 138, 140-1. It seems that a few of the passages Peerwani identifies as having derived from the *Tamhīdāt* actually go back to earlier Sufi sources. Thanks to a recent monograph, we now have a much clearer overview of the general development of early Sufism. See Ahmet Karamustafa: *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

1.4.3 – *Tafsīr Q 27:88*¹¹⁴

This short and incomplete commentary upon Q 27:88, “And you look at the mountains, deeming them to be still....,” seems to have first been identified by Āqā Buzurg¹¹⁵ as one of Ṣadrā’s works. Although some have accepted Āqā Buzurg’s identification, no other author in “Category # 3” (see section 1.2.1 above) follows his lead. It would seem best to place this work at a very early period in Ṣadrā’s career because of its distinctly Shī’ī undertones (cf. 1.4.1 above).¹¹⁶ Assuming that this treatise is an early work, it might be a good example of what Ṣadrā had in mind when he spoke of his “miscellaneous writings” (*mutafarraqāt*) on the Qur’ān, and which he distinguished from his more complete *tafsīrs*.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the work is “scattered” in that it reads like a set of stray reflections on Q 27:88. In terms of both style and content, this text resembles Ṣadrā’s other *tafsīrs*, and so there is no good reason to assume that he is not its author, especially since the treatise clearly alludes to (but does not develop) Ṣadrā’s doctrine of substantial motion.

¹¹⁴ Ṣadrā, *Majmū’at*, 614-6.

¹¹⁵ See Āqā Buzurg, *Dharī’a*, 4:278.

¹¹⁶ In two places, the text mentions the *tafsīr* of a certain “‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm,” which is most likely a reference to the important early Shī’ī Qur’ān commentator, al-Qummī (d. 307/919), whose complete name is Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī. Also, Ṣadrā refers to the “exalted ‘Alawī line, which is witnessed by the *shiqshiqiyya*.... [*al-khaṭiyya al-‘āliya al-‘alawīyya al-shuhūda bi-l shiqshiqiyya*].” To readers of the famous *Nahj al-balāgha*, one of the “scriptures” of the Safavid period attributed to ‘Alī, the odd term *shiqshiqiyya* calls to mind this book’s famous (and polemical) third sermon. Ṣadrā appears to be linking this with the “people of intelligence” (*ahl al-faṭāna*), from whom the reality of the final hour is not hidden. See Ṣadrā, *Majmū’at*, 615. For Qummī’s role in Ṣadrā’s *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, see p. 129.

¹¹⁷ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:6 and pp. 51-2 above.

1.5 – Theoretical Works on the Qur’ān

1.5.1 – *Asrār al-āyāt wa-anwār al-bayyināt*¹¹⁸

This and the following two titles are not works of *tafsīr* as such. They are, in a sense, more concerned with the theoretical aspects involved in any interpretation of scripture, although this holds true more for the following entry. The *Asrār al-āyāt* was written during the final phase of Ṣadrā’s career. It is over 200 pages in length and Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī’s glosses are longer than the book itself.¹¹⁹ The *Asrār* contains an introduction and three sections (*ṭaraf*). Each section is subdivided into several subsections known as “places of witnessing” (*mashhad*), each of which contains several principles (*qā’ida*). The scope of this work is vast, for in it Ṣadrā attempts to discuss a wide range of theological and philosophical topics, often drawing upon verses of the Qur’ān in his discussions.

The *Asrār* deals with various philosophical and mystical issues: the path of the wayfarers to God and the method of those who are “firmly rooted in knowledge” (an allusion to Q 3:7), proofs for God’s existence, the entification (*ta’ayyun*)¹²⁰ of the Greatest Name (*al-ism al-a’zam*) and its locus of manifestation (*mazhar*, i.e., the Perfect Man), the Muḥammadan Reality, the temporal origination of the world, meditations on the transience of this worldly life, and eschatology. In the *Asrār*, Ṣadrā also discusses the names and qualities of the Qur’ān, the difference between God’s Speech and His book, the modality of revelation to the Prophets, the

¹¹⁸ Idem, *Asrār al-āyāt wa-anwār al-bayyināt*, ed. S. M. Mūsawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hikmat, 1385 Sh/2006).

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 223-522.

¹²⁰ This term is a synonym for *tajallī* (self-disclosure) and *zuhūr* (manifestation). See Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 95 n. 11.

nature of the divine book, God's address (*khiṭāb*) to His creatures, and the "Perfect Words" (*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*) referred to in a famous *ḥadīth*.

1.5.2 – *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*

As mentioned earlier, the *Mafātīḥ* was written in 1042/1632. In the final phase of Ṣadrā's career, his writings on the Qur'ān take on a slightly different focus. Whereas before 1041/1631 he had written a number of independent commentaries on *sūras* and *āyās*, from 1041/1631 to the end of his life he begins to produce books which deal with a variety of hermeneutical questions and themes related to the Qur'ān. This shift in focus is best evidenced in the *Mafātīḥ*.¹²¹

Why Ṣadrā would not devote a treatise to independent questions concerning the Qur'ān until a much later date in his intellectual life is not quite clear. It would be incorrect to say that the *Mafātīḥ* was written after Ṣadrā's intellectual perspective had crystallized, since his first *tafsīr* work is quite mature, and was completed a considerable time after the commencement of the *Asfār*. We can reject Brockelmann's suggestion that this work is a "defence of mysticism" (*Verteidigung der Mystik*).¹²² Nor would it be correct to say that Ṣadrā wrote the *Mafātīḥ* as an introduction to his Qur'ān commentaries, since there is little evidence in the *Mafātīḥ* itself which suggests this. All that we can say with certainty is that, after having already written over ten *tafsīrs*, Ṣadrā's perspective deepened by the time he penned the *Mafātīḥ*, and was thus in a better position to address the general hermeneutical questions and important themes related to the Qur'ān. Thus, the *Mafātīḥ* can be said to present an epitome of Ṣadrā's hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān.

¹²¹ It should be noted here that the relevant sections of the *Mafātīḥ* which deal with Qur'ānic hermeneutics are expanded versions of a corresponding section in Ṣadrā's *Asfār*. See pp. 76-7.

¹²² Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1938), Suppl. 2:589.

The published version of the *Mafātīḥ* is over 700 pages long¹²³ and is accompanied by Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī’s extensive glosses.¹²⁴ The book contains a very important introduction and twenty chapters or “keys” (*miftāḥs*), the first ten of which comprise part one, and the last ten of which comprise part two. Each chapter consists of various subtitles, all of which have specific titles. A close reading of the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ* reveals this entire work as providing the “keys” to Ṣadrā’s hermeneutical perspective.¹²⁵ Technically speaking, the *Mafātīḥ* is not a work on the Qur’ān or on Qur’anic hermeneutics, since only the first two *Miftāḥs* are concerned with the Qur’ān as such. *Miftāḥ* 1 (which, as will be shown in the following chapter, is a significantly expanded discussion of several sections of Ṣadrā’s *Asfār*) and *Miftāḥ* 2 inform the remaining eighteen *Miftāḥs* in such a way that, without them, understanding how the *Mafātīḥ* in its entirety is meant to outline Ṣadrā’s hermeneutics is impossible. Thus, *Miftāḥ* 4, which is about the different types of “inspiration” (*ilhām*) a person may receive, cannot in and of itself function as outlining Ṣadrā’s hermeneutics. But it does inform what Ṣadrā says in *Miftāḥ* 1, where he discusses “revelation” (*waḥy*). What this means is that the book’s chapters beyond *Miftāḥ* 2—dealing as they do with such topics as the nature of knowledge, angelology, eschatology, the creation of the world, and wayfaring on the path to God—do not allow one to abstract Ṣadrā’s hermeneutical theory as such. They function as practical applications of the theoretical considerations laid out in *Miftāḥ* 1 and *Miftāḥ* 2, or, in rare cases, elaborate upon some of the ideas discussed in them. From this perspective, those sections in *Miftāḥs* 3-20 where Ṣadrā deals

¹²³ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 75-782.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 787-881.

¹²⁵ See Rustom, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Prolegomenon to the *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*.”

with the Qurʾān resemble his reflections on its verses to be found in his *tafsīr* and non-*tafsīr* compositions.

1.5.3 – *Mutashābihāt al-qurʾān*¹²⁶

Although we do not have a date of composition for this short treatise on the “ambiguous” verses of the Qurʾān, it may have been written after the *Mafātīh*, since parts of the treatise seem to expand on shorter discussions in sections of the *Mafātīh*.¹²⁷ The treatise consists of an introduction and five chapters (*fuṣūl*).

Ṣadrā begins this text by summarizing the problem of the ambiguous verses and briefly highlighting the views of his predecessors. Here, he charges a number of Qurʾān commentators’ interpretations of these verses as being nothing more than sophistry. Ṣadrā then launches an attack on the interpretations of scripture carried out by “the deniers of the divine attributes” (*ahl al-taʿṭīl*). After clearing the ground, so to speak, he moves on to his own treatment of the ambiguous verses, discussing the nature of metaphor and how unveiling (*kashf*) functions in the interpretation of these verses. Ṣadrā is careful to tell his readers that not all verses which cannot be understood rationally are to be interpreted metaphorically. It is precisely through “unveiling” that one can come to know the reality of those Qurʾānic passages which seem to defy reason.

¹²⁶ Ṣadrā, *Sih risāla*, 257-84.

¹²⁷ Cf. Āshtiyānī, “Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥih,” 77; Bīdārfar, “Taqdīm,” 102-3; Khamenci, *Hikmat-i mutaʿāliya*, 37. Āshtiyānī’s glosses to this text, which are to be found in Ṣadrā, *Sih risāla*, 285-310, mainly consist of those excerpts from the *Mafātīh* which discuss the Qurʾān’s *mutashābih* verses.

1.6 – Qur’anic Works of Doubtful Authenticity

1.6.1 – 1.6.3 – *Tafsīrs Sūrat Yūsūf, ṭalāq, qadr*

Brockelmann ascribes the *Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsūf* to Ṣadrā. But no reference to this work is to be found in Ṣadrā’s writings, whereas there appears to be one rather late reference to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭalāq*.¹²⁸ With respect to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-qadr*, the first reference to this work, as mentioned earlier, is to be found in Qazwīnī’s *Mutammim*. There do not appear to be any extant manuscripts of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ṭalāq* or the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-qadr*.

1.6.4 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-duḥā*

Several authors have ascribed this title to Ṣadrā, the first of whom appears to have been Āqā Buzurg. The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-duḥā* is listed in the *Dharī’a*’s “individual *tafsīr* entries,”¹²⁹ but does not appear amongst the titles listed in its “basic *tafsīr* entries.” It is difficult to determine whether the first of the two “basic *tafsīr* entries” was written before the entry on the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-duḥā* found its way into the list of “individual *tafsīr* entries.” Although the former’s entry number is 1283 as opposed to the latter’s being numbered 1466, its precedence simply has to do with alphabetical order. Thus, it is not possible to judge whether or not Āqā Buzurg wished to amend his first list of “basic *tafsīr* entries” but did not have the opportunity to do so. In fact, the volume in which both of these entries appear was edited and printed after Āqā Buzurg’s death under the care of his sons.¹³⁰ This problem is further complicated by the fact that the first list of “basic *tafsīr* entries” says that its source for its listing of Ṣadrā’s *tafsīrs* is a collection of Ṣadrā’s *tafsīr* printed in 1333/1914. But the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-duḥā* is reported by Āqā Buzurg to have also

¹²⁸ Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Suppl. 2:589.

¹²⁹ Āqā Buzurg, *Dharī’a*, 4:338.

¹³⁰ See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v.v. “*al-Darī’a elā taṣānīf al-šī’a*.”

been found in a printed collection of his *tafsīrs* dating to 1332/1913.¹³¹ All subsequent entries in the *Dharī'a* which make reference to this printed collection date it to 1332/1913, so the 1333/1914 date is likely to have been a slip of the pen on the part of the author. The fact that Āqā Buzurg does not have an entry on this work in his listing of “individual *tafsīr* entries” may also call its attribution to Ṣadrā into question. According to the *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmi'-i Mullā Ṣadrā*, this title is extant in manuscript form.¹³²

1.6.5 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ*¹³³

This title is not commonly ascribed to Ṣadrā, but is included in some of the more recent bibliographies of his works.¹³⁴ Because this text cannot be dated to any particular period, if Ṣadrā is its author, he could have written it at any point in his career. Compared to his other *tafsīrs*, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ* is structured differently, and its discussions are not as detailed as they are in texts of a similar size. The *tafsīr* is strangely divided into two parts, which seem to be two separate treatises. Part one consists of an introduction composed of six sections or “merits” (*fā'ida*), comments on the *sūra*'s verses, and a conclusion which is composed of two “merits.” The first part of the commentary is mostly concerned with proving God's oneness. There is nothing specifically Ṣadrīan about this part of the commentary. The language is fairly straight-

¹³¹ Āqā Buzurg, *Dharī'a*, 4:338. The collection of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* used by Āqā Buzurg seems to be different from the lithographed edition in our possession, because the latter was printed some ten years earlier and, more importantly, because it does not contain the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ḍuḥā*.

¹³² Khurramdashtī and Aṣgharī, *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmi'-i Mullā Ṣadrā*, 72.

¹³³ Ṣadrā, *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-falsafīyya*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d., repr. ed.), 429-72.

¹³⁴ See Kalin, “An Annotated Bibliography,” 40; Khurramdashtī and Aṣgharī, *Kitabshināsī-yi jāmi'-i Mullā Ṣadrā*, 73; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shūrāzī*, 109.

forward, and a reliance upon the terminology of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī is evidenced throughout.

The second part of the *tafsīr* is also a running commentary on each of the verses of Q 112. In the introduction to the second part, which is the most important section of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-ikhhlāṣ*, the author briefly discusses the symbolism of the letters of the *basmala*.

1.6.6 – 1.6.8 – *Ma‘ānī al-alfāz al-mufrada min al-qur’ān, Risāla fī rumūz al-qur’ān, Ta‘līqa ‘alā Anwār al-tanzīl*

The *Ma‘ānī* was first listed by Khurramdashtī and Aṣgharī.¹³⁵ They say that it is a short treatise which discusses some of the individual terms and/or phrases found in the Qur’ān. Ṣadrā does not appear to refer to this work in his writings. In all likelihood, it too is a section from a larger work. This hypothesis may be correct, since in Āqā Buzurg’s content description of Ṣadrā’s *Mafātīh*, he states that one of the sections in *Miftāḥ* 1 is about the “*ma‘ānī al-alfāz al-mufrada*” of the Qur’ān.¹³⁶ Going on this description alone, it appears to correspond to *Miftāḥ* 1:1-3. The *Risāla fī rumūz al-qur’ān*, which is only listed by Brockelmann,¹³⁷ is likely to be the same as the *Ma‘ānī*, or at least a part of it, since its title indicates that it corresponds to *Miftāḥ* 1:1, which is about the symbols (*rumūz*) of the Qur’ān.

Thanks to Ṣadrā’s inventory of books in his personal library,¹³⁸ we know that he was familiar with the *tafsīr* of the famous Sunnī theologian and exegete, ‘Abd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī (d.

¹³⁵ Khurramdashtī and Aṣgharī, *Kitābshināsī-yi jam-i Mullā Ṣadrā*, 74.

¹³⁶ Āqā Buzurg, *Dharī’a*, 21:305.

¹³⁷ Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Suppl. 2:589.

¹³⁸ See Ṣadrā, *Yāddāsht-hā-yi Mullā Ṣadrā hamrāh bā fihrist-i kitābkhāna-yi shakhṣī-yi Mullā Ṣadrā*, ed. Muḥammad Barakat (Qum: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1377 Sh/1998). It is reproduced in English in Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shirāzī*, 117-35. For the entry on Bayḍāwī, see *ibid.*, 118-9. This inventory of works, although very useful, certainly does not present us with a complete listing of all of the texts in Ṣadrā’s possession over the course of his career. This

716/1316), parts of whose *Anwār al-tanzīl* were in his possession.¹³⁹ However, the common attribution of a set of glosses upon this text to Ṣadrā under the title *Ta'liqa 'alā Anwār al-Tanzīl*,¹⁴⁰ is in all likelihood mistaken.¹⁴¹

1.7 – Conclusion

In this chapter we had the opportunity to survey the reception of Mullā Ṣadrā's works on the Qur'ān by providing a detailed overview of the manner in which these writings were documented and commented upon in Safavid, Qajar, and Pahlavid learned circles. It was shown that, amongst Ṣadrā's followers, it was not until about a century after his death that his writings on the Qur'ān began to attract serious scholarly attention. This fact is symptomatic of a wider trend in the development of a commentarial tradition proper upon Ṣadrā's philosophical writings: it was not until the Qajar period that followers and opponents of his teachings decided to write extensive commentaries upon his most important philosophical works.

In contrast to the nuanced understanding of Ṣadrā's intellectual concerns amongst philosophers and mystics in late medieval and early modern Iran, biographical and historical writings from the Safavid, Qajar, and early Pahlavid periods tended to recycle the image of his being a philosopher first and scriptural exegete (mostly concerned with *ḥadīth* literature) second.

is because a number of important books upon which he draws at one point or another are missing from this list, such as Qūnawī's *Mafātīḥ* (see p. 124), 'Irāqī's *Lama'āt* (see pp. 123-4), and Rāzī's *Tafsīr* (see pp. 131-3). According to the editor of the text of Ṣadrā's personal library, the latest Ṣadrā could have drawn up this list would have been around two decades before his death (see Ṣadrā, *Yaddāsht-hā*, 8-9; and Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 117).

¹³⁹ For this work, see Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1911).

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, Mangabadi, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Method of Qur'anic Commentary," 441 (where the author has "*Hahiyyah* (sic.) *bar* (marginal gloss on) *Tafsīr Bayḍari* (sic!)"); Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Khayyām, 1369 Sh/1990), 4:419.

¹⁴¹ See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 116.

It was not until the twentieth century, beginning with Aqā Buzurg's *Dharī'a*, that this image began to change. Annotated bibliographies of Ṣadrā's oeuvre from the middle of the twentieth century onwards present a much more balanced picture of his scholarly activities. Thanks to a number of these bibliographies, we now have a fairly good idea of the nature of Ṣadrā's works on the Qur'ān and its sciences. Yet, these bibliographies are also limited when it comes to describing the nature and scope of Ṣadrā's works on the Qur'ān. In the last part of this chapter, therefore, we provided the most comprehensive overview to date of the chronology, scope, and contents of each of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān and its sciences. This presents us with a good picture of his Qur'anic writings, and sets the stage for an in-depth inquiry into the theoretical dimension of his Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Chapter 2

Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Hermeneutics

In this chapter we will attempt to articulate as clear a picture as possible of Mullā Ṣadrā's theoretical scriptural hermeneutics. This will pave the way for the remaining chapters of this study, which will be concerned with the practical dimension of his hermeneutics. As was made clear last chapter, Ṣadrā's most important theoretical work on the Qur'ān is the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, one of his last compositions. The *Mafātīḥ* is a text which is not easy to characterize. Its style is somewhat forbidding, since Ṣadrā often breaks out into rhetorical flourishes when making a simple point. There is thus the difficulty of simply coming to the point that he is trying to make. The subheadings contained in the text are often helpful in discerning where the discussion is headed, but this is not always the case.

A thinker who wrote as widely and rapidly as Mullā Ṣadrā would naturally draw on other authors' books, either by way of direct citation or indirect adaptation. In the following chapter we will demonstrate just how indebted Ṣadrā's *tafsīr* is to the writings of his predecessors, amongst whom are some of the most seminal figures in Islamic thought. With respect to the *Mafātīḥ*, we find many direct references to Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*, along with several references to Ghazālī's writings, particularly the *Munqidh*.¹ S. J. Badakhchani, following Ḥasanzādah Āmulī,² suggests that a later section of the *Mafātīḥ* is nothing more than a translation of Naṣīr al-Dīn

¹ See pp. 80-1 n. 21 for Ṣadrā's appropriation of Ghazālī's rules for reciting the Qur'ān.

² S. J. Badakhchani, "Introduction," in Ṭūsī, *Contemplation and Action: The Spiritual Autobiography of a Muslim Scholar*, ed. and trans. S. J. Badakhchani (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1998), 17. Cf. Ḥasanzādah Āmulī's notes in Ṭūsī, *Āghāz wa-anjām*, ed. Ḥasanzādah Āmulī (Tehran: Wizārat-i Farhang wa-Irshād-i Islāmī, 1987), 75-232.

Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1274) Ismā'īlī Persian eschatological work, *Āghāz wa-anjām*.³ Although upon closer inspection the section in question is characteristically reworked by Ṣadrā with more attention to detail, this may be the first indication that Ṭūsī's "influence" upon Ṣadrā's philosophical teachings is more a result of his familiarity with Ṭūsī's work as an Ismā'īlī thinker rather than as a Twelver thinker.⁴ With respect to Ṣadrā's theoretical understanding of scripture as laid out in the *Maḥāṭib*, however, it would be incorrect to say that it has been influenced by the work of Ṭūsī or Ghazālī.⁵ The only directly discernable influence on Ṣadrā's scriptural hermeneutics in terms of its theoretical articulation can be traced back to the work of Ibn 'Arabī, as will be discussed below.

We saw in the previous chapter how internal references within Ṣadrā's oeuvre can help us solve questions concerning the chronology of his compositions on the Qur'ān and its sciences. At times, however, such references can be misleading for the simple reason that Ṣadrā is known to have rewritten some of his earlier books, but which refer to texts that were definitively penned after the former work's completion (but before its revision). Although this kind of practice can often lead to a dead end with respect to dating particular texts, it is probably safe to assume that, on the whole, references to Ṣadrā's earlier writings in his later books are to be taken at face

³ For an overview of Ṭūsī's life and thought, see Hamid Dabashi, "Khawājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī: The Philosopher/Vizier and the Intellectual Climate of his Times," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 1:527-84; Nasrollah Pourjavady and Z. Vesel (ed.), *Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī: Philosophe et savant du XIII^e siècle* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 2000); M. T. Mudarris Raḍawī, *Aḥwāl wa-āthār-i Naṣīr al-Dīn* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1991).

⁴ See the observations in Landolt, "Introduction," in Ṭūsī, *The Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought*, ed. and trans. S. J. Badakhchani (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), 11.

⁵ As I will demonstrate in chapter four of this study, although there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Ṭūsī's Ismā'īlī writings heavily influenced Ṣadrā's work on the Qur'ān, Ṣadrā's treatment of ontology as discussed in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* may have had an eye on some of Ṭūsī's Ismā'īlī-inspired ideas.

value. This is likely more true of later texts which noticeably modify or correct the positions and arguments mentioned in the earlier texts to which they refer.

It is with the above point in mind that we should seek to understand the statement in a recent article by Sajjad Rizvi, who remarks that Ṣadrā's *Mutashābihāt*, *Asrār*, and *Mafātīḥ* were written "as a preparation for his own incomplete mystical and philosophical commentary."⁶ This observation is surprising because we know, largely based on the dating provided by Rizvi himself, that these three books were written after Ṣadrā had completed most of his *tafsīrs*.⁷ With respect to the *Mutashābihāt* and *Asrār*, there is little in these two texts which would indicate that they were meant to function as preparations for Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs*. With respect to the *Mafātīḥ*, however, Rizvi is not far from the mark.

The *Mafātīḥ*, like the *Mutashābihāt* and *Asrār*, was written towards the end of Ṣadrā's career. But unlike these two titles, the *Mafātīḥ*'s most significant discussion vis-à-vis Ṣadrā's Qur'anic writings was originally a part of the *Asfār*.⁸ The section in question, namely Miftāḥ 1 of the *Mafātīḥ*'s twenty Miftāḥs, deals with such topics as the nature of revelation and the different levels of the descent of God's Word and its correspondences to the inner layers (*darajāt*) of man's soul. Since the *Asfār* was written over a twenty-two year period, it is difficult to determine when the theoretical sections on the Qur'ān (later to be incorporated into Miftāḥ 1 of the

⁶ Rizvi, "‘Au-delà du miroir’ or Beyond Discourse and Intuition: Pedagogy and Epistemology in the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣīrāzī [ca. 1571-1635]," in *Miroir et savoir: la transmission d'un thème platonicien des Alexandrins à la philosophie arabo-musulmane*, ed. D. De Smet and M. Sebtī, 254 (Louvain: Peeters, 2008).

⁷ See appendix one of the present study for a tentative chronology of the order of composition of Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān and its sciences.

⁸ We list here the volume and page numbers from the *Asfār* and their corresponding, expanded sections in the *Mafātīḥ*: *Asfār*, 7:44-6 → *Mafātīḥ*, 85; *Asfār*, 7:50-4 → *Mafātīḥ*, 88; *Asfār*, 7:2-4 → *Mafātīḥ*, 93; *Asfār*, 7:32-4 → *Mafātīḥ*, 97-8; *Asfār*, 7:30-2 → *Mafātīḥ*, 98-9; *Asfār*, 7:10-8 (cf. *Asfār*, 7:10-3 with *Elixir*, 27) → *Mafātīḥ*, 100-5; *Asfār*, 7:19-28 → *Mafātīḥ*, 106-13; *Asfār*, 7:34-6 → *Mafātīḥ*, 113; *Asfār*, 7:36-40 → *Mafātīḥ*, 115.

Mafātīḥ) were written. But we can be sure that these relevant sections were written concurrently with if not before most of Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs*. Miftāḥ 1 of the *Mafātīḥ*, therefore, occupies a special place amongst Ṣadrā's writings on the Qur'ān. As we will see later in this chapter, the general hermeneutical observations contained in this text do indeed act as preparatory reflections for Ṣadrā's commentaries on individual Qur'anic *sūras* and *āyas*.

2.1 – The *Mafātīḥ*'s Introduction

Miftāḥ 1 is complemented by another brief text which is not to be found in the relevant sections of the *Asfār*, namely the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ* itself. Taken together, Miftāḥ 1 and the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ* can, generally speaking, be said to encapsulate Mullā Ṣadrā's esoteric hermeneutical vision of the nature of the Qur'ān.⁹ At present, we will therefore turn our attention to Ṣadrā's pronouncements in the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ*, which will facilitate our analysis of Miftāḥ 1.

At the beginning of the *Mafātīḥ*, Ṣadrā tells his readers that he had been meaning to write this work for quite some time:

For some time now I have longed to bring forth the Qur'ān's meanings. [With] my previous reflections I attempted to walk its roads and [by means of] the way stations of the pious explore its paths. In order to attain this goal I would consult my soul [*nafs*], casting aside the arrows of my own opinion.¹⁰

Ṣadrā says that he was reluctant to carry out this endeavour because of the weight of the task itself.¹¹ The passage above states explicitly that some preparatory work was required on the

⁹ A number of scholars have noted the theoretical importance of the *Mafātīḥ* in general. See, for example, Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy*, 127; Peerwani, "Translator's Introduction," 11; Saleh, "The Verse of Light," 42. Cf. Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," 1:109; Khwājawi, *Lawāmi'*, 123.

¹⁰ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 77.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

part of the author in order to undertake this task. These are the words of someone who had already written some ten commentaries on independent chapters or verses of the Qurʾān. Shortly before this, Ṣadrā remarks that the work was written as the result of a spiritual experience which compelled him to bring forth what he knew of the Qurʾanic sciences. That this passage would precede the one cited above, where Ṣadrā expresses his wish to write the *Mafātīḥ*, may come as a surprise. It may come as even more of a surprise given that what follows the introduction, namely Miftāḥ 1, was written before the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ* itself, albeit in a much more condensed version. But the reasons for this are purely stylistic. The following lines are dramatic and compelling; they are written with vigour, a sense of urgency, and in mellifluous Arabic. They are, in effect, Ṣadrā’s meditations after-the-fact, summarizing the end of his endeavours which he will go on to explicate in more or less straight-forward fashion for the remainder of the introduction:

A command has issued from the Lord of my heart [*āmir qalbī*], and a spiritual allusion has come forth from my innermost recesses [*waradat ishāra min sirr ghaybī*]. God’s judgement and decision have come to pass and He has decreed that some of the divine symbols [*al-rumūz al-ilāhiyya*]¹² become manifest, and that the matters related to the Qurʾanic sciences, Prophetic allusions, secrets of faith, flashes of wisdom, esoteric glimmerings connected to the wonders of the glorious revelation, and the subtleties of Qurʾanic interpretation, be brought forth.¹³

The wording here is very important. Ṣadrā was commanded by God to bring forth the “divine symbols,” the “matters related to the Qurʾanic sciences,” and the “subtleties of Qurʾanic interpretation.” As it soon becomes apparent from the contents of Miftāḥ 1, the fulfilment of this

¹² I translate *rumūz* as “symbols” following Corbin, “Introduction,” 23. In the singular (i.e., *ramz*), Corbin also renders the term as “chiffre” or “cipher.” See idem, *En islam iranien*, 217.

¹³ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 76-7.

command was articulated in discussions dealing with such phenomena as the Qur’ān’s use of allusory language and the senses of scripture.

Ṣadrā also notes in the introduction that the *Maḥāṭib* was an inspired work, since it was the result of an “opening” (*fath*):

The Master of the holy realm of the Divinity [*ṣāḥib quds al-lāhūt*], the Owner of the Kingdom of the Dominion [*mālik mulk al-malakūt*], granted me a new opening [*fath jadīd*], made the sight of my insight piercing with His light, revealing to my heart an opening which drew me near...¹⁴

Ṣadrā further remarks that this opening granted him new knowledge of the “treasures of the symbols of the divine realities [*kunūz rumūz al-ḥaqā’iq*],”¹⁵ which, it will be recalled, he was commanded by the Lord of his heart to bring forth. This “opening” may be one reason why Ṣadrā would go on to incorporate the sections of the *Asfār* having to do with the Qur’ān into Miftāḥ 1. Yet this spiritual experience was also accompanied by a great burden of responsibility. Ṣadrā says, “I said [to myself] after this opening within myself [*fath li-nafsī*], ‘now is the time to begin mentioning the principles [*uṣūl*] from which the branches [of the Qur’anic sciences] derive.’”¹⁶ This approach would be characterized by its sapiential perspective and would not delve too deeply into matters pertaining to exoteric exegesis, such as the fine points of Arabic. He notes that excessive concern with language is characteristic of the approach of the exoteric scholars who “have the outward [*zāhir*] and the legal aspects [*ḥadd*],”¹⁷ whereas we have the inward aspect

¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

¹⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ There is some disagreement in Sufi texts as to the precise meaning of this term in the context of mystical exegesis. It can either refer to the lawful and unlawful (and hence “legal”) dimensions of a specific Qur’anic verse, or to the utmost limit of one’s understanding of a specific Qur’anic verse. See Gerhard Böwering, *The Classical Vision of Existence in Islam: The Qur’anic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979),

[*bāṭin*] and the transcendent perspective [*maṭla'*]! It has been said, ‘He who comments [upon the Qur’ān] using his own opinion has concealed the truth [*fā-qad kafara*].’¹⁸ Ṣadrā then provides us with a theoretical definition of *ta’wīl*:

As for *ta’wīl*, it does not spare nor leave anything out [*lā tubqī wa-lā tadhar*] [Q 74:28],¹⁹ for it comes—thanks be to God!—as a discourse [*kalām*] in which there is no crookedness, nor does doubt or confusion assail it.²⁰

Before this definition of *ta’wīl*, Ṣadrā lists some of the conditions which are necessary for approaching the Qur’ān. These are not conditions for the appropriate recital of the Qur’ān, nor are they hermeneutical principles as such.²¹ They are, rather, those spiritual prerequisites which

139-41; Keeler, *Ṣūfī Hermeneutics: The Qur’ān Commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies 2007), 70-1; Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān in Classical Islam*, 8-12.

¹⁸ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 79. Notice Ṣadrā’s use of the Augustinian-flavoured tradition—often attributed to either Ibn Mas’ūd, ‘Alī, or Ja’far al-Ṣādiq—concerning the “senses” of scripture. Cf. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:212 ff. For a survey of the reception of this tradition and its interpretation by both Sufi and non-Sufi authors, see Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān in Classical Islam*, 8-13. See also Böwering, *The Classical Vision of Existence in Islam*, 139-41. Cf. Peerwani, “Translator’s Introduction,” 15-6. See also Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 147-8, where he inveighs against those who only know the outward purport of scripture. For a discussion of the prohibition of interpreting the Qur’ān using one’s own opinion, see Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān in Classical Islam*, 47-50.

¹⁹ For ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī’s (d. 736/1335) use of this verse and the above-cited tradition in the introduction to his Sufi *tafsīr*, see Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur’an and its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 1:5. For a study of Kāshānī’s Sufi *tafsīr*, see Pierre Lory, *Les commentaries ésotériques du Coran d’après ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1980). Cf. Peter Heath’s explanation of this statement in his “Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches,” *Arabica* 36, no. 2 (1989): 210. Although this piece raises many interesting questions, the author seems too sure (read “presumptuous”) when it comes to getting at what a figure like Ibn ‘Arabī must have meant when he read scripture. In contrast to Heath’s reading of Ibn ‘Arabī’s hermeneutics, see Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn ‘Arabī, the Book, and the Law*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

²⁰ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 79.

²¹ Ṣadrā’s practical guidelines for approaching the Qur’ān can be found in the second *Miftāḥ* of the *Maḥāṭib*. These points are partially translated and summarized in Peerwani, “Translator’s Introduction,” 23-8 and Ešots, “The Qur’ānic Hermeneutics of Mullā Ṣadrā.” For some reason, Peerwani does not count numbers 1 and 10, thus

are absolutely necessary in order for one to penetrate the Qur'ān's symbols. The interpreter is expected to (1) have patience and purity, (2) continuously profess the *shahāda* or statement of God's oneness, (3) undergo spiritual discipline, (4) spend time in solitary retreat, and (5) abstain from the sciences and character traits of the common folk. Ṣadrā lists other—albeit mysterious—requirements, such as (6) the need to learn the “science of swimming in the Ocean (*baḥr*),” (7) knowledge of the “language of the birds,”²² (8) an understanding of the “language of the Dominion” (*malakūt*), and (9) having been granted the secrets of the “realms of the Divinity (*lāhūt*) and Invincibility (*jabarūt*).”²³ Although he does not elaborate at great length upon these conditions, nor is this exposition systematic, Ṣadrā makes it known that without meeting these basic prerequisites, *ta'wīl* is not possible.

Yet he lays out another “condition” when it comes to interpreting the Qur'ān. He addresses his readers in the following manner:

O intelligent, discerning one! If you want to investigate the science of the Qur'ān, the wisdom of God and the principles of faith—that is, faith in God, His angels, books, messengers, and the Final Day—then you need

enumerating only eight points. These guidelines are derived from Ghazālī, who relies on Sarrāj (see Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'ān in Classical Islam*, ch. 3). It should be noted that Peerwani, “Translator’s Introduction,” 9-22, attempts to reconstruct from Ṣadrā’s oeuvre his rules for interpreting scripture. Apart from failing to distinguish between the principles and preconditions required for reading scripture, her approach is misleading since Ṣadrā’s hermeneutics cannot be summarized by a set of formal rules. Rather, it must be understood through his ontology, which we will turn to in the following section of this chapter. A proper grasp of the manner in which Ṣadrā’s ontology relates to his understanding of scripture precludes the need to construct a formal listing of his “conditions” for interpreting scripture. This may be why Ṣadrā does not attempt to lay out such a list anywhere in his works.

²² Apart from being an obvious reference to the story of Solomon in the Qur'ān, the “language of the birds” refers to the allusive language employed by the Sufis. See Maria Subtelny, “La langue des oiseaux: L’inspiration et le langage chez Rumi,” in *L’inspiration: Le souffle créateur dans les arts, littératures et mystiques du Moyen Age européen et proche-oriental*, ed. Claire Kappler and Roger Grozelier, 363-75 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006).

²³ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 78-9.

to return to the guardians [*ḥafaza*] of the secrets of the Qurʾān and its meanings, seek out its folk and those who bear it, and ask the “people of remembrance” about its contents. As He—exalted is His name—says, *Ask the people of remembrance if you do not know* [Q 16:43], just as, with the rest of the arts and sciences, you would seek out their folk.²⁴

It is the inner purity of the “people of remembrance” which makes them receptacles for the secrets of the divine book. They have died to themselves and live in God. To this effect, Ṣadrā cites an unnamed sage, and then, in the following order, Plato, Jesus, the Prophet, and ‘Alī. Commenting upon ‘Alī’s saying, “God loves courage, even if it be in the slaying of a snake,” Ṣadrā says:

There is no snake like your soul, so slay it and purify it of the stain of its false beliefs and ugly opinions; or, subjugate it until it becomes a *muslim* in your hand. First cast it aside like the staff of Moses, then pick it up with your right hand after it has returned to its primordial nature [*sīratihā al-ūlā*] and original disposition [*fītratihā al-aṣliyya*].²⁵ It shall then live an intellectual life, striving for the Return [*al-maʿād*] and the final abode [*al-mathwā*].²⁶

Ṣadrā then advises those seeking knowledge of the Qurʾān but who do not have access to any of the “people of remembrance”:

O you in pursuit of the Real and the science of the First and the Last! If none of the folk of this kind—whom you can ask concerning the goal of the Qurʾanic sciences—are destined for you, then you should study this book. It contains beneficial principles [*al-qawānīn al-nāfiʿa*] pertaining to the knowledge of revelation [and] is comprehensive in its foundations which allude to the secrets of *taʾwīl* [*al-muḥīṭ bi-qawāʿidihi mushīra ilā asrār al-taʾwīl*]....²⁷

The *Mafātīḥ*, therefore, does not introduce Ṣadrā’s individual *tafsīrs*. Rather, it introduces the basic hermeneutic-cum-esoteric principles underlying these commentaries themselves. In

²⁴ Ibid. Cf. idem, *Sharḥ*, 1:166.

²⁵ This phrase harks back to Q 20:21, where *sīra* takes the accusative case ending.

²⁶ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 81.

²⁷ Ibid.

other words, the *Mafātīḥ*, in keeping with its title, provides the keys which will allow one to access the hermeneutical perspective Ṣadrā adopts in his Qurʾān commentaries. More specifically, this perspective is most clearly articulated in Miftāḥ 1.

2.2 – The Word Made Book

Although the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ* prepares us to read Miftāḥ 1 of the book’s twenty Miftāḥs, we would need to look in every possible corner within the text to see how Ṣadrā’s statements in the introduction relate to the remaining Miftāḥs. When Ṣadrā deals with, for example, God’s attributes much later in the *Mafātīḥ*, we may have some idea of how his introduction can inform such a discussion, namely that the secrets contained within the Qurʾān reveal to the one who looks close enough—that is, has the ability to “see”—the knowledge appropriate to a true understanding of God’s attributes. The first Miftāḥ, on the other hand, follows quite smoothly from the *Mafātīḥ*’s introduction, and the implications of the discussions there are clearly discernable when juxtaposed with the stated intent in the text’s introduction. It is, therefore, in the first Miftāḥ’s directness that Ṣadrā’s theoretical hermeneutics is best displayed. The other parts of the *Mafātīḥ* can function as elucidations on the points raised in the book’s first Miftāḥ, and in this sense, they elucidate his general hermeneutical perspective.

Hence, one is fully justified in focusing on the first Miftāḥ of the *Mafātīḥ* to discern Ṣadrā’s theoretical scriptural hermeneutics. For the remainder of this chapter, therefore, our discussion will be limited to Miftāḥ 1.²⁸ But before turning to Miftāḥ 1, an overview of Ṣadrā’s

²⁸ Since the text is quite theoretical in nature, there are several instances in which Ṣadrā does not develop the points he makes because he explicates their details in another one of his works. We will indicate where this happens in Miftāḥ 1 insofar as it has a bearing on our treatment of Ṣadrā’s scriptural hermeneutics, and will draw on these texts to help complete the picture.

ontology is in order, since its basic principles inform the entire argument of this section of the *Mafātīh*. Without doing so, it will be difficult to appreciate the text's discussions concerning the intimate relationship shared between the Qur'ān and being. As will be seen below, Ṣadrā only makes this connection in relatively vague terms in his writings, and this is because he assumes that his readers will be able to relate his theoretical pronouncements on the nature of the Qur'ān to his ontology.

2.2.1 – *The Two Senses of Being*

Ṣadrā distinguishes between two senses of being (*wujūd*): there is its concept (*mafhūm*) and then there is its reality (*ḥaqīqa*).²⁹ The reality of being, he says, is completely simple and indefinable, and is the most hidden thing. As Aristotle demonstrates in his *Topics*, in order for a thing to be defined, it must have a genus (*jins*) and differentia (*faṣl*).³⁰ Being, however, has neither genus nor differentia, and thus is not susceptible to any form of definition. What is communicated in an essential definition, that is, when we know a thing's genus and differentia, is the quiddity (*māhiyya*) or the “what-it-is-ness” (that by virtue of which the thing is what it is) of

²⁹ For this basic distinction, see Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités*, 28-30; Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 68-85; Kalin, “Mullā Ṣadrā's Realist Ontology of the Intelligibles and Theory of Knowledge,” 83-4; Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present*, 73-4; Fadlou Shehadi, *Metaphysics in Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Delmar, 1982), 120 ff. Cf. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 58 ff.

³⁰ See Aristotle, *Topics*, 103^b14-15 in idem, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:170. Cf. Avicenna's statement in his *Kitāb al-ḥudūd*: “The definition [*ḥadd*, but understood here as *ta'rīf*] of essential definition [*ḥadd*] is what the philosopher mentioned in the book [entitled] *Topics*. An essential definition is a statement which denotes the quiddity of a thing, namely the perfection of its essential existence, which is what is actualized for it in terms of its proximate genus and its differentia,” translated from the Arabic text published in Kiki Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition in Islamic Philosophy: The Limits of Words* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 163. Cf. Kennedy-Day's translation of this passage at *ibid.*, 102.

its species.³¹ Thus, when we bring together “animal” (genus) and “rational” (differentia), we are given the descriptive expression “rational animal.” “Rational animal” conveys to us the quiddity of a particular species, namely “man,” which is subsumed under the wider category “animal.” Thus, by defining the species “man” as a “rational animal,” man’s quiddity or that by virtue of which man is a man (and not a horse, for example), is conveyed. Since the reality of being does not have a genus or differentia, it cannot be defined, meaning that its quiddity cannot be conveyed.³² Therefore, the quiddity of being cannot be got at, since there is nothing about being which allows it to be subsumed into any general category (genus), let alone a more particularized category of the genus (differentia).

Despite the fact that the reality of being is indefinable and hidden, its “*anniyya*,”³³ Ṣadrā tells us, “is the most evident of things”³⁴ Or, as Sabziwārī famously put it:

³¹ Walbridge and Ziai, “Glossary,” in Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 197, describe an essential definition as a “definition that conveys the quiddity of the species by naming the proximate genus and the differentia.” See also p. 151 n. 14.

³² It is important to distinguish between two types of quiddity: there is (1) quiddity in the most specific sense (*al-māhiyya bi-ma’nā al-akhaṣṣ*), and (2) quiddity in the most general sense (*al-māhiyya bi-ma’nā al-a’amm*). The first type of quiddity is simply the answer to the question, “what is it?,” whereas the second type is a thing’s essence proper, that is, that by virtue of which it is what it is. Being does have a quiddity in the most specific sense, since if we were to ask what being is, we can answer “being.” But being does not have a quiddity in the most general sense, since it escapes all definition, and that because it does not have a genus or differentia. See Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 75 n. 34, 101; Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present*, 66.

³³ In later Islamic thought, the important philosophical term *anniyya* becomes a synonym for *wujūd*. See Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy*, 317 n. 18; Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 6:48-57. Cf. Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités*, 37. Cf. also Corbin’s note in Ṣadrā, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 181-2, where he cites a comment from Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā’ī’s *Sharḥ al-Mashā’ir*, which reads as follows: “The thing’s *annīya* is its reality when one considers this thing as positive and real.” For a survey of the opinions of Western historians of Islamic philosophy concerning the term’s provenance, and a thorough discussion which suggests its possible Syriac origins, see Richard Frank, “The Origin of the Arabic Philosophical Term *’anīya*,” *Les Cahiers de Byrsa* 6 (1956): 181-201 (reprinted in idem,

Its notion is one of the most recognizable of things,
although its reality lies in utter hiddenness.³⁵

Being is self-evident (*badīhī*) from two perspectives: (1) by virtue of its simple givenness to us, which is tantamount to saying that the very fact or reality of being is itself self-evident;³⁶ and (2) its notion or concept. Turning our attention to the first of these two perspectives, we notice that being is the very ground of our experience of reality, and is therefore the most general and comprehensive of things, since it applies to all things. This explains why any predicate with which we can qualify being is subsumed under being itself. If, for example, we speak of “horses” or “books,” we can only do so with reference to existent entities, that is, entities that participate in some mode of being, even if these entities do not exist extra-mentally. In other words, the being of horses and books is what allows us to talk about them. Therefore, when we look at any

Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism in Medieval Islam: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām (Vol. 1), ed. Dimitri Gutas, ch. 4 [Aldershot, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2005]). For more recent discussions of *annīyya*, see Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 124 ff.; Gerhard Endress and Dimitri Gutas, *A Greek and Arabic Lexicon* (Leiden: Brill, 1992-), 1:427-37; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 49.

³⁴ Ṣadrā, *al-Mashā'ir* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2000, repr. ed.), 57. See also *ibid.*, 58; *idem*, *Asfār*, 1:83. In the *Mashā'ir*, one of Ṣadrā's most mature philosophical compositions, he explains the fundamentals of his ontology in remarkably lucid fashion. The most useful discussion of this text remains Corbin, “Introduction.” An English translation of this work is available, although it is not as nuanced as Corbin's French translation, and contains many inaccuracies: Ṣadrā, *The Metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā: The Book of Metaphysical Prehensions*, trans. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science, 1992). For more on this text and its manuscripts, see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 66-8.

³⁵ *Mafhūmuhu min a'rafi l-ashyā'i / wa kunhuhu fī ghāyati l-khafā'i* (Sabziwārī, *Sharḥ*, 4). For alternative translations of this couplet, see Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present*, 297 n. 29; Sabziwārī, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 31.

³⁶ Talk of the self-evidentiality of the reality of being should not be confused with the self-evidentiary nature of the concept of being. The former, as Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 78 puts it, “forever escapes direct conceptualization.” But the later can be conceived and its structure analyzed.

particular thing—whether it exists extra-mentally or not—we can say that it “is” being.³⁷ At the same time, since being is so all-pervasive, any attempt to define its reality will end up in error, since one can only define being through what is more obscure than it.³⁸ Being’s self-evidentiary nature is, in the final analysis, what veils it from us. It is the most proximate of things to us, and by the same token it is the most distant of them as well. This order of being’s self-evidentiary nature is concerned with its reality as it is self-evident by virtue of its very givenness, although it cannot be defined because of its fundamental hiddenness, which obtains because of its all-pervasiveness and manifestness.

With respect to the other sense in which being is self-evident, namely its concept, we can make concrete judgements about its structure. As a notion, in other words, being is not entirely hidden from us. When, for example, we are presented with the statement, “This is a house,” the notion “house”—which is an existent in one form or another—immediately occurs to the mind. This understanding of being is what Izutsu refers to as the “preconceptual” notion of being,³⁹ since it forms the basis through which we understand the world. In a sense, the preconceptual notion of being resembles the reality or givenness of being, although, as seen above, the givenness of being refers to the very fact of its apparentness in its hiddenness and its hiddenness in its apparentness. The preconceptual understanding of being, insofar as individual existents are conceived by the mind, is simply a preparatory stage in which the concept of being is self-

³⁷ We cannot, strictly speaking, say that particular things “have” being, for they are nothing but instantiations of being. Or, as Plato would put it, they “participate in existence.” To say that B has A is to say that the two are distinct. But if A itself is the ground for B and without which B would be nonexistent, it would be absurd to say that B “has” A. Rather, it would be more fitting to say that B “is” A, but in a limited sense. On how we can talk about instantiations or particularizations of being, see pp. 88-9.

³⁸ Şadrā, *Mashā’ir*, 57.

³⁹ Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 68-9.

evident to the mind based on the apprehension of a term or concept, such as “house.” The concept of being proper, on the other hand, again mediated by a concept such as “house,” is what Izutsu refers to as a “secondary elaboration” of the conceived object, which is to say that the image is “a step removed from the concrete and intimate kind of presence in the consciousness [afforded to the mind by the self-evidentiary nature of being through the concept encountered by the mind].”⁴⁰

Izutsu’s distinction between the preconceptual notion of being and the concept of being proper does not, technically speaking, affect one important point: the concept of being, however conceived, is intimately linked to the existence of quiddities.⁴¹ Thus, however we conceive of being, when we attempt to understand it conceptually, we must posit a quiddity. Being is the most self-evident concept, and it is known through particular quiddities. Quiddities are discernable through the gradation of being.⁴² Hence the reality of being is unknown, although its concept is self-evident. In other words, the self-evidentiary nature of the concept of being is itself a given. Applied to things, which is that to which the concept of being must necessarily attach,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 76.

⁴¹ Although at *ibid.*, 77 Izutsu notes that these two orders of the concept of being are linked by quiddities, he is more concerned with analyzing the structure of the notion of being proper, which is why he posits these two orders. To be sure, Izutsu himself notes at *ibid.*, 76-7 that the *ḥikmat* philosophers often do not make this two-tiered distinction of the notion of being explicitly, instead using the term *mafhūm* to denote both senses of notion.

⁴² See the remarks in Sabziwārī, *Sharḥ-i Manzūma*, 42; *idem*, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, 31-2. Indeed, a basic Ṣadrīan principle is that the less there is of being, the more there is of quiddity, and the more there is of being, the less there is of quiddity. See Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités*, 66 ff; Jambet, *The Act of Being*, ch. 4; Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 29-31, 35 ff. Although the notion of degrees of intensity and weakness in existence is a cornerstone of Ṣadrā’s philosophy, this teaching has its roots in earlier Islamic thought, particularly in some passages of Avicenna’s *Mubāḥathāt*. See Mayer, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Critique of Ibn Sīnā’s Argument for the Unity of God in the *Ishārāt* and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī’s Defence,” in *Before and After Avicenna*, 199-218. For a study of Avicenna’s *Mubāḥathāt*, see David Reisman, *The Making of the Avicennan Tradition: The Transmission, Contents, and Structure of Ibn Sīnā’s al-Mubāḥathāt (The Discussions)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

the only way being can be conceptualized is through its instantiations or particularizations, since quiddity is what allows for the “concept” of being to arise in our minds in the first place. In other words, the concept of being cannot arise out of a vacuum, but rather through being itself. If we attempt to conceptualize being without particular references, we would be inquiring into the reality of being, to which we have no access. The reality of being, therefore, is indefinable and inaccessible, although its concept—which is signalled in the first instance by quiddities, which come about as a result of being’s individual instantiations, or what Ṣadrā calls specifications (*takhaṣṣuṣ*),⁴³ individuations (*mutashakhkhaṣ*),⁴⁴ or modes (*naḥw*)⁴⁵ of being—can be accessed and, from this perspective, “defined.”

2.2.2 – *The Scroll of Being*

Early on in Miftāḥ 1, Ṣadrā employs several images to convey the significance of the Qur’ān. Some key points are made here which, when read in the context of Ṣadrā’s treatment of the modes of descent of the divine Word, allow us to walk away with a clearer picture of his understanding of the nature of the Qur’ān. Alluding to an observation made in the introduction of the *Mafātīḥ*, Ṣadrā tells his readers that the Qur’ān, by its very nature, is meant to make human beings ascend. Here he notes that each of the Qur’ān’s letters contains a thousand allusions and symbols, which is a fairly common trope in Sufi Qur’anic exegesis. Ṣadrā likens the Qur’ān’s letters to hunting nets which are outspread with meanings in order to capture the birds that are in

⁴³ See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 1:44 ff.

⁴⁴ See idem, *Mashā’ir*, 57-8.

⁴⁵ See idem, *Asfār*, 1:56 ff., 427-46. For expositions of Ṣadrā’s concept of the gradation or modulation of being (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), see Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités*, part 1; Kamal, *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendent Philosophy*, ch. 5; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, chs. 2-5. See also Jambet, *The Act of Being*, ch. 4.

the sky. The image used here, which Ṣadrā draws on in at least one of his *tafsīrs*,⁴⁶ is quite telling. Every bird (read “human soul”) finds its “sustenance” (*rizq*) in the Qur’ān, but very few of them will be captured by the Qur’ān’s hunting nets. Most birds are contented with taking what little sustenance they need in order to get by, who are likened here to those human beings who read the Qur’ān only to obtain particular types of knowledge, such as legal injunctions. These forms of knowledge, if followed, will grant human beings salvation.⁴⁷ But there are other birds who seek a different kind of sustenance from the Qur’ān. They hover over the Qur’ān’s hunting nets, seeking their nourishment from the Qur’ān’s letters and sounds since they contain the meanings of God’s Word.⁴⁸ Since their sustenance in the deepest sense is contained in the Word itself and not just in its surface meanings, they immerse themselves within the Qur’ān’s universe and become its “prisoners.” These prisoners of the Qur’ān cannot but be captured by the Qur’ān’s hunting nets, seeing as it is that they expend all their efforts grappling with its nets, but which, in the end, must necessarily overpower them.

On a number of occasions the Qur’ān refers to itself as a “cure” (*shifā*),⁴⁹ and the Prophet is reported to have said that “the Qur’ān is the cure.”⁵⁰ We are thus not surprised to find references to the “hospital of the Qur’ān” (*shifā-khāna-yi qur’ān*) in Sufi literature.⁵¹ Souls will naturally gravitate towards the Qur’ān since, as Ṣadrā remarks, it contains the cure to the greatest sickness

⁴⁶ See Keeler, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Commentary on *Sūrat al-Sajda*,” 343-6. Cf. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 70.

⁴⁷ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 86.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See Q 17:82, 10:57.

⁵⁰ ‘Allāma Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Qum, 1956-72), 92:176 (also on *Nūr* (CD-ROM) [Qum: Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences, 1999]).

⁵¹ Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-‘ibād*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāḥī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjama wa-Nashr-i Kitāb, 1973), 268. Cf. Ešots, “The Qur’ānic Hermeneutics of Mullā Ṣadrā.”

which plagues human beings, namely ignorance (*jahl*).⁵² Hence, the deeper one is immersed in the Qur’ān, the more entangled he finds himself in its hunting nets, and the less ignorant he becomes. It is with this consideration in mind that we should read an important statement about the Qur’ān in one of Ṣadrā’s early *tafsīrs*, namely the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-wāqī’a*. Here, he employs several other images to convey the book’s depth and significance. We find that ignorance, here identified with blindness, is what keeps human beings fettered from attaining true life:

Every one of its chapters is an ocean saturated with gems of meaning and exposition; rather, it is a celestial sphere filled with the stars of divine realities and essences.... The verses are shining stars which adorn and illuminate the heaven of guidance, prophecy, and sainthood [*walāya*], because of whose flashes and illuminations man and jinn attain unto *the last configuration* [*al-nash’at al-ukhrā*]⁵³ [Q 53:47] and the abode of life, being freed from the darkness of blindness and deprivation, the punishments of the grave, and the fires of Hell.⁵⁴

We have already seen how Ṣadrā refers to the Word of God as that by virtue of which man “ascends.” By extension (and paradoxically), the less immersed/imprisoned one is in the Qur’ān, the more pinned down one is by other than it, which is tantamount to darkness, blindness, and ignorance. But what exactly is this book that contains the cure for the illnesses of man’s existential condition and allows him to ascend? Drawing on another image, Ṣadrā alludes to the Qur’ān’s nature by referring to it as a “rope” that descends from Heaven in order to save all those trapped in what Henry Corbin would call the “cosmic crypt”⁵⁵:

⁵² Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 85. For the healing nature of the Qur’ān, see idem, *Tafsīr*, 6:8. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:2, 6:10. See also Mangabadi, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Method of Qur’ān Commentary,” 436; Sa’idi, “Illumination, Unveiling and Intuition in Mullā Ṣadrā’s Qur’ānic Commentary,” 521-2.

⁵³ Depending on the context, the term *nash’a*, which denotes the makeup of a particular thing, can either refer to the configuration of a place or world (as it is used in this passage), or a human being’s constitution. For discussions of this term, see Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 98 n. 31; idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 250 n. 302.

⁵⁴ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:9. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:2.

⁵⁵ See Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 16-28.

The Qur'ān is God's firm rope [*ḥabl allāh al-matīn*]⁵⁶ which was sent down from Heaven in order to save those shackled in the cradle of satans and the abyss of those who have descended. It is one of God's lights [*nūr min anwār allāh*]: it contains guidance for wayfarers, and through it one can ascend from the lowest of worlds to the highest way stations [*manāzil*] of the 'Illiyūn⁵⁷ and the most exalted levels of those seated upon *the chair of truth* [Q 54:55] and certainty. So read it, O impoverished one, and advance!⁵⁸

It is significant that Ṣadrā refers to the Qur'ān in the above-cited text from the *Maḥāṣin* as “one of God's lights.” This reference, as we will see in chapter four of this study, is all the more important because of the emphasis placed in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* on the nature of light and its identity with God's Essence. In the present context, it is worth noting that Ṣadrā does not provide us with a clear-cut definition of the nature of the Qur'ān. All we have to work with are several stock images, and in each case Ṣadrā employs them, his intention is to convey the salvific role of the Qur'ān and not its status as such. The reason he does not attempt to provide a definition of the book for us seems to be because, in one sense, he identifies the Qur'ān with being. Although Peerwani⁵⁹ and Khwājawi⁶⁰ insist that Ṣadrā does this explicitly, there is not one clear-cut text in his oeuvre which makes this point.

⁵⁶ A clear allusion to Q 3:103, which speaks of “God's rope” (*ḥabl allāh*).

⁵⁷ Mentioned in Q 83:18-9, this term in early Qur'anic exegesis was understood to refer to an exalted station in Paradise, whereas later commentators took it to mean the “inscribed book” (*kitāb marqūm*) (mentioned in Q 83:20), which contains a record of the deeds of the righteous. In this context, Ṣadrā clearly favours the earlier interpretations. See *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. “'Illiyūn” (by Frederik Leemhuis; cf. Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 98 n. 34). See also *Dictionnaire du Coran*, s.v.v. “'Illiyūn et Sijjīn” (by Daniel De Smet).

⁵⁸ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṣin*, 89. Cf. the following statement: “The Qur'ān was revealed to creation with thousands of veils in order for those with weak intellects and blind eyes to comprehend. If, given its greatness, the Throne [*arsh*] of the *bā'* of the *basmala* were to descend to the earth [*farsh*], the earth would perish and become annihilated. There is an indication to this meaning in His saying, *Were we to cause this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain, you would see it humbled and split apart out of fear of God* [Q 59:21]” (ibid., 98-9).

⁵⁹ Peerwani, “Translator's Introduction,” 15.

Yet Peerwani and Khwājawī are not mistaken in their insistence on Ṣadrā's identification of the Qur'ān with being from one perspective, even if he does not explicitly make this connection. There is one text in Miftāḥ 1 in particular which provides us with a key piece to the puzzle, but to which neither of the aforementioned authors seem to give much weight. In the passage in question, Ṣadrā notes that the Qur'ān is one in its reality, but multiple in its levels of descent:

Although the Qur'ān is one reality, it has many levels in its descent [*nuzūl*]⁶¹ and many names⁶² in accordance with these levels. So in every world and configuration it is called by a name which corresponds to its specific station and its particular rank.⁶³

As was seen above, Ṣadrā's fundamental ontological stance is that there is one underlying reality, namely being, which in and of itself is indefinable. Yet we know of being through its many instantiations, all of which help define it in some limited fashion. The Qur'ān, likewise, cannot be defined, which is why Ṣadrā does not provide us with a definition of it, and limits himself to allusions of its true nature by employing symbolic imagery. Yet how is the Qur'ān one in its reality and multiple in its instantiations? The missing ingredient here, and which is essential to a proper understanding of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics, lies in the function of God's Speech.

We noted above that the Qur'ān can be identified with being, but in one sense only. Because the Qur'ān is God's Word, it is not to be identified with being as such. As we will see in chapters four and five of this study respectively, being can, strictly speaking, only be identified with God's Essence (*dhāt*) and mercy (*raḥma*). The primary reason being cannot be identified

⁶⁰ See Khwājawī's introduction in Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 57. See also Ārānī, "Taṭābuq-i madārij-i qur'ān wa-ma'ārij-i insān az manẓar-i Ṣadr-i muta'allihīn," 48-9.

⁶¹ Lit. "its reality has many levels in descent."

⁶² Reading *asmā'* for *asmā'*.

⁶³ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 98.

with the Qurʾān is because the Qurʾān, by virtue of being God’s Word, is itself an instantiation of being. That is to say that as soon as there is “movement” within being as such, it will necessarily be delimited and hence “defined” in some sense. As Ṣadrā reminds us, God’s Word comes about through the Qurʾanic Command “Be!” (Q 2:117):

The Word is the High Spirit which is said not to fall under the shade of “Be!,” for it is the Word “Be!” itself which is the very Command itself, because it is God’s Command through which things are existentiated. There is no doubt about the fact that the Speech [*qawl wa-kalām*] of the Real is above existing beings and higher than them, since through God’s Speech, actuality [*fiʿl*], the exercising of effects [*taʿthīr*],⁶⁴ and engendering [*takwīn*] occur. So how can God’s Word be under existent things? He says, *God’s Word is the highest* [Q 9:40].⁶⁵

When God wills for His Word to emerge from its primordial silence and state of latency within the divine Essence, the Command sends out reverberations, which make up the “stuff” of the cosmos.⁶⁶ Yet the Word or Command⁶⁷ is “above” existent things, which explains why, in

⁶⁴ Cf. idem, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 95 n. 10.

⁶⁵ Idem, *Asrār*, 76. A page earlier, Ṣadrā makes the following remark: “[In] His saying, *If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord would be exhausted, even if we were to come with its like in assistance* [Q 18:109], the ‘Words’ are an allusion to the luminous essences through which the effusion of being [*ḥayāt al-wujūd*] reaches bodies and corporeal entities; the ‘sea’ is an allusion to the prime matter of bodies which are characterized by reception and renewal. The renewal of the effusion occurs in accordance with the succession of the bodies’ passivities and preparednesses” (ibid., 75).

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the function of the reverberation of the Word in the cosmos, see Rustom, “The Symbolism of the Wing in Suhrawardī’s *The Reverberation of Gabriel’s Wing*,” *Transcendent Philosophy* 7 (2006): 189-202. See also Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:199-201.

⁶⁷ That the Word and the Command are, from one perspective, the same reality, is confirmed by Ṣadrā at *Asrār*, 75-6: “From the perspective of various standpoints, the names are many and the Named one. Insofar as the knowledge-giving [*ʿilm*] of the realities from God occurs through them, they are called ‘Words.’ Insofar as the existence of existing beings [*wujūd al-kāʾināt*] is necessitated by them—each at its appropriate moment—they are called God’s ‘Command’ [*amr allāh*] and ‘Irrevocable Decree’ [*qaḍāʾuhu al-ḥatmī*]. Insofar as the life of existing things is through them, they are called God’s ‘Spirit’ [*rūḥ*]: Say, *The Spirit is from the Command [amr] of my Lord* [Q 17:85]. In its essence, the names are one: *Our Command [amrunā] is nothing but one* [Q 54:50]. But they are numerous by virtue of the numerous types of effects: *And He revealed in each heaven its Command [amrahā]* [Q

one sense, we can identify the Qur’ān—God’s Word—with being. Since God’s Speech (*kalām*) is the first movement of being, that is, the first instance in which being makes itself known, it is, in a sense, hidden and yet completely manifest. This explains why the cosmos only comes about through Speech and can be identified with it.⁶⁸

Employing the language of theoretical Sufism, Ṣadrā identifies the cosmos with the articulation of the Breath of the All-Merciful (*al-naḥās al-raḥmān*), a term based on a famous *ḥadīth* and made popular by Ibn ‘Arabī. Ṣadrā identifies the Breath of the All-Merciful with self-unfolding being (*al-wujūd al-munbaṣiṭ*) and the Real through whom creation takes places (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi*).⁶⁹ Following Ibn ‘Arabī, he likens this Breath to human breath. Just as human breath gives rise to articulated forms through the act of speaking, so too do the various levels of being take on concretized form within God’s Breath, that is, through His act of speaking.⁷⁰ In other words, just as the forms of words become articulated in human breath (this

41:12]. Or, from the perspective of their directions of their effusions upon the things or their attachments to them, they become ‘many’ through their abundance, just as being is one reality which becomes numerous through the abundance of quiddities—not because the quiddities exercise effects upon being, but because of the unification of quiddity with being.” See also Corbin’s remarks in Ṣadrā, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 208 n. 79. At *Tafsīr*, 1:190-1, Ṣadrā makes a similar point with respect to the fragmentation of letters, that is, they are one but take on different designations (*alqāb*) because of the diversity of ranks and loci of manifestation (*maḥāhir*). He also relates this phenomenon to the many names taken on by God, who is, however, One in Himself. For Ṣadrā’s discussion of this point in the context of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, see pp. 158-64.

⁶⁸ Idem, *Maḥāṭiḥ*, 93-4.

⁶⁹ Ṣadrā seems to take the former term from Qūnawī, *al-Tafsīr al-ṣūfī li-l-qur’ān (Ijās al-bayān fī ta’wīl umm al-qur’ān)*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā’ (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1969), 193. However, Ṣadrā will more commonly speak of “self-unfolding being” (*al-wujūd al-munbaṣiṭ*), for which, see p. 159 n. 41 of the present study.

⁷⁰ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭiḥ*, 100-1. See also *ibid.*, 93-4: “The cosmos [*‘ālam*] does not become manifest except through Speech. Rather, the cosmos is Speech itself, its parts being commensurate to its twenty-eight stations [*maqāmāt*] and ranks [*manāzil*] within the Breath of the All-Merciful [*naḥās al-raḥmān*] [for the Breath of the All-Merciful and its relation to the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), xxviii-xxxii], just as words and vocal

being nothing other than the outward manifestation of an inward form), so too do the things which are formed within the divine Breath take on corporeal form through God's act of existentiation (effectively bringing the latent possibilities contained within God's "mind" from potentiality into actuality). Just as when a speaker conceives of saying something there occurs in his mind a form of what he wants to say, and then there exits from within him, articulated in air, the form of his speech, so too are the realities of things, which are fixed in God's knowledge, contained in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), which Ṣadrā identifies with the Angelic Intellects.⁷¹ God's knowledge, likewise, is brought into being (*iẓhār*) (this is a term which will have a great deal of significance in Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*) from the Unseen to the seen, until a Command issues forth.⁷²

God's Command, however, itself has levels. For if this were not the case, then all of His Commands would have the same ontological status, which would mean that His Speech would ontologically be on the same level as, for example, His creatures, who are lesser manifestations of the Word or Command. Strictly speaking, Speech consists of three levels: the highest, the mid-most, and the lowest.⁷³ God's Speech at the highest level is referred to by Ṣadrā, following the wording of a well-known Prophetic supplication, as the Perfect Words (*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*):

letters [*al-ḥurūf al-ṣawtiyya*] subsist within the self of the human speaker commensurate to his points of stopping and articulation [*manāzil wa-makhārij*] [cf. *ibid.*, 42]. The speaker's aim in speaking is, firstly, to produce the entities of letters and existentiate them from the points of articulation. This is the very essence of making-known [*i'lām*].” This passage is reproduced in slightly different form in Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-baqara* (see *idem*, *Tafsīr*, 1:188), which was written after the *Mafātīḥ*.

⁷¹ *Idem*, *Mafātīḥ*, 104.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 94. Cf. *ibid.*, 103-6, where Ṣadrā describes the manner in which speech is formed intellectually and then verbally.

The highest level of Speech is Speech itself in terms of its principal purpose [*maqṣūd awwalī*], there being no other purpose after it because of the nobility of its existence, the perfection of its being, and because of its being the final goal [*ghāya*] of whatever is beneath it. This is like God's originating the World of the Command through the Command "Be!", and nothing else. These are God's Perfect Words [*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*] which are never exhausted, nor do they perish, since there is no aim other than God's Command in their being produced from Him through the Command "Be!"⁷⁴

Ṣadrā goes on to tell us that the highest form of Speech corresponds to the Originating Command (i.e., the world of the Decree); the mid-most to the engendering Command (i.e., the world of temporal measuring out); and the lowest to the prescriptive Command.⁷⁵ The engendering Command must be obeyed, whereas obedience to the prescriptive Command is entirely man's decision. The engendering Command must be obeyed since human beings do not have a say in whether or not they will come to exist. The prescriptive command, on the other hand, corresponds to God's rules as laid out in the religious law.⁷⁶

As for the originating Command, being ontologically higher than both the engendering and prescriptive Commands, it is of a completely different order. The intellectual and disembodied forms of being which emerge from the Command are known as God's "Words." As intermediaries between God and His creatures, the function of these Words of God is to carry out His will in the created order.⁷⁷ Just as human commands—which proceed from human volition—

⁷⁴ Ibid., 94. Corbin renders *al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt* as "Paroles parfaits" and "Verbes parfaits." See Ṣadrā, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 208 n. 79.

⁷⁵ Idem, *Maḥāṭih*, 94-5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 95-6. For the engendering (*takwīnī*) and prescriptive (*tashrīṭī*) Commands, see Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 141-4.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:9-10: "His Speech [*qawl*] and Word [*kalima*] are not of the genus of sounds and letters, just as His Essence and attributes are not of the genus of bodies and modalities. Nor are they of the genus of substances and accidents. Rather, His Speech [*qawl wa-kalām*] and Command [*amr*]⁷⁷—as has been stated in the *Maḥāṭih*—is pure intellectual disembodied being. So His Words are holy existents [and] spiritual matters which are the intermediaries

come about through the function of our words, so too do the Perfect Words proceed from God's Command. And, just as the individual letters which make up the words of a human command arise spontaneously—that is, not gradationally—our words carry out our commands in a manner that is more primary than the actual object of the command. Likewise, God's Words embody His Command and are thus complete and perfect, since they come about as a direct result of the originating Command. That which is the object of the Command, namely the things in the cosmos, all of which come into being by virtue of the Command "Be!," are thus weaker in being and less potent in effects than the Perfect Words themselves. Since these words are "Perfect," they inform the less perfect words, which are nothing but the shadows of the Perfect Words.

God's Speech is therefore the mode in which He reveals His will to the cosmos.⁷⁸ His Speech is the "stuff" of the cosmos since the cosmic order is nothing but the articulated form of the originating Command "Be!," which means that all the beings in the cosmos are simply instantiations of the Perfect Words which themselves are the primary instantiations of the originating Command. The highest level of God's Speech, that is, His most principal Command which is identified with the Qur'ān, is therefore the prototype of being.⁷⁹ As the scroll of being, the Qur'ān's verses are everywhere, since they are entities of being which are to be found in the parchment of the cosmic order:

Just as when the Command becomes an act, as in His saying "Be!," and
it becomes [Q 2:117], when Speech becomes individuated

between God and the creatures, and through which is realized His knowledge, power, and the penetration of His will and desire amongst the existent things." We will turn to Ṣadrā's treatment of the Perfect Words in the context of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* in chapter four of this study.

⁷⁸ Cf. idem, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 148-50.

⁷⁹ For this point in Ibn 'Arabī, see Denis Gril, "Commentaries on the *Fātiḥa* and Experience of Being According to Ibn 'Arabī," trans. Josip Rainer, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 20 (1996): 33-52 (particularly p. 40 onwards).

[*tashakkhaṣa*] and descends, it becomes a book. The scroll [*ṣahīfa*] of the being of the created world is the book of God [*kitāb allāh*], and its signs [*āyāt*] are the entities of the existent things [*a'yān al-mawjūdāt*]: *In the alternation of night and day, and in what God created in the heavens and on earth, are signs for a people who are God-wary* [Q 10:6].⁸⁰

The fact that the Qur'ān is the prototype of being explains why Ṣadrā does not attempt to define the Qur'ān's nature. The Qur'ān is not being as such, since, as the Word, it emerges through a delimitation of being. But, since it is the first delimitation of being, the Word of God cannot properly be encompassed.⁸¹ It is, as the highest of the Perfect Words, the most inaccessible of them as well. Like the Intellect in Neoplatonism which contains all the archetypal forms and thus “is” the forms, so too can we say that the Qur'ān contains all of being and “is” being.

2.3 – Levels of the Qur'ān, Levels of the Self

In his *tafsīrs*, Ṣadrā occasionally alludes to the correspondences which exist between the Qur'ān and man. He tells us, for example, that all of the Qur'ān's verses are “hidden shells containing valuable and precious pearls, every one of which corresponds to the soul of man.”⁸² As is the case with his other theoretical discussions concerning the Qur'ān, Ṣadrā's most important treatment of the correspondences shared between the Qur'ān and man is to be found in Miftāḥ 1 of the *Maḥāṭib*. In one key passage, he addresses a version of the famous Sufi doctrine of the Qur'ān's senses:

⁸⁰ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 103.

⁸¹ Cf. Izutsu's observation: “What makes revelation such a particular non-natural kind of linguistic behaviour is that here the speaker is God and the hearer is a man, that is to say, the phenomenon of speech occurs here between the supernatural order of being and the natural order of being, so that there is in fact no ontological balance or equilibrium of rank and level between speaker and hearer” (“Revelation as a Linguistic Concept in Islam,” *Studies in Medieval Thought* 5 [1962]: 127).

⁸² Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 7:9. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:2.

Know that the Qur'ān, like man, is divided into a manifest [*alan*] and hidden dimension [*sirr*], each of which has an outer [*zahr*] and inner [*batn*] aspect. Its inner aspect has another inner aspect known only to God: *and none knows its interpretation but God* [Q 3:7].⁸³ It has also been related in the *ḥadīth*, “The Qur'ān has an outer and inner aspect.” Its inner aspect consists of up to seven inner dimensions [*abṭun*] which are like the levels of man's inner dimensions, such as the soul [*nafs*], heart [*qalb*], intellect [*aql*], spirit [*rūḥ*], innermost mystery [*sirr*], and the hidden and most hidden [*al-khafī wa-l-akhfā*].⁸⁴

Although the above-cited text occurs quite late in Miftāḥ 1 and Ṣadrā does not develop it in any significant fashion, some of the earlier discussions in Miftāḥ 1 shed a good deal of light on his statement concerning the relationship shared between the Qur'ān and man. At the beginning of Miftāḥ 1, Ṣadrā drives home the point that outward faculties will only be able to perceive the outward realities of things. The more outward and exoteric one's outlook, the more exoteric his vision of reality. Ṣadrā gives the example of Abū Lahab and Abū Jahl. Both of these individuals were eloquent in Arabic, yet neither of them saw the Qur'ān for what it was.⁸⁵ Their inner-sight was blinded by the defilement of exterior forms, and hence their hearts were unable to perceive the truth of the Prophet's message.⁸⁶ The more one is immersed in outward forms, the less opportunity will he have to purify his inward state. The less purified one's inward being, the less will he be able to perceive inward realities.

⁸³ For a discussion of this verse, see Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'ān in Classical Islam*, ch. 2.

⁸⁴ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 115. This passage is also translated in Kamada, “Mullā Ṣadrā Between Mystical Philosophy and Qur'ān Interpretation,” 280. See also Ešots, “The Qur'ānic Hermeneutics of Mullā Ṣadrā.” Cf. Peerwani, “Translator's Introduction,” 15. Although Ṣadrā does not provide us with a citation, he derives the notion of the seven *abṭun* of the Qur'ān—either directly or indirectly—from an earlier source. See Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Boulder: Shambala, 1978), 121-31; Jamal Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of 'Alā' ad-Dawla as-Simnānī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 79-99; Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'ān in Classical Islam*, 44-6.

⁸⁵ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 87.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

Yet Ṣadrā clearly does not limit his criticisms of exoteric individuals to the early enemies of Islam. There are many Muslim scholars who, despite their knowledge and formal learning of the Islamic sciences, when it comes to the Qur’ān, do not even “hear” one of its letters as they should be heard, and thus do not truly understand its words.⁸⁷ Ṣadrā makes it very clear that, when interpreting the Qur’ān, one cannot depart from conventions of the Arabic language, since this can only lead to mistaken interpretations of scripture.⁸⁸ At the same time, there is a difference between remaining faithful to the written Word and being confined by its most outward expressions. In his Persian work, *Siḥ aṣl*, which is anything but mild in its condemnation of the exoteric ‘ulamā’, Ṣadrā makes his point clear:

That which Zamakhsharī and his likes understand from the Qur’ān is not, in reality, knowledge of the Qur’ān. Rather, it goes back to the sciences of lexicography, grammar, verbal expressions, and scholastic theology. But knowledge of the Qur’ān is other than these sciences, just as the skin and husk of man is not man in reality, but only metaphorically. This is why when one of the people of the heart [*aṣḥāb al-qulūb*]⁸⁹ read the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 92. See also idem, *Tafsīr*, 4:164 for the necessity of esoteric interpretation.

⁸⁸ Cf. ibid., 6:30-1, where Ṣadrā emphasizes the need to remain close to the conventions of the Arabic language. For the passage in context, see Sa’idi, “Illumination, Unveiling and Intuition in Mullā Ṣadrā’s Qur’ānic Commentary,” 525. See also Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:150-1 (translated in Sa’idi, “Illumination, Unveiling and Intuition in Mullā Ṣadrā’s Qur’ānic Commentary,” 528) for further appeals to clarity when there is no need to be esoteric. See also Peerwani, “Translator’s Introduction,” 22-3. Ṣadrā seems to closely follow Ibn ‘Arabī on this point, for which, see Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*, ch. 1.

⁸⁹ It is unclear who Ṣadrā intends by this appellation in this context. In another work, he employs the term in what is likely an allusion to Ghazālī. See Morris’ note in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 183-4 n. 174. Although Ghazālī was a much older contemporary of Zamakhsharī, he could not have been the critic of the *Kashshāf* mentioned in the passage, since the work was written after Ghazālī’s death. For the *Kashshāf*’s dates, see Andrew Lane, *A Traditional Mu’tazilite Qur’ān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh Zamakhsharī* (d. 538/1144) (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 48 ff. For an updated account of Ghazālī’s life and times, see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), ch. 1.

Kashshāf, he said to its author, “You are one of the scholars of the husk [*qishr*].”⁹⁰

Zamakhsharī and his likes are on the receiving end of Ṣadrā’s criticisms here because they approach the Qur’ān through exoteric lenses, devoting the bulk of their reflections on scripture to issues related to grammar, language, theology, and law. The correspondence between the Qur’ān and man in this text is telling. Ṣadrā likens the outer reality of the Qur’ān to the outer reality of man, just as he likens the inner reality of the Qur’ān to the inner reality of man. The most superficial aspect of scripture is its husk, just as the most superficial aspect of man is his outward form or “skin.”

Returning to Miftāḥ 1 of the *Mafātīḥ*, Ṣadrā again draws on the image of husks and outer coverings in discussing the relationship between the Qur’ān and man. This time, however, he juxtaposes the image with the necessary complement to the outward, namely the inward:

The Qur’ān has degrees and ranks, just as man has levels and stations. The lowest level of the Qur’ān is like the lowest level of man: the Qur’ān’s lowest level is what is contained in the book’s binding and covering [*jild wa-aghlāf*], just as the lowest rank of man is what is in the outer covering and skin [*al-ihāb wa-l-bashara*]. The husk [*qishr*] of man attains nothing but the blackness of the Qur’ān and its sensory form. The man of the outward husk only perceives husk-like meanings [*al-ma’ānī al-qishriyya*]. As for the spirit of the Qur’ān, its kernel [*lubb*],⁹¹ and its secret, none but the possessors of the kernels [*ūlū-l-albāb*]⁹² perceive it. They do not attain this through knowledge acquired by way of learning and thinking. Rather, [they attain this] through God-given [*ladunī*] knowledge.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ṣadrā, *Sih aṣl*, 84. Cf. the summary of this passage in Peerwani, “Translator’s Introduction,” 29. See also Corbin, “Introduction,” 24.

⁹¹ The word *lubb* (pl. *albāb*) signifies the innermost aspect or quintessence of a thing, as well as the heart or intellect. I translate it here as “kernel” in order to demonstrate its concrete juxtaposition with the term *qishr* or “husk.”

⁹² A phrase which occurs in the Qur’ān on sixteen occasions, such as Q 12:111, 13:19, etc.

⁹³ Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ*, 117. Note here the Qur’anic provenance of *‘ilm ladunī* (i.e., Q. 18:65). See also Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:206 for a fine characterization of the different types of knowers with reference to the language of shells, outer layers, etc.

Since the Qurʾān can in one sense be identified with being, like being, it is, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, both one and multi-level.

Thus, the more one penetrates the Word of God, the closer one moves towards the undifferentiated aspect of being, and hence the closer one moves towards unity. Since the Qurʾān's levels correspond to the levels of being, and Ṣadrā notes that the levels of man correspond to the levels of the Qurʾān, the more man penetrates being, the more “real” he becomes, and the more he understands of the Qurʾān. Put differently, we can say that the more he understands the Qurʾān, the more intensely he “is.”

In order to penetrate the Qurʾān's deepest levels man must therefore penetrate his own deepest levels. This can only be done when he engages in a *taʾwīl* of his soul, that is, when he causes his soul to return to its true Origin. The Origin is undifferentiated, which explains why, as Corbin suggests, *taʾwīl* is a metahistorical “event.”⁹⁴ A return to one's Origin necessitates the crushing of the ego, which is to say that the self leaves the self and transcends time, space, and “history.” Thus, the more one dies to the self, the deeper one becomes immersed in his true Self. The deeper one becomes immersed in his true Self, the deeper will he be able to penetrate being on the one hand, and the Qurʾān—the prototype of being—on the other.

Penetrating the veils of being is, as Ṣadrā notes elsewhere, akin to self-knowledge, and having self-knowledge is akin to having knowledge of the heart.⁹⁵ To proceed from the husk of

⁹⁴ See Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:212-3. See also idem, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, trans. Leonard Fox (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), 90-1.

⁹⁵ Cf. Rizvi, “‘Au-delà du miroir’ or Beyond Discourse and Intuition.” In his *Sih aṣl*, 13-4, Ṣadrā makes the following point: “The foundation of faith in the afterlife and knowledge of the gathering and resurrection of souls and bodies lies in knowing the heart. But most people are ignorant of it—and this is the greatest cause of wretchedness and unhappiness in the end—since they are engulfed in the world. So whoever has not acquired self-knowledge does not know God, since ‘He who knows himself knows his Lord.’ And whoever does not know God is

the Qurʾān to its kernel, one must be able to proceed from the husk of his own existence to its kernel, which is the heart. This heart-knowledge is tantamount to what Ṣadrā referred to in the above passage as “God-given knowledge.” This type of knowledge allows one to read both the book of the soul and the book of God.⁹⁶ And since the human soul and the Qurʾān share such an intimate relationship, a completely refined soul shares an affinity with the Qurʾān in a principal manner.

The Qurʾān, as we observed in the previous section of this chapter, is, as the Word of God, the first instantiation of the Command “Be!” In its originary unity, the Qurʾān contains the forms of all things within it, and is, from this perspective, akin to being. The individual words contained in the Qurʾān appear in the written text of the Qurʾān as collective words, just as all the existents in the cosmos are comprised of composite parts. But in the realm of the unseen, in the most unmanifest aspect of being, these collective words of the Qurʾān subsist on their own as

better off being with beasts of burden and cattle: *They are like cattle. No, they are more misguided!* [Q 7:179]. Thus will the blind-hearted be resurrected on the Final Day, *Deaf, dumb, and blind—they will not return* [Q 2:18]. Concerning these people, God says, *They forgot God, so God caused them to forget themselves* [Q 59:19], which is an obversion of ‘He who knows himself knows his Lord.’ Since forgetfulness of God is the cause of forgetfulness of self, remembering the self will necessitate God’s remembering the self, and God’s remembering the self will itself necessitate the self’s remembering itself: *Remember Me and I will remember you* [Q 2:152]. God’s remembering the self is identical with the self’s existence [*wujūd*], since God’s knowledge is presential with all things. Thus, he who does not have knowledge of self, his self does not have being [*wujūd*], since its being is identical with light, presence, and perception. From these premises it becomes clear that whoever does not have self-knowledge does not know God and will be unfortunate in the next life: *Remember God much so that you may prosper* [Q 8:45]. It is in this context that ‘Aṭṭār says:

This advice will suffice you in both the worlds:
 let not your self take a breath without mention of God.
 So much must you remember God that,
 were you to relinquish His remembrance, you would be lost.”

⁹⁶ For Ṣadrā’s treatment of the book of the soul and the book of God, see idem, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 26-8.

individual letters.⁹⁷ The detached letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*) in the Qurʾān, therefore, indicate something of the primordial nature of being, that is, before the full deployment of the Word. Indeed, for Ṣadrā, the detached letters are not only limited to the mysterious letter combinations at the beginning of some Qurʾanic *sūras*.⁹⁸ Rather, they make up the entirety of the Qurʾān. The reason people do not see all the letters of the Qurʾān as detached is because they are too tied down to the husk of the book, which is another way of saying that they are confined to the husks of their own beings:

Because the people of this world are in the station where forms are gathered and meanings separated [*al-jamʿiyya al-ṣūriyya wa-l-tafarruqāt al-maʿnawīyya*], they witness various letters as unified and letters which are of one species as numerous individual parts. Thus, when they look at the letters *He loves them and they love Him* [*yuḥibbuhum wa-yuḥibbūnahū*] [Q 5:54], they see them as a unified species which is divided in its parts. However, those who have divested themselves of this world—for whom the veil has been lifted and the clouds of doubt and blindness have dispersed from the face of their insight—see these letters through inner sight in this way: *H-e-l-o-v-e-s-t-h-e-m* [*yāʾ-ḥāʾ-bāʾ-hāʾ-mīm*]. Then, when they ascend from this station to a higher station, they see them as tiny dots [*niqāṭ*].⁹⁹

The higher one ascends the scale of *wujūd*, the closer he ascends to the undifferentiated nature of being. Since the original Command was one Word, namely “Be!,” the gnostic is able to see the vast panorama of existence in its full potentiality, thus grasping the nature of things as so many individually differentiated species. At the furthest reaches of being, which is to say at the deepest

⁹⁷ Idem, *Maḥāṭib*, 90.

⁹⁸ At *Tafsīr*, 1:215-8, Ṣadrā summarizes Avicenna’s discussion of this topic as found in his *al-Risāla al-nayrūziyya fī maʿānī al-ḥurūf al-hijāʿiyya* (in idem, *Tisʿ rasāʾil* [Constantinople: Maṭbaʿat al-Jawāʾib, 1880], 92-7). For Avicenna, the detached letters are the names of essential realities (see Lory, *La science des lettres en islam* [Paris: Dervy, 2004] ch. 4), although he does not relate them to the Perfect Words, which seems to be Ṣadrā’s unique contribution here. For Ibn ʿArabī’s treatment of the detached letters, see Ibn ʿArabī, “The Science of Letters,” trans. Denis Gril in Ibn ʿArabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz (New York: Pir Press, 2002-4), 2:161-75.

⁹⁹ Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 90-1.

level of the penetration of the Qurʾān and the human soul, the gnostic sees all things in existence as so many tiny traces of the divine Command.

2.4 – Conclusion

We began this chapter with an inquiry into Mullā Ṣadrā’s most important theoretical work on the Qurʾān, the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. Although this work is a rather late addition to the Ṣadrian oeuvre, we know that several parts of it were written earlier on in his career, as portions of Miftāḥ 1 are expanded version of sections from the *Asfār*. This indicates that Ṣadrā’s understanding of the nature of scripture had already begun to crystallize even before he had completed his independent *tafsīr* works, which in part accounts for the consistent doctrinal perspective we find amongst these *tafsīrs*. At the same time, in Miftāḥ 1 of the *Mafātīḥ*, Ṣadrā’s presentation of the theoretical underpinnings of his Qurʾanic hermeneutics is most consistently presented, and there is an added dimension of depth not to be found in the corresponding sections of the *Asfār*. This explains why Ṣadrā understood the *Mafātīḥ* to have occupied a special place amongst his writings on the Qurʾān, a point which, as demonstrated in this chapter, he was especially concerned to drive home in the introduction to the *Mafātīḥ*.

The central importance of the *Mafātīḥ* in general, and Miftāḥ 1 in particular, is, therefore, not in its being an introduction to Ṣadrā’s individual *tafsīrs*, but, rather, in its ability to summarize the general hermeneutical perspective which informs these *tafsīrs*. The hermeneutical perspective argued for in Miftāḥ 1 takes Ṣadrā’s ontology for granted. Like being, the Qurʾān is also revealed in “modes” and grades. And, since being is the prototype of man, so too is the Qurʾān the prototype of man. The levels of being therefore find their perfect parallel in the levels

of the human soul, just as the levels of the Qur'ān, and, hence, its types of readers, find their perfect parallel in the levels of the human soul.

Chapter 3

***Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* I: Sources, Structure, Content**

In the previous chapter we outlined Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'anic hermeneutics in terms of theory. For the remainder of this study, we will closely examine how his hermeneutics relates to his work on the Qur'ān in terms of practice. The following three chapters will therefore be dedicated to Ṣadrā's last complete *tafsīr* work, namely the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. But before determining the extent to which Ṣadrā's theoretical scriptural hermeneutics informs his *tafsīr* on the Qur'ān's opening *sūra*, some preliminary considerations are in order with respect to this work's sources and content. Thus, in this chapter we will address the following questions: (1) what are the sources for Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*?, and (2) how is the work ordered, and what are its contents?

The reason our first encounter with the the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* must be a discussion of the work's sources is quite pragmatic: this text is a late work of Ṣadrā's and is a fine presentation of both the theoretical and practical dimensions of his teachings with reference to scripture. Since Ṣadrā was not writing or thinking out of a vacuum, we must be able to take account of those materials, figures, and ideas which make the text what it is. Failure to acknowledge the historical and intellectual background to the ideas in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* will impede us from understanding the influence exercised by the cumulative weight of the Islamic intellectual tradition upon Ṣadrā's thought. By extension, we will not be able to properly determine just what it is that Ṣadrā is doing that is so unique in this *tafsīr*. It is quite difficult to say something "new" after over a thousand years of the development of Islamic philosophy, scriptural exegesis, and

mysticism. Yet Ṣadrā does say something new here, and his statements are knowingly (and perhaps unknowingly) formulated in response to, and in dialogue with, the “old.”

There is also another sense in which the exercise in determining Ṣadrā’s sources for the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* will prove to be useful. He takes great pains in this book to supplement his usual philosophical, theological, and mystical sources with citations from a surprisingly diverse range of disciplines: *ḥadīth* literature, *tafsīr*, poetry, anecdotes, maxims, and fine points of grammar and rhetoric. Taking stock of Ṣadrā’s use of these sources should serve to indicate just how serious he considered his work as a commentator upon scripture to be.

Outlining the structure and content of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is just as important as determining the work’s sources. What the text is about and how its contents are ordered can tell us a great deal about Ṣadrā’s practical hermeneutics. Like his philosophical treatises, he argues for similar points in this work, but within the context of a commentary upon the Qur’ān. Thus, the way arguments are formed, ordered, and delivered in this *tafsīr* gives us a good indication of how Ṣadrā situates his arguments within the context of the Qur’ān’s universe of discourse and its interpretive traditions. Furthermore, since we will be closely examining Ṣadrā’s most important teachings in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* in the following two chapters, outlining the work’s content here will allow its less important, but by no means insignificant, features to emerge.

3.1 – Background Texts and Source Materials

Determining the texts which Mullā Ṣadrā draws upon in his writings is not an easy task. As was shown in the previous chapter, Ṣadrā at times incorporates expanded versions of discussions from his earlier writings into later writings. At the same time, any of his given writings could reproduce materials from a variety of sources in Islamic thought. We must also

seriously entertain the possibility that some of Ṣadrā's books, whether in part or whole, are reworked versions of texts written by other authors.¹

In almost all of his writings, when Ṣadrā does cite an authority belonging to the Islamic intellectual tradition, he often refers to him with such generic titles as “the realized gnostic” (*al-‘arīf al-muḥaqqiq*) or “the lordly knower” (*al-‘ālim al-rabbānī*). At other times, he will tell his readers the name of the book he is about to cite (as well as the chapter number, in some instances), but this does not necessarily make locating that particular passage any easier. With respect to Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs* in general, we are fortunate in that their editor, Muḥammad Khwājawī, has been able to identify many of their sources. Simple perusal through the notes to any of these *tafsīrs* will serve to indicate the vast range of materials drawn upon in each text. But concrete judgements concerning Ṣadrā's sources for his *tafsīrs* cannot solely rely on Khwājawī's notes. With respect to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, after subjecting it to very close textual scrutiny, a number of important points emerge which are not indicated in the editor's notes.

3.1.1 – *Qurʾān and Ḥadīth*

3.1.1.1 – *Qurʾanic Verses*

It is often assumed that Islamic philosophical texts have very little to do with the Qurʾān. If we turn, for example, to the work of Fārābī, we indeed do notice that citations from the Qurʾān are infrequent if not nonexistent. Yet this is not to say that key Qurʾanic themes and concepts do not underlie Fārābī's worldview.² In the writings of other earlier Muslim philosophers, such as

¹ As noted in chapter one of this study, Ṣadrā's *Iksīr al-‘arīfīn* is a thorough reworking of Bābā Afdāl's Persian treatise, *Jāwidān-nāma*. For a summary of how Ṣadrā revised Bābā Afdāl's text in writing the *Iksīr*, see Chittick, “Translators' Introduction,” xxxii-v.

² Cf. the observations in Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 102-3, 127, despite the author's insistence on the “un-Qurʾanic substrate of the universe of Alfarabism” (p. 125). See also Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī, Founder of Islamic*

Kindī (d. ca. 257/870),³ the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā',⁴ Avicenna,⁵ and Averroës,⁶ a marked emphasis is placed upon the Qur'anic text, both by way of citations and exegeses of Qur'anic passages. In

Neoplatonism: his Life, Works and Influence (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 101-17 for some "Islamic" (and hence Qur'anic) terms and concepts which inform Fārābī's political philosophy. Cf. Jacques Langhade, *Du Coran a la philosophie: la langue arabe et la formation du vocabulaire philosophique de Farabi* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1994), 284 ff. See also Alexander Knysh, "Multiple Areas of Influence," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe, 224-5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), which, although problematic in several areas, is correct to suggest that the Muslim philosophers could not but remain "loyal to their sacred book" (p. 124) in a civilization founded upon Qur'anic principles. Cf. Ghazālī's charge against the root of the philosophers' epistemology in Frank Griffel, "Taqlīd of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazālī's Initial Accusation in his *Tahāfut*," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther, 273-92 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). For a coherent picture of Islamic philosophy's rootedness in scripture, see Corbin, with Nasr and Yahia, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, ch. 1; Hābil, "Traditional Esoteric Commentaries on the Qur'ān," 35-6; Nasr, "The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 1:27-39.

³ See, in particular, Jules Janssens, "Al-Kindī: The Founder of Philosophical Exegesis of the Qur'ān," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2007): 1-21. My thanks go to Professor Janssens for sending me an electronic copy of this article. See also Adamson, *Al-Kindī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41-4 and passim; Majid Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 93-4.

⁴ Indeed, their writings are saturated with references to and meditations upon, the Qur'ān. See Corbin, with Nasr and Yahia, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, 195-6; Yves Marquet, *La philosophie des Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Archè; Paris: Société d'études de l'histoire de l'alchimie, 1999), 194, 210 ff. and passim; the relevant articles in De Smet, Daniel, G. De Callataÿ, and J. M. F. Van Reeth (ed.), *Al-Kitāb: la sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'Islam* (Brussels: Peeters, 2004); Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 39-40, 44-5 and passim. Omar Ali-de-Unzaga's forthcoming monograph promises to be the most exhaustive study of the Ikhwān's use of the Qur'ān. For a brief analysis of the Ikhwān's use of language and letter symbolism, see Lory, *La science des lettres en islam*, 65-74.

⁵ Many allusions and direct references to the Qur'ān can be found throughout his philosophical oeuvre. We find, for example, several citations from the Qur'ān in his treatise on the soul, which is likely his last work. See Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 72, 75, 77. Avicenna's famous argument from contingency (known as the *burhān al-siddiqīn* argument) actually uses the Qur'ān to prove his point. See the insightful observations in Toby Mayer, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn'," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2001): 18-39; idem, "Theology and Sufism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, 278-9. To be sure, Avicenna also wrote several commentaries on *āyas* and *sūras* of the Qur'ān. As Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 164 n. 41 notes, Avicenna actually

post-Avicennan Islamic philosophical texts we find an even greater reliance upon the Qurʾān and its terminology, especially in Ishrāqī writings.⁷ Indeed, there seems to be a correlation between the increased attention paid to the Qurʾān in post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy and the sizeable increase of Islamic philosophers in this period who wrote on religious topics.⁸ By the time we get to Mullā Ṣadrā, his philosophical writings are so thoroughly infused with references to scripture

treats the light verse (Q 24:35) in several places within his corpus, the most significant of which is to be found in his *Fī ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*. For a translation of Avicenna's treatment of the light verse (in the context of his discussion of the soul's faculties) in his *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, see Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 164-5. For a translation of Avicenna's philosophical interpretation of the light verse in his *Fī ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, see Avicenna, "On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophets' Symbols and Metaphors," trans. Michael Marmura in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, 116-21 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963). For a study of Avicenna's approach to the Qurʾān, along with the relevant texts in Arabic, see Ḥasan ʿĀṣī, *al-Taṣīr al-qurʾānī wa-l-lughā al-ṣūfiyya fī falsafat Ibn Sīnā* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-Jāmiʿa li-l-Dirāsa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1983). See also Muhammad Abdul Haq, "Ibn Sīnā's Interpretation of the Qurʾān," *The Islamic Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1988): 46-56.

⁶ See Ibn Rushd (Averroës), *Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), passim. For the use of the Qurʾān in Averroës' work, see Fakhry, "Philosophy and Scripture in the Theology of Averroës," *Mediaeval Studies* 30 (1968): 78-89 (reprinted in idem, *Philosophy, Dogma, and the Impact of Greek Thought in Islam* [Aldershot: Variorum, 1994], ch. 16). See also *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. "Philosophy and the Qurʾān" (by Majid Fakhry).

⁷ See, for example, Rustom, "The Symbology of the Wing in Suhrawardī's *The Reverberation of Gabriel's Wing*"; Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt*, in *Majmūʿah-yi muṣannaḥāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq*, 1:91-4. Cf. Mīr Dāmād's work, such as his *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran: Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, 2006), which does not cite the Qurʾān a great deal (see the index on p. 520), but whose title is inspired by Q 81:23.

⁸ Again, this does not imply that earlier Islamic philosophy was unconcerned with religion per se. Avicenna, in particular, wrote on a number of religious/theological issues. For his treatise on *qadr*, see Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Avicenna on Theology*, trans. Arthur Arberry (London: John Murray, 1951), 38-41; Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 303-4, which treats this work in the context of a discussion of Avicenna's use of symbols; George Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Essay on the Secret of Destiny'," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29 (1966): 27-48 (reprinted in idem, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], ch. 14). For Avicenna's treatment of prayer, see Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Avicenna on Theology*, 50-63; Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 181-3.

and “religious” language that we can safely say that his writings mark the culmination in Islamic philosophy of the integration of philosophy and scripture.

With respect to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we would naturally expect to find many citations from the Qur’ān. Out of the work’s 182 pages, there are some 335 citations from or allusions to the Qur’ān, most of which Khwājawī was able to identify. So infused is Ṣadrā’s worldview with the Qur’ān that he will seamlessly weave into the fabric of any given argument a number of Qur’anic verses. It can also be noted that since the Qur’ān was second (if not first) nature to Ṣadrā, in this work he at times inadvertently cites the Qur’ān incorrectly, or modifies its wording so that he can make his point within a particular context.⁹ Apart from the verses of the Fātiḥa itself, Ṣadrā’s most significant use of the Qur’an in this *tafsīr* work occurs in the context of his treatment of God’s mercy, to which we will turn in chapter five of this study.

3.1.1.2 – *Shī‘ī and Sunnī Ḥadīth Sources*

Just as Mullā Ṣadrā was the philosopher most concerned with the Qur’ān, so too was he the philosopher most concerned with *ḥadīth*. For one thing, he left behind an incomplete philosophical commentary on al-Kulaynī’s (d. 329/940-1) famous book of Shī‘ī *ḥadīth*, *al-Uṣūl al-kāfī*,¹⁰ and is known to have written several discrete commentaries on various other important

⁹ This is also the case with some of Ṣadrā’s other writings. See Chittick, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxxv.

¹⁰ Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājawī (Tehran: Mu’assasa-yi Muṭāla‘āt wa-Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1366 Sh/1987). For some studies of this work, see Karim Crow, Mullā Ṣadrā on the First Intellect in his *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*; Maria Dakake, “The Origin of Man in Pre-Eternity and His Origination in Time: Mullā Ṣadrā and Imāmī Shī‘ite Tradition.” See also Devin Stewart’s brief inquiry which seeks to situate Ṣadrā’s *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-kāfī* within the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī debate in its Safavid context: “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* as a Response to the Akhbārī Revival.” While Stewart’s approach is novel, the contents of Ṣadrā’s commentary on the *Kāfī* do not give us any particularly good reason to assume that it was written in response to the revival of Akhbārism during the Safavid period. For an interesting discussion concerning Ṣadrā’s relationship to the Akhbāriyya, see Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 37-46. A partially annotated listing of various commentaries on the *Kāfī* written in the Safavid period

ḥadīths.¹¹ Ṣadrā's concern with "scripture" is, therefore, not only limited to the Qur'ān. To be sure, based on what we know of Ṣadrā's education, his interest in scripture is something which occupied him from early on in his life.¹²

In the context of his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā demonstrates his knowledge of *ḥadīth*, citing or alluding to some ninety-four traditions in total. Of these ninety-four traditions, twenty are of the "sacred" or *qudsī* type, that is, where God speaks in the tongue of the Prophet.¹³ Of the twenty *ḥadīth qudsīs* cited, we have been unable to trace three of them.¹⁴ The remaining seventeen are found in Sunnī and Shī'ī *ḥadīth* literature, with eleven of them going back to Sunnī sources,¹⁵ one to a Shī'ī source,¹⁶ and five to both Sunni and Shī'ī sources.¹⁷

"*Ḥadīth*" in a Twelver Shī'ī context includes the sayings of the Prophet, Fāṭima (d. ca. 11/633), and the twelve Imams. Yet Ṣadrā's usage of traditions in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is not distinctively Shī'ī. Of the seventy-four non-*qudsī* traditions cited or alluded to, only three of

can be found in *ibid.*, 47-50. For a discussion of Kulaynī's *Kāfī* as a distinctly Qummī, and hence traditionalist challenge to rationalistic trends within Baghdādī Twelver Shī'ī theology, see Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shī'ism: Ḥadīth as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), chs. 6-8.

¹¹ For a commentary on the famous *ḥadīth* of the hidden treasure commonly attributed to him, see Armin Eschraghi, "I Was a Hidden Treasure': Some Notes on a Commentary Ascribed to Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī"; Ja'farī, "Sharḥ-i ḥadīth 'kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan' (sic)." For Ṣadrā's commentary on the *ḥadīth* of awakening, which he later reincorporated into his *Tafsīr Sūrat yāsīn*, see Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination."

¹² See Rizvi, *Mulla Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 10.

¹³ For this genre of traditions, see William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977).

¹⁴ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:26, 177, 183.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:71, 81, 93, 96, 151, 155, 156, 157-8, 162.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:9 reproduces a *ḥadīth qudsī* from Kulaynī's *Kāfī*. Ṣadrā refers to the collection as "one of the divine books."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:47, 70, 105, 159, 180.

them are sayings of the Imams,¹⁸ all of which are to be found in Shī'ī sources. Of these seventy-four sayings, fifty-two go back to Sunnī sources,¹⁹ nine to Shī'ī sources,²⁰ seven to both Sunnī and Shī'ī sources,²¹ and six remain untraceable.²²

Eleven of the fifty-two traditions from Sunnī sources which appear in this work come from the writings of the Sunnī authors whom Ṣadrā cites, namely Ghazālī, Rāzī, Ibn 'Arabī, and Qūnawī. Yet there are forty-one other traditions from Sunnī sources which Ṣadrā draws on, and does not seem to have a problem in doing so. Despite the astounding number of traditions from Sunnī sources which figure in the text, it does not seem that this alone calls Ṣadrā's Shī'ism into question, particularly if we take the following into consideration: (1) after writing his *tafsīrs*, Ṣadrā would go on to pen the aforementioned incomplete commentary on Kulaynī's *Kāfī*; (2) the few times the names of the Imams, Shī'ī scholars, or books within the Shī'ī tradition are mentioned in the text, they are done so reverentially;²³ (3) Ṣadrā offers a novel Shī'ī reading of the Qur'ān's detached letters in his appendix to the work.²⁴

What the absence of a heavy Shī'ī substrate to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* (and almost every other work in *tafsīr* by Ṣadrā) seems to indicate is that he was less concerned with

¹⁸ Ibid., 1:40, 168 (two).

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:9; 12 (two); 15; 24; 25 (two); 31; 33; 44; 72 (cf. *ibid.*, 1:71, where Ṣadrā cites this tradition as a *ḥadīth qudsī*); 73 (two); 74; 75; 76 (three); 77; 106-7; 107 (two); 108 (two); 109 (two); 119 (three); 125; 128; 130 (three); 147 (two); 150; 152 (two); 153 (three); 156; 158 (three); 168 (two); 171; 176; 179; 181; 182. Indeed, Ṣadrā's heavy reliance on Sunnī *ḥadīth* sources is reminiscent of the same practice in earlier Shī'ī *tafsīr*. See Lawson, "Akḥbārī Shī'ī Approaches to *tafsīr*," 175.

²⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:40, 70, 78, 90, 130, 135, 152, 168, 169.

²¹ Ibid., 1:6, 8, 25, 46, 71, 157, 181.

²² Ibid., 1:76, 123, 153, 168, 169 (two).

²³ At *ibid.*, 1:135, Ṣadrā cites Ibn Bābūya's *Uyūn al-akḥbār*, referring to its author as "The noble Shaykh, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābūya al-Qummī."

²⁴ See p. 272.

reconciling his mysticism and philosophy with traditional Shī'ī dogma than he was with explicating his vision of reality, which could be done independent of particularly Shī'ī teachings. Indeed, it is for similar reasons that Hermann Landolt calls into question the specifically Shī'ī nature of Ṣadrā's thought.²⁵

3.1.2 – *Philosophical and Theological Materials*

3.1.2.1 – *Ṣadrā's Other Works*

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the *Maḥāṣin*, a very late work, occupies a special role amongst Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic writings, as it lays out the esoteric perspective which informs his Qur'ān commentaries. It was also shown that, since the *Maḥāṣin* had its roots in an earlier text which was written concurrently with at least some of Ṣadrā's Qur'ān commentaries, the perspective argued for in the *Maḥāṣin* is certainly not an afterthought. But with the advantage of hindsight, this perspective is fully explained, and its implications entirely drawn out.

The question that remains is this: does the *Maḥāṣin* inform Ṣadrā's later works on the Qur'ān, and, if so, in what manner? Turning to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we notice that, in the context of his treatment of such topics as the "Perfect Words," Ṣadrā explicitly refers to the *Maḥāṣin* five times.²⁶ The fact that the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* mentions the *Maḥāṣin* several times

²⁵ See Landolt, "Henry Corbin's Understanding of Mullā Ṣadrā," 1:172 (reprinted in Landolt, *Recherches en spiritualité*, 364). Cf. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 69-70; Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 129-30. It is also interesting to note that although Ṣadrā accepts the long-established tradition in which 'Alī says that he is the dot under the *bā'* of the *basmala*, he does not develop its implications in any significant manner. See Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṣin*, 97-9. This is not to suggest that Ṣadrā's worldview remains uninformed by Shī'ī categories. For the figure of 'Alī in one of his Persian poems, see Mohammed Ali Amir-Moezzi, "'Le combattant du *ta'wīl*': Un poème de Mollā Ṣadrā sur 'Alī," in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam*, 432-54 (reprinted in idem, *La religion discrète: croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam shi'ite* [Paris: Vrin, 2006], 231-51).

²⁶ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:4, 9, 10, 33, 69.

allows us to safely conclude that it was written some time after the *Maḥāṭih*. This explains why the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* has a dimension of depth not to be found in Ṣadrā's other *tafsīrs*. From this perspective, we can say that Ṣadrā's primary source for the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* was his own *Maḥāṭih*.

With respect to his other writings, Ṣadrā explicitly refers to four titles in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*: *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*,²⁷ the *Asfār*,²⁸ *al-Risāla fī l-ḥudūth*,²⁹ and his glosses (*hāshiya*) on Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd*.³⁰ None of these well-known texts figure in this *Tafsīr* in a significant manner, although Ṣadrā's treatment of the "path" (*ṣirāṭ*) mentioned in Q 1:6-7, and the question of God's mercy, are partly derived from the *Asfār*.³¹

3.1.2.2 – Avicenna, Suhrawardī, Ṭūsī

The only philosopher explicitly cited by Ṣadrā in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is Avicenna. He is cited twice in the context of a discussion concerning the different levels of certainty. Avicenna is referred to as "the author of the *Ishārāt*" (*ṣāhib al-ishārāt*)³² and, in the next paragraph, "the author of the *maqāmāt*" (*ṣāhib al-maqāmāt*),³³ the *maqāmāt* being the ninth *namaṭ* (class) (entitled *fī maqāmāt al-ʿarīfīn*) of the section devoted to metaphysics in Avicenna's famous *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* (*Remarks and Admonitions*). Both citations from Avicenna are actually from the ninth *namaṭ*.³⁴ It is perhaps significant that Ṣadrā would cite this part of Avicenna's work, which belongs to a larger section (*namaṭs* eight to ten) simply called "On

²⁷ Ibid., 1:11.

²⁸ Ibid., 1:92 (alluded to), 1:112.

²⁹ Ibid., 1:11. For a translation of this work, see idem, *Die Risāla fī l-ḥudūth* (*De Abhandlung über die Entstehung*).

³⁰ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:54.

³¹ See p. 217 ff.

³² Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:90.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1957-60), 4:749-906.

Sufism” (*fī l-taṣawwuf*),³⁵ especially since Ṣadrā unqualifiedly praises the spiritual accomplishments of someone whose spirituality (or the lack thereof) he is otherwise critical.³⁶

Ṣadrā says that through invocation and increased knowledge of and proximity to God, one will eventually become one of the “people of witnessing” (*ahl al-mushāhada*).³⁷ A common notion in Sufī literature is that what is actually witnessed cannot be spoken of or described, and thus only allusions (*ishārāt*) are possible. The apophysis invoked by Ṣadrā is linked with one of Avicenna’s statements concerning the fruits of the spiritual life in which he says that this station cannot be described by ordinary language. Thus, although Ṣadrā makes use of a well-known philosophical work, he explicitly draws on its more “mystical” aspect in order to bolster an argument which is decidedly Sufī.

Suhrawardī does not appear in Ṣadrā’s *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, although he seems to identify Suhrawardī with the Stoics in one passage.³⁸ The most significant allusion to Suhrawardī is Ṣadrā’s passing reference to one of the Illuminationist tradition’s well-known technical terms,

³⁵ For a translation of this section of the *Ishārāt*, see idem, *Ibn Sīnā on Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions, Part 4*, trans. Shams Inati (London: Keagan Paul, 1996).

³⁶ See Chittick, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxvi. At *Tafsīr*, 1:90, Ṣadrā explicitly describes Avicenna as someone who has “arrived at the stations of the gnostics and the ranks of the unveilers....”

³⁷ Ibid., 1:89-90.

³⁸ Ibid., 1:48. Ṣadrā also identifies the Stoics and Suhrawardī with “the people of the Real.” See idem, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 96 n. 16. John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 187-97, views Ṣadrā’s identification of the Stoics with Suhrawardī as a way of supporting his claim that his philosophy accorded with Plato’s. Morris, on the other hand, says that the term “Stoic” in later Islamic philosophy was commonly misused, and notes the same problem in Shahrastānī. See Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 106 and the corresponding note (n. 106). See also Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les réalités*, 37-8 n. 4 (at the end of the note on p. 38). For Shahrastānī’s understanding of the term, see Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. Ṣidqī al-‘Attār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002, repr. ed.), 298-9.

“lords of species” (*arbāb al-anwā*).³⁹ Coined by Suhrawardī,⁴⁰ the term is equivalent to the Platonic forms (*muthul*), which Ṣadrā prefers to use, not least for the reason that the Platonic forms figure differently in the Ishrāqī cosmic hierarchy than they do in Ṣadrā’s cosmology.⁴¹ Ṣadrā for his part does not dedicate a discussion to the Platonic forms in this *tafsīr* work, nor are his references to the “lords of species” anything more than passing.

Since Ṭūsī’s Ismā‘īlism had a direct (albeit minor) influence upon Ṣadrā’s Qur’ānic hermeneutics, when approaching the latter’s *tafsīr* writings, one would naturally expect to find a similar phenomenon at work. With respect to Ṣadrā’s *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we find no explicit mention of Ṭūsī or any of his books. However, as we will see in the following chapter, he may lurk in the background.

3.1.2.3 – *Schools of Kalām*

Apart from a brief section dedicated to explaining and then refuting Jabirite and Qadirite positions on the *isti‘ādha* formula, Ṣadrā does not engage the views of any theological groups in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.⁴² He does, however, mention the Mu‘tazilites’ position concerning the

³⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:75, 78.

⁴⁰ See Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 101 ff. Although Suhrawardī has *arbāb al-aṣnām al-naw‘iyya al-falakiyya* here, it is synonymous with *arbāb al-anwā*. See *ibid.*, 182 n. 10.

⁴¹ For Ṣadrā’s understanding of Plato’s forms, see Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 47 ff., 147 ff. Cf. Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 107 and the corresponding note (n. 35). It is clear that Suhrawardī and Ṣadrā’s predecessor, Avicenna, rejected Plato’s theory of forms. See Marmura, “Avicenna’s Critique of Platonists in Book VII, Chapter 2 of the Metaphysics of his *Healing*,” in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard Frank*, ed. James Montgomery, 355-69 (Louvain: Peeters, 2006).

⁴² This section follows parts of Rāzī’s *tafsīr*. See pp. 131-3. It can also be noted that at *Tafsīr*, 1:146, Ṣadrā mentions the Ash‘arites, along with the colleagues of Democritus, in passing. For a discussion of Ṣadrā’s use of important *tafsīrs* by Ash‘arite authors in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, see pp. 129-33.

“fixity” of quiddity, that is, that quiddities have the status of quiddities before effectuation.⁴³ Zamakhsharī appears in this *tafsīr* work, although his positions are not discussed qua Mu‘tazilite thinker. Rather, Ṣadrā deals with him qua Qur’an commentator, and we will thus turn to his treatment of Zamakhsharī below.⁴⁴ Other than Zamakhsharī, the only Mu‘tazilite we encounter in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is the famous early figure Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 303/915), whose interpretations of the words “day of judgement” (*yawm al-dīn*) are given in the context of Ṣadrā’s treatment of Q 1:4.⁴⁵ Jubbā‘ī interprets the phrase to mean “the day of being rewarded for one’s observance of the religion [*yawm al-jazā’ ‘alā l-dīn*].”⁴⁶ There is nothing particularly Mu‘tazilite about this interpretation, although one may speculate that Jubbā‘ī’s exegesis was carried out with two of the five fundamental Mu‘tazilī principles in mind, namely God’s justice (*‘adāla/‘adl*) and “the promise and the threat” (*al-wa‘d wa-l-wa‘īd*).

⁴³ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:59. Cf. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 146 ff. For Mu‘tazilite teachings on the fixity of quiddity, see Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Masā’il fī l-khilāf bayna al-Baṣrīyīn wa-l-Baghdādīyīn*, ed. Riḍwān Sayyid and Ma‘n Ziyāda (Tarabulus: Ma‘had al-Inmā’ al-‘Arabī, 1979), 37 ff. See also Hans Daiber, *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2:65; Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Mu‘tazilī Cosmology* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), ch. 2; Frank, “*al-Ma‘dūm wal-mawjūd: The Non-Existent, the Existent, and the Possible in the Teaching of Abū Hāshim and his Follows*,” *MIDEO* 14 (1980): 185-209 (reprinted in idem, *Early Islamic Theology: The Mu‘tazilites and al-Ash‘arī: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām (Vol. II)*, ed. Dimitri Gutas, ch. 4 [Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007]). My thanks go to Gregor Schwarb for providing me with these references in an email correspondence (July 14th 2008).

⁴⁴ See pp. 129-30.

⁴⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:85.

⁴⁶ Cf. Daniel Gimaret, *Une lecture mu‘tazilite du Coran: Le tafsīr d’Abū ‘Alī al-Djubbā‘ī (m. 303/915)* (Louvain: Peeters, 1994), 73. For an interesting response to this Mu‘tazilite reading, see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥālib al-‘āliya min al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām Shāhīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999), 9:186-7.

3.1.3 – *Sufi Texts and Authors*

3.1.3.1 – *Ibn ‘Arabī*

Ṣadrā explicitly cites Ibn ‘Arabī five times throughout the work,⁴⁷ reworks or cites texts from the *Futūḥāt*—without acknowledging their source—another four times,⁴⁸ cites an author who cites Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* once,⁴⁹ and refers to Ibn ‘Arabī in passing once.⁵⁰ The texts from Ibn ‘Arabī which Ṣadrā draws upon in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* range from his famous catch phrase, “he who does not have unveiling does not have knowledge,”⁵¹ to more substantial

⁴⁷ (1) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:38, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. A. E. Afifi (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, 1946), 67 (at *Tafsīr*, 1:39, Ṣadrā goes on to explain one of the sentences in the passage cited from the *Fuṣūṣ* on the previous page); (2) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:40, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 90; (3) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:71-2, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 2:86-7; (4) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:110-1, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:470 (cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989], 338-9); (5) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:114-5, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:629. Of the nine direct citations from Ibn ‘Arabī’s works, Khwājawī was able to trace four of them, leaving five passages unlocated. With the help of an online search engine of the *Futūḥāt* (www.onctradition.org) and several of Chittick’s works, I was able to find the remaining passages.

⁴⁸ (6) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:71, citing Ibn ‘Arabī’s statement “The end for all is mercy” (for which, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 120, 130, 225, 338; idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 174); (7) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:101, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:218 (cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 170); (8) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 153-4 (paraphrasing parts of his *Asfār*, 9:357-9) closely follows *Futūḥāt*, 3:449 (cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, “Towards God’s Signs,” trans. William Chittick in Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, 1:182; Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 28); (9) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:154-7, reproducing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:462-3 (cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 360-1; idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 174; idem, “Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Hermeneutics of Mercy,” in *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Stephen Katz, 153-68 [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001] (the citation is to be found on p. 168) (reprinted in Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabī: Heir to the Prophets* [Oxford: Oneworld, 2005], ch. 9)).

⁴⁹ (10) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:72, citing Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī, *Divine Flashes*, trans. William Chittick and Peter Wilson (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 95, who cites Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:210 (cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 37).

⁵⁰ (11) Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:144.

⁵¹ See n. 48 #7.

materials with an eye to proving a particular point, such as the fact that God is really the object of worship in every act of worship.⁵²

The most important issue which Ṣadrā addresses with recourse to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings is the question of God’s mercy and its relationship to His wrath. Here, Ṣadrā is particularly concerned with the age-old theological problem of the existence of eternal suffering for finite actions, and how this is to be reconciled with the existence of a God who is purely merciful on the one hand, and who is unaffected by the wrong actions of His creatures on the other.

Needless to say, Ṣadrā is cognisant of the conflicting accounts in scripture concerning the status of people consigned to Hell, but he does not take up the issue in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. Turning our attention to the *Asfār*, we notice that he treats the problem of eternal suffering, but with an eye to resolving contradictory scriptural passages and with explicit recourse to Ibn ‘Arabī and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350). The section which corresponds to the question of eternal suffering in the *Asfār* is partly reproduced in the relevant section of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. However, not only is the question of conflicting scriptural statements removed in the latter, but Ṣadrā cites some of the same texts from Ibn ‘Arabī which he used in the *Asfār*. The only difference here is that these words reappear not as Ibn ‘Arabī’s, but as Ṣadrā’s.⁵³

3.1.3.2 – The “School” of Ibn ‘Arabī

There is little doubt that Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) and his followers played a very important role in spreading the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī. However, they tended to emphasize issues which may not have occupied a central role in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, or at least were not

⁵² See n. 48, # 8.

⁵³ See p. 206 ff.

given systematic philosophical expression by him.⁵⁴ Indeed, it is Qūnawī's work which marks the rapprochement between the scripture-based language of Ibn 'Arabī's worldview and the technical discourse of *falsafa*. From this perspective, it may even be more fitting to speak of the "school of Qūnawī" rather than the school of Ibn 'Arabī. Whatever term we give to the "school" which helped spread Ibn 'Arabī's ideas in Iran, Central Asia, Anatolia, and India from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards, one thing remains certain with respect to Mullā Ṣadrā: he found in the writings of Qūnawī and his followers a highly developed technical vocabulary which could suit his purposes in articulating his profound philosophical and mystical vision.

There are three instances in which Ṣadrā anonymously cites a person belonging to the school of Ibn 'Arabī, introducing him as "one of the people of God,"⁵⁵ "one of the unitarian gnostics" (*al-ʿurafāʾ al-muwaḥḥidīn*),⁵⁶ and "one of the verifiers" (*al-muḥaqqiqīn*).⁵⁷ Given the fact that the technical terminology of the citations clearly belongs to the developed form of theoretical Sufism, it is safe to say that these anonymous references belong to a member or members of the school of Ibn 'Arabī.

The only explicit reference we find in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* to a follower of Ibn 'Arabī is a short passage which cites Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī's (d. 688/1289) highly influential Persian work, the *Lama'āt*. The passage occurs in the context of Ṣadrā's treatment of the function of God's mercy on the final day. After citing an important passage from Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*,

⁵⁴ See Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī." See also idem, "The Central Point: Qūnawī's Role in the School of Ibn 'Arabī," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 35 (2004): 25-45.

⁵⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:35.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:91.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:100.

Şadrā recounts an incident related by ‘Irāqī in the *Lama‘āt* concerning Abū Yazīd Baṣṭāmī’s (d. ca. 260/874) famous question (see below) and Ibn ‘Arabī’s reply to him.⁵⁸

The only other follower of Ibn ‘Arabī who definitely figures in Şadrā’s *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is Qūnawī.⁵⁹ Apart from an anonymous passage cited from his *Ijāz al-bayān* (Şadrā refers to him as “one of the gnostics”⁶⁰), Şadrā draws on the same work towards the end of the text. Here, however, he offers a reworking of sections of the book, and incorporates them into his discussion concerning the levels of God’s wrath.⁶¹ Close comparison between the relevant part of the *Ijāz* with its corresponding section in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* reveals that Şadrā was able to recast Qūnawī’s words in a manner not unlike his much more significant reworking of Bābā Afḍal’s *Jāwidān-nāma* into the *Iksīr*.

3.1.3.5 – *Baṣṭāmī, Anṣārī, Ghazālī*

Mullā Şadrā’s thorough knowledge of the Sufī tradition did not stop with the writings of Ibn ‘Arabi and his followers. As Carl Ernst has shown through his statistical analysis of the names of figures which appear in the *Asfār*, Şadrā was thoroughly familiar with the earlier

⁵⁸ See p. 125.

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* Şadrā does not draw on the writings of the famous Shī‘ī mystical philosopher, Ḥaydar Āmulī (fl. 8th/14th century) (for whom, see Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 3:149-213), who managed to put a unique Twelver Shī‘ī spin on some of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas. Since Şadrā was not attempting to reconcile his teachings in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* with Shī‘ī dogma, he may not have found Āmulī’s work entirely pertinent to his concerns in this particular text.

⁶⁰ Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:104-5, citing Qūnawī, *Ijāz*, 449 (not 448 as noted by Khwājawī at Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:104 n. 1).

⁶¹ Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:159-62, reworking Qūnawī, *Ijāz*, 475-78 (not 465-78 as noted by Khwājawī at Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:162 n. 1).

tradition of Sufism as well.⁶² This is also clearly evidenced in the *Tafsīr Āyat al-nūr*, where a number of important early Sufi figures are cited, either explicitly or implicitly.⁶³

Turning to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we find Ṣadrā drawing on the famous *shaḥḥ* by Baṣṭāmī in which he says that even if God’s Throne and all that it contains were to enter a corner of the gnostic’s heart a thousand times, it would be unable to fill it.⁶⁴ This saying is cited some ten pages after the aforementioned incident related by ‘Irāqī, which runs as follows: upon hearing Q 19:85, “The day We muster the godfearing to the All-Merciful in droves,” Baṣṭāmī let out a cry and asked how God will bring to Him those that are already with Him. Ibn ‘Arabī responds to Baṣṭāmī’s question with reference to the divine names, saying that those who are with Him will be taken “From the name ‘the Compeller’ to the name ‘The All-Merciful,’ and from the name ‘the Overbearing’ to [the name] ‘the Compassionate.’”⁶⁵

In another passage, Ṣadrā introduces an Arabic saying by the famous Ḥanbalī Sufi ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), referring to him with the honorific of the Sufi master Junayd (d. 297/910), namely “master of the tribe” (*shaykh al-ṭā’ifa*). Anṣārī is cited as saying that the different faces of God vis-à-vis mercy and wrath are actually a manifestation of mercy.⁶⁶

⁶² See Ernst, “Sufism and Philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā.”

⁶³ See Ṣadrā, *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse of the Qur’ān*.

⁶⁴ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:81. Cf. idem, *Tafsīr*, 6:25; Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 407. Ṣadrā also relates a version of this *shaḥḥ* in his *‘Arshīyya*, although here Baṣṭāmī speaks in the first person and says that he would not notice the Throne were it to enter his heart. See idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 165. For the phenomenon of *shaḥḥāt* in Sufism, see Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985). Ṣadrā’s likeliest source for this saying is Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 88, 120. For Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatment of the *shaḥḥāt*, see Ibn ‘Arabī, “The True Knowledge of Unruly Utterances,” trans. William Chittick in *The Meccan Revelations*, 1:150-6.

⁶⁵ See n. 49 above for Ṣadrā’s sources for this incident. See also Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 4:71.

⁶⁶ For the citation, see *ibid.*, 1:109. I was unable to locate this statement in Anṣārī’s writings.

We also find a reference in this *tafsīr* to “the books of the people of the heart.”⁶⁷ Although this may be an allusion to the work of Ghazālī,⁶⁸ explicit references to Ghazālī total two. Ṣadrā demonstrates his familiarity with his famous *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* early on in the *tafsīr*, linking Ghazālī’s observations concerning his pursuit of knowledge with his own point that the one who wishes to know the Qur’ān’s meanings has to undergo very rigorous training.⁶⁹ Another instance in which Ghazālī figures in this text is through a citation from Rāzī’s *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, which cites Ghazālī’s explanation of the different levels of the *tahlīl* formula.⁷⁰

Ṣadrā’s most extensive use of Ghazālī is to be found in his treatment of blessings (*ni‘ma*), which is prompted by the first part of Q 1:7. After a discussion concerning the nature of the Perfect Man, the flow of Ṣadrā’s *tafsīr* abruptly changes. Readers familiar with the eloquent prose and taxonomic approach of Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* would immediately recognize the change in style. As Khwājawī rightly notes, the entire section is nothing more than a reworking of a section from book thirty-two of Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’*, the *Kitāb al-ṣabr wa-l-shukr*.⁷¹ Ṣadrā may have borrowed this section from the *Iḥyā’* because of the clarity with which Ghazālī treats the topic of blessings.

3.1.4 – *Shī‘ī and Sunnī Tafsīr*

3.1.4.1 – *Exegetical Notes within both Traditions*

One of the most impressive features of Ṣadrā’s work as a commentator on the Qur’ān is his clear mastery of both Shī‘ī and Sunnī *tafsīr* literature. As we saw last chapter, Ṣadrā has some

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1:47.

⁶⁸ See p. 102 n. 89.

⁶⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:31.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1:47-8.

⁷¹ Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Jayl, 1997), 4:357 ff.

very harsh things to say about the exoteric *mufasssirūn*, whom he accuses of wasting time in trivial details of lexicography. Yet their contributions are nonetheless important, and Ṣadrā is fully aware of this. His engagement with questions in *tafsīr* seems to give his criticisms all the more credibility, since he is not simply rejecting something with which he is unfamiliar or ignorant. As was shown last chapter, Ṣadrā wants his readers to know that he is well-versed in the *tafsīr* sciences, and that he is not satisfied with the enterprise as it is generally pursued in the books of scholars.

As a lead-in to further study, exoteric *tafsīr* is helpful, but it cannot give one access to truth. This is why Ṣadrā, for all his knowledge of *tafsīr* literature, devotes comparatively little space to it in his *tafsīrs*. He will often begin a discussion on a verse with the relevant exegetical remarks within the tradition. Once he has displayed his erudition and familiarity with the opinions of a number of scholars of *tafsīr*, he will then proceed to comment upon the Qur’ān in his usual philosophical and mystical manner.

In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā cites a number of various exegetical remarks which are often common to both the Shī‘ī and Sunnī traditions. In this work we encounter a host of different short interpretations on such topics as the following: why the Fātiḥa is called “doubled” (*mathānī*),⁷² the different but equal readings of the *ḥamdala* formula,⁷³ various positions on how one should read and understand the term *mālik* in Q 1:4,⁷⁴ different interpretations of the term *ṣirāṭ* found in Q 1:7,⁷⁵ and the views of the Qur’anic exegetes on the identity of the *maghdūb* and

⁷² Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:74.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:84.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:98.

ḍāllīn mentioned in Q 1:7.⁷⁶ We also encounter a number of important figures within the genre of *tafsīr* literature: ‘Alī,⁷⁷ ‘Āṣim (d. 128/745), Kisā’ī (d. 89/805),⁷⁸ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373),⁷⁹ Ibn Mas‘ūd (d. 31/652),⁸⁰ Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), Ibn ‘Abbās (d. ca. 68/688),⁸¹ ‘Umar (d. 23/644), Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 73/692),⁸² Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and ‘Abd al-Qāhir Baghdādī (d. 429/1037).⁸³

3.1.4.2 – ‘Ayyāshī, Qummī, Ṭabrisī

Just as the *ḥadīth* sources employed by Ṣadrā in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* are predominantly Sunnī, so too are his references from *tafsīr* literature. We only encounter two explicit and minor references to the famous Shī‘ī Qur’ān commentator Muḥammad b. Mas‘ūd al-‘Ayyāshī (d. 320/932), who, according to Meir Bar-Asher’s useful periodization of early Imāmī *tafsīr*, belongs to the pre-Buwayhid (r. 334/945-447/1055) school of Twelver Shī‘ī scriptural exegesis.⁸⁴ Ṣadrā cites a *ḥadīth* from ‘Ayyāshī’s *tafsīr* in his treatment of the merits of the Fātiḥa,

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1:143.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1:142.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1:84.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1:98, 142.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1:99-100, 125.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1:99-100.

⁸² Ibid., 1:124.

⁸³ Ibid., 1:143.

⁸⁴ See Meir Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), ch. two. For ‘Ayyāshī, see *ibid.*, 56-63. Bar-Asher’s work is the standard account for the development of early Shī‘ī *tafsīr*, but Ignaz Goldziher’s treatment of the subject is still serviceable, although he deals less with figures and schools of Shī‘ī exegesis and more with several prominent Shī‘ī hermeneutical strategies. See Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920), 263-309. For a more complete picture of the development of Twelver Shī‘ī *tafsīr*, the following works should also be consulted: Mahmoud Ayoub, “The Speaking Qur’ān and the Silent Qur’ān: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imāmī Shī‘ī *tafsīr*,” in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin, 177-98 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) (reprinted in *The Koran: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, 4: ch. 58); Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:135-219 (inter alia); Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, ch. seven; Lawson, “Akhhārī Shī‘ī Approaches to *tafsīr*”; Diana Steigerwald, “Twelver Shī‘ī

explicitly providing his name.⁸⁵ In the case of Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1154), a key post-Buwayhid Shīʿī exegete,⁸⁶ he simply refers to a reading of the first part of Q 1:7 as having derived from “the *Majmaʿ al-bayān*,”⁸⁷ a reference which would have been familiar to any reader of Ṣadrā’s *tafsīr*.⁸⁸ As for Qummī, another important pre-Buwayhid Imāmī exegete, Ṣadrā does not mention his name, although Khwājawī traces one of Ṣadrā’s grammatical discussions centred around the first part of Q 1:7 back to both Qummī and Ṭabrisī’s *tafsīrs*.⁸⁹

3.1.4.3 – *Zamakhsharī, Rāzī, Bayḍāwī, Nasafī, Nīshāpūrī*

In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā refers to Zamakhsharī on four occasions, two of which are rather insignificant.⁹⁰ One of the two significant references to Zamakhsharī is an allusion to his view—with which Ṣadrā takes issue—that God’s ascribing mercy to Himself is simply a metaphor for His blessings to His servants.⁹¹ Elsewhere, in a passage in which Ṣadrā offers his

Taʿwīl,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān*, ed. Andrew Rippin, 373-85 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006). For an overview of classical/medieval Twelver Shīʿī hermeneutical procedures (with particular reference to Q 4:157), see Lawson, *The Crucifixion and the Qurʾān: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 92-8.

⁸⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:168.

⁸⁶ For studies of Ṭabrisī’s *tafsīr*, see Musa Abdul, *The Qurʾān: Shaykh Ṭabarsī’s Commentary* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1977), which is particularly useful for its comparisons with the *tafsīrs* of Zamakhsharī and Rāzī on some key theological questions; Bruce Fudge, *Shīʿī Exegesis in the Twelfth Century: The Major Qurʾān Commentary of al-Ṭabrisī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, forthcoming); Ḥusayn Karīmān, *Ṭabrisī wa-Majmaʿ al-bayān* (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Dānishgāh-i Tihirān, 1341 Sh/1962).

⁸⁷ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:125.

⁸⁸ Ṣadrā records this work amongst the inventory of books in his personal library. See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 117-8.

⁸⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:124. For an important discussion of Qummī’s *tafsīr*, see Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, 33-56. See also Regula Forster, *Methoden mittelalterlicher arabischer Qurʾānexegese am Beispiel von Q 53, 1-18* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2001), 57-64.

⁹⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:67 (implicitly), 98.

⁹¹ Cf. Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary*, 68.

advice to those seeking knowledge of the Qur'anic sciences, he refers to Zamakhsharī by name and is somewhat favourable. He notes that those who wish to know the specifics of the detailed discussions concerning the placement of letters in the *basmala* formula should read the *Kashshāf*, since they will find such information in that work.⁹² Although Ṣadrā goes on to praise the book for its unsurpassed linguistic analysis, it is clear from what follows that the linguistic sciences, like the other sciences not rooted in unveiling, are all based upon personal opinion and therefore fall short of the goal.⁹³

Bayḍāwī appears three times in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. These appearances are all significant for one reason or another. In one passage, Ṣadrā seems to paraphrase a small portion of Bayḍāwī's commentary on the Fātiḥa in his *Anwār al-tanzīl*, but does not state that he is doing so.⁹⁴ In another passage, Ṣadrā prefaces his significant discussion concerning the Perfect Man and his relationship to the Qur'ān with a citation from the *Anwār*. In this citation, Bayḍāwī displays his philosophical know-how in explaining the meaning of the term *'ālamīn* to be found in Q 1:2.⁹⁵ Ṣadrā then voices his disagreement with another one of Bayḍāwī's interpretations of Q 1:2, in which he argues that the verse indicates that all things are ordered and depend upon God.⁹⁶

⁹² Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:30.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See ibid, 1:93. The corresponding section can be found in Bayḍāwī, *Anwār*, 1:29. I am indebted to William Chittick for pointing this out to me. The passage does not appear to be in Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an-ghawāmiḍ ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa-'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001). For a discussion of Ṣadrā's listing of sections of Bayḍāwī's *Anwār* as a part of his personal library, as well as the set of glosses upon this *tafsīr* work wrongfully attributed to him, see pp. 71-2 of the present study.

⁹⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:79, citing Bayḍāwī, *Anwār*, 1:26.

⁹⁶ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:81-2.

The *Madārik al-tanzīl*, written by another key Sunnī theologian, ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310), also figures in Ṣadrā’s *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. Since Nasafī for the most part presents a condensed version of Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār*, it is difficult to determine whether or not Ṣadrā draws on the *Madārik* directly. But, since Ṣadrā is known to have had a copy of the first quarter of this text,⁹⁷ and some of the specifically grammatical discussions are reminiscent of the style of Nasafī’s *tafsīr*,⁹⁸ we cannot rule out the possibility that the *Madārik* in some manner or another figures in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.

The most important exegetical source for the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is Rāzī’s *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, which Ṣadrā draws upon on four occasions. The first instance in which we encounter Rāzī is in Ṣadrā’s treatment of the standard formula in Islamic praxis known as the *isti‘ādha* (“seeking refuge”), where he relies heavily on the corresponding (but much longer and detailed section) in Rāzī’s *tafsīr*.⁹⁹ Later in the text, Ṣadrā discusses how calling on God’s names can also pose

⁹⁷ See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 118.

⁹⁸ See p. 170 n. 68.

⁹⁹ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:4-27, which closely follows, at times word-for-word, sections from Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya 1934-8), 1:74 ff (especially 64, 68-73). For a typology of the *isti‘ādha* formula, see Constance Padwick, ““I Seek Refuge”,” *Muslim World* 28 (1938): 372-85. It can be noted that parts of Rāzī’s commentary on the *isti‘ādha* from his *tafsīr* can be found, albeit in the context of his rebuttal of Mu‘tazilite exegeses of the Fātiḥa, in Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya*, 9:179-82. Two helpful studies of Rāzī’s *tafsīr* are Roger Arnaldez, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: commentateur du Coran et philosophe* (Paris: Vrin, 2002) and Tariq Jaffer, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210): Philosopher and Theologian as Exegete” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2005). For a recent discussion of Rāzī’s treatment of the *mutashābihāt* and *muḥkamāt* verses of the Qur’ān, see Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, “The Hermeneutics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī,” in *Coming to Terms with the Qur’ān: A Volume in Honor of Professor Issa Boullata*, ed. Khaleel Mohammed and Andrew Rippin, 125-58 (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 2008).

limitations upon the servant. One important passage here is a slightly reworded reproduction of Rāzī's arguments from his *tafsīr*.¹⁰⁰

Another instance in which Rāzī appears in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is in the albeit minor final appendix to the work, which, by Ṣadrā's own estimation, was meant to be a supplement to the text.¹⁰¹ Ṣadrā says that this appendix is derived from the *tafsīrs* of Rāzī and Niẓām al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī (d. 730/1329), although on closer inspection, it turns out that all of the passages are actually from Rāzī's *tafsīr*.¹⁰²

The most significant appearance Rāzī makes in this *tafsīr* work is in the context of Ṣadrā's treatment of the levels of *dhikr*.¹⁰³ Ṣadrā states that the highest form of invoking God is the formula "O He other than whom there is no He" (*yā man lā huwa illā huwa*). He then cites Rāzī's meditation upon Ghazālī's explanation of this formula. Ghazālī states that these words correspond to the station of the most elect of the elect (*akhaṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ*), and Rāzī says that he affirmed this point through scripture and demonstrative proof (*burhān*). Rāzī argues that the statement "O He other than whom there is no He" proves that God's effectuation (*ta'thīr*) does not take place by giving quiddities the quality of being, for if quiddities were given the quality of

¹⁰⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:44, reworking Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1:147. The influence of Rāzī's understanding of the divine names upon later Islamic thought remains unexplored. See the significant discussion in *ibid.*, 1:134 ff. See also Wisnovsky, "One Aspect of the Akbarian Turn in Shī'ī Theology," in *Sufism and Theology*, 61-2 n. 10, for a suggested possible influence of Rāzī's treatment of the divine names upon Ibn 'Arabī. My thanks go to Robert Wisnovsky for drawing my attention to this point in an email correspondence (February 15th, 2008), and for sending me his article before I was able to obtain a copy of the volume in which it appears.

¹⁰¹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:179.

¹⁰² Ṣadrā only cites Nīshāpūrī once in the text, in the same section where Rāzī is first cited (i.e., *Tafsīr*, 1:47). For a thorough study of Nīshāpūrī's "scientific" exegesis of the Qur'ān and its relationship to his theology, see Robert Morrison, *Islam and Science: The Intellectual Career of Niẓām al-Dīn Nīsābūrī* (London: Routledge, 2008), chs. six and seven.

¹⁰³ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:48-64.

being, being, as a predicable quality, would itself require a quiddity.¹⁰⁴ Rather, God's effectuation is nothing more than the effectuation of quiddities, which are nothing before their instantiation, just as being is “nothing” before God gives it effectuation. One of the implications of this position is that essence precedes existence, and this gives Ṣadrā occasion to step in and defend his famous thesis of the fundamentality of being. The response, as Ṣadrā makes clear, is derived from his other works, although he does not state his sources.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1:48. At *ibid.*, 1:47 n. 1, Khwājawī notes that the citation from Rāzī is to be found, with variations, in his *al-Taḥṣīn al-kabīr*, 117, but I have not been able to locate the reference.

¹⁰⁵ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:49. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:54, where Ṣadrā states that there are several insightful points (*istibṣārāt*) concerning the fundamentality of being which he has already discussed in his books, and which he has incorporated into the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* as a “single treatise” (*risāla mufrada*). Indeed, Ṣadrā ends this section with the type of blessings upon the Prophet and his family which customarily mark the end of a treatise. It can also be noted that at *ibid.*, 1:55, Ṣadrā responds to the view, argued for by Suhrawardī, that being is merely a “rational construct” (*ʿtibār ʿaqlī*) (in rendering this term I follow ʿAbd al-Rasul ʿUbudiyyat, “The Fundamentality of Existence and the Subjectivity of Quiddity,” trans. D. D. Sodagar and Muhammad Legenhausen, *Topoi* 26 [2007]: 202; cf. Bonmariage *Le Réel et les réalités*, 37; Kalin, “Mullā Ṣadrā's Realist Ontology of the Intelligibles and Theory of Knowledge,” *Muslim World* 94, no. 1 [2004]: 84) by which being—which does not correspond to anything *in concreto* because it is a secondary intelligible (*maʿqūl thānī*)—is grafted by the mind onto quiddities. For a discussion of Suhrawardī's position on rational constructs, see ʿUbudiyyat, “The Fundamentality of Existence and the Subjectivity of Quiddity,” 202-4; Walbridge, *The Science of Mystic Lights: Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī and the Illuminationist Tradition in Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 45-6. At *ibid.*, 45 n. 3, Walbridge notes that there is a slight difference between intellectual operations (what he somewhat misleadingly calls “intellectual fictions”) and secondary intelligibles. To the best of my knowledge, Izutsu is the first author to suggest that the adjective *ʿtibārī* be understood as “fictitious.” See Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 46 (reprinted in *idem*, *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy* [Ashland: White Cloud Press, 1994], 83). Izutsu, however, prefers to understand the term as meaning “mentally posited.” See *idem*, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 99 ff. With respect to being as a secondary intelligible, Ṣadrā also takes this position, but contra Suhrawardī, understands being to be a secondary intelligible in the “philosophical” sense, not in the logical sense. See *ibid.*, 82-4.

3.1.5 – *Other Materials*

3.1.5.2 – *Anecdotes, Maxims, Poems*

Several anecdotes¹⁰⁶ and two maxims¹⁰⁷ are to be found in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, most of which do not have any particular significance to the development of the work's main ideas. One anecdote which plays a somewhat important role in the *tafsīr* is taken from Ibn Hishām's (d. ca. 213/828 or 218/833) famous biography of the Prophet, in which 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Zab'arī al-Sahmī objects to the Prophet upon hearing Q 21:67. Ṣadrā uses this incident to explain how objects of worship other than God to which people may incline are themselves one of the acts of Satan, and should thus be avoided.¹⁰⁸ He then contrasts people who incline to the acts of Satan with the perfect gnostics, who worship God without any delimitations of His reality.¹⁰⁹

The only other significant anecdote in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* occurs shortly after the Ibn al-Zab'arī narration, in which Ṣadrā explains the Prophet's method for elucidating the path of truth and the path of falsehood.¹¹⁰ This is an important piece of information as it appears in Ṣadrā's text, since he gives it an interpretation to which many would object, tying it in as he does to the ultimate salvation of all human beings.¹¹¹

It is well-known that Ṣadrā wrote poems in Persian, and several of his books include citations from such important Persian Sufi poets as Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221) and Jalāl al-

¹⁰⁶ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:4, 42, 65, 163, 177.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:7, 84.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:41. For Ibn al-Zab'arī's question, see Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz Shiblī (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 1:359.

¹⁰⁹ See p. 259 for the passage in translation.

¹¹⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:42.

¹¹¹ See pp. 259-60 for the passage in translation.

Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273).¹¹² In some of his writings, Ṣadrā also displays his knowledge of Arabic poetry, and even tries his hand at composing his own verses. With respect to Ṣadrā’s work on the Qur’ān, it seems that the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* contains more citations of Arabic poetry than any of his other *tafsīrs*. Fourteen poems appear in the text, eleven of which are anonymous citations of earlier materials.¹¹³ Of these eleven anonymous poems, two of them are important for Ṣadrā’s understanding of the relationship between the Qur’ān, the cosmos, and the Perfect Man.¹¹⁴ In two cases, Ṣadrā identifies the poet whose words he cites. The first of them is Labīd (d. ca. 41/661), a convert to Islam who was one of the seven so-called *mu‘allaqāt* poets of pre-Islamic times.¹¹⁵ The second is al-Maḥallī, a poet of the Banī Salūl tribe.¹¹⁶

The most significant poem in the text seems to be by Ṣadrā himself.¹¹⁷ It is a terse couplet that has to do with the different positions “the people of caprice” (*ahl al-hawā’*) take with respect to God, and how Ṣadrā does not fall into that trap because he has a single position in which he alone dwells. The insertion of these verses occurs at a crucial moment in the text, where Ṣadrā distinguishes between the different types of knowers of the Qur’ān.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Selections from Ṣadrā’s Persian *dīwān* are appended to his *Sih aṣl*. For one of his citations from Rūmī’s *Mathnawī*, see Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 6:23-4. For a citation from ‘Aṭṭār in the *Sih aṣl*, see p. 104 n. 95.

¹¹³ For these poems, see Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:73, 78, 81, 86, 119, 130, 147, 158, 163, 163, 171.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:163. See pp. 177-80 for a discussion of Ṣadrā’s treatment of the Perfect Man in this *tafsīr* work.

¹¹⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:78.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:142. At *ibid.* n. 1, Khwājawī notes that ‘Alī resembled the poet a lot. For the Banī Salūl, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Salūl” (by Michael Lecker).

¹¹⁷ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:30. It is also a possibility that Ṣadrā’s authorship of this couplet comes by way of one of the accepted forms of *ṣariqa* or “plagiarism.” For more on this phenomenon in classical Arabic literature, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Sariqa” (by Wolfhart Heinrichs).

¹¹⁸ See p. 195.

3.2 – Structure and Content

3.2.1 – A Note on Method

Mullā Ṣadrā is generally not always as systematic a writer in his *tafsīrs* as he is in his strictly philosophical writings. To be sure, there are plenty of instances in his *tafsīrs* where he digresses from the topic at hand. Such digressions may at times lead one to assume that the work in question lacks thematic unity.¹¹⁹ What augments the difficulty in reading Ṣadrā's *tafsīrs* in general are the lack of helpful indicators of where the respective discussion is heading. The generic subheadings in these works may mislead one into thinking that the point under discussion is crucial to the text, which is often not the case.¹²⁰

In our attempt to explicate the structure and content of Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we have not simply provided a diagram or description of the work's structure and then followed it up with a discussion of the content in each of its sections. Apart from being somewhat prolix, such an approach would present us with the same kind of confusion a reader of the original is bound to encounter when first reading the text, as it would not give us an adequate idea of how

¹¹⁹ Ṣadrā was writing for an audience who would have shared his assumptions about textual linearity/non-linearity, and would have been used to the digressive style of philosophical and theological discourse. With that in mind, lengthy digressions in the text should be viewed as supplementary material to the point at hand. In modern scholarship, the function of these digressions would quite literally be equivalent to the function of the footnote/endnote. Since Ṣadrā was writing as a Qur'ān commentator, the normal digressive style of philosophy and theology is further augmented, because, as a commentator on scripture, he had more ground to cover than he normally would in a philosophical or theological treatise.

¹²⁰ Cf. the introduction in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 57-8 n. 63, where Morris states that these subheadings “indicate the decisive realization of enlightenment or the “unveiling” of Being...” Although this interpretation is open to debate, at *ibid.*, 99 n. 22, Morris rightly notes the Ishrāqī roots to some of these subheadings. See also *ibid.*, 94 n. 11 and 98 n. 21. It can be noted that in his edition of Ṣadrā's *tafsīr*, Khwājawī will often insert his own explanatory titles alongside any given subheading. His purpose in doing so is to provide a summary of the heading's contents, although such insertions are far from helpful.

the work coheres as a whole. Our approach, therefore, is to provide, as concisely as possible, an outline of the work's structure alongside an explanation of its contents.¹²¹

3.2.2 – *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa: Structure and Content*

Mullā Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is 183 pages long. It consists of an introduction, eight parts or chapters with various subdivisions, and three appendices. Of the book's eight parts and three appendixes, Ṣadrā only gives titles to parts one, six, and the first two appendixes. We have included these below, and have given our own titles to the text's unnamed sections. For reasons that will be made clear shortly, Ṣadrā devotes the bulk of his attention to verses one, two, six, and seven of the Fātiḥa.

Introduction to the Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Tafsīr, 1:1-3)

The introduction begins with a listing of several names traditionally associated with the Fātiḥa, and briefly discusses the question of whether or not it consists of six or seven verses. Ṣadrā announces in the introduction that the time has come to reveal the Qur'ān's meanings. He goes on to single out the Fātiḥa as the most special ray of God's lights, noting that it brings together the secrets of the Origin and the Return.

Part I: Seeking Refuge (Tafsīr, 1:4-28)

Each of the book's last seven parts are dedicated to one the verses of the Fātiḥa. Its first part deals with what is normally recited before the Fātiḥa (but is not a part of it), namely the *isti'ādha*. Ṣadrā notes that his goal in this unexpectedly long section, parts of which are based on the corresponding section in Rāzī's *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, is to explain the *isti'ādha* formula's

¹²¹ To avoid confusion, I summarize each part of the work rather than give the details of the subdivisions in each part, and discuss noteworthy digressions along the way. The most important issues in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* will be fully discussed in chapters four and five of this study.

intellectual meaning as opposed to its verbal meaning. To accomplish his goal, Ṣadrā discusses the different aspects of seeking refuge, which range from the one seeking refuge to why one seeks refuge. Taken together, Ṣadrā's treatment of the *isti'ādha* can be said to explore the theme of the reality of evil and man's weakness before it. Because man is so weak, he is constantly in need of God's help and mercy, the physical manifestation of which is voiced in the *isti'ādha* formula.

What emerges from Ṣadrā's explanations is significant to the development of the entire work. Several important points are made here concerning the function of the "Perfect Words" in the cosmos. The sections on cosmology in this section of the book, therefore, shed a great deal of light on the development of Ṣadrā's theoretical and practical hermeneutics.

An important excursus in this part of the text, in part following Rāzī, is the brief discussion Ṣadrā devotes to the arguments of the Jabirites and the Qadirites concerning the efficacy of seeking refuge. Ṣadrā states that neither side will arrive at the correct answer unless God protects them and teaches them directly from Him.

Part II: *The Name and the Named (Tafsīr, 1:29-77)*

This section is devoted to Q 1:1. It contains a full engagement with the philosophical and mystical implications of the name Allāh, and a meditation on God's names "the Merciful" (*al-rahīm*) and "the Compassionate" (*al-rahīm*).

After discussing the different types of approaches to scripture (i.e., outward and inward), Ṣadrā contrasts those people who are bound to particular fixed categories of interpretation and cannot go beyond them (i.e., exoteric scholars) with those who are not bound by any particular opinion, and who therefore get to the heart of the Qur'ān (i.e., the esoteric scholars). He ties this

discussion into the point he is trying to make: just as there are different views of God, so too will there necessarily be different approaches to His Word.

Ṣadrā goes on to discuss how the name Allāh is the first manifestation of multiplicity, acts as an isthmus (*barzakh*) between the Presence of Unity and the loci of the Command and creation, and unites all the contradictory names. We are then given a fairly standard explication of how multiplicity comes about in the cosmos by virtue of the different ruling properties of the divine names.

Ṣadrā's discussion of the divine names and the inaccessibility of the divine Essence allow him to introduce two important themes in this book: the gods of belief, and why only the Perfect Man worships God as God. These points are then linked with the author's treatment of the invocation/remembrance (*dhikr*) of God. We learn that the highest form of *dhikr* is invocation of the name "Huwa," which denotes the Essence Itself. One can only arrive at this practice after having realized that invocation of God's other names, such as "the Merciful" and "the Gentle," lead us to particular aspects of His reality, the invocation of which ultimately entail limitations. This section then leads Ṣadrā to go into his long and detailed response to Rāzī, which arises out of the latter's explanation of the *dhikr* formula, "There is no He but He."

Ṣadrā ends this section with several comments upon the divine names "the Merciful" and "the Compassionate." After discussing the fact that mercy really only comes from God and refuting Zamakhsharī's view that the ascription of mercy to Him is purely metaphorical, Ṣadrā introduces this book's most important themes: the fundamentality of God's mercy, the accidental nature of His wrath, and how all human beings will ultimately end up in felicity.

Part III: *The Act of Praise (Tafsīr, 1:73-82)*

Ṣadrā begins this section by discussing the relationship between “praise” (*ḥamd*) and “gratitude” (*shukr*). Praise for God, we are told, is actually a part of speech, and is thus an “act.” Since God’s act is nothing but existention, being, insofar as it is separate from God, is an act of praise for Him. Thus, everything praises God, which means that each thing is both an act of praise and that which praises. The highest level of praise is the level of the Muḥammadan Seal, which Ṣadrā connects here with the famous tradition in which the Prophet says that he will be given the “banner of praise” (*liwā’ al-ḥamd*) on the final day.

The discussion of the levels of praise, taken together with what Ṣadrā said earlier in Part II concerning the Perfect Man, informs what he says in this section. Here, Ṣadrā speaks of the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm—the great book and the small book—which is prompted by his meditations on the last part of Q 1:2. It is in the context of Ṣadrā’s treatment of the words “Lord of the worlds” (*rabb al-‘ālamīn*) that he refutes Bayḍāwī’s interpretation of this verse, tying it into his famous doctrines of substantial motion and the gradation of being.

Part IV: *Reflections on Q 1:3 (Tafsīr, 1:82)*

Since Ṣadrā dealt with the implications of the divine names the Merciful and the Compassionate in Part II, this section is very short. He simply states that the occurrence of this verse here could be rhetorical and for purposes of confirming what came before it (i.e., the *basmala* formula in Q 1.1). Or, it could be there to stress the *ḥamd* and *shukr* mentioned in the previous verse, which emphasize God’s divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and man’s servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*).

Part V: *The Specification of Praise (Tafsīr, 1:83-6)*

Prompted by Q 1:4, Ṣadrā discusses some of the grammatical and lexical usages of the term *mālik*. He then briefly relates how the verse in question conveys the principles of spontaneous, temporal origination and the gradation of being. Ṣadrā eventually goes on to explain how, in the next world, God’s control of things will be made crystal clear because things will then exist in their full potentiality. Since a thing’s existing in full potentiality necessitates that there be no receptacle for the locus of God’s control, the actualized thing will itself become a self-evident manifestation of God’s exclusive effective power.

The most important discussion in this part of the *tafsīr* is Ṣadrā’s treatment of the modes in which *ḥamd* becomes specified in the cosmos as mediated by God’s merciful qualities (recall that in Part II Ṣadrā says that *ḥamd* is both an act of praise and the act of existentiation: thus we see why mercy is being and vice versa). This pivotal section not only elucidates what Ṣadrā says in Part II, but it informs the most important discussions in the remainder of the text.

Part VI: *The Precedence of Worship over Seeking Help (Tafsīr, 1:87-97)*

Just as Ṣadrā linked the function of *ḥamd* to his cosmology in the previous section, so too does he link *ḥamd* to worship in this section, although his treatment of the question here is quite circumspect. This is because Ṣadrā’s main concern in this part of the *tafsīr* is to explain why the wording in Q 1:5 puts “worship” (*ibāda*) before “seeking help” (*isti‘āna*). In other words, why does the verse teach people to say “We worship You” before saying “We seek help from You”? Ṣadrā offers several explanations for why the words “We worship You” come first: they (1) are a way of admonishing the worshipper not to have self-interest in his devotions, (2) emphasize God’s lordship and thus strengthen the servant’s servanthood, (3) help avoid Satan’s insinuations, and (4) allow one to realize his servanthood, which then leads to asking the Master

for help. Furthermore, the precedence of “We worship You” over “We seek help from You” is similar to the Islamic testimony of faith, which puts servanthood over messengerhood, that is, it puts that which is lasting over that which is not, since servanthood does not end with the cessation of the world, whereas messengerhood does.

Part VII: *The Straight Path (Tafsīr, 1:98-123)*

Ṣadrā offers several interpretations of the expression “the straight path” (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) to be found in Q 1:6. We are told, for example, that it can be the Qur’ān, Islam, God’s religion, or the Prophet and the Imams. Ṣadrā’s preferred understanding of the *ṣirāṭ*, which he states in the *Asfār* as well, is that it is made of the stuff of the soul itself.

Ṣadrā makes it clear that everyone is on a “path” to God which is their straight path as determined by their primordial dispositions and modes of descent. Here, he anticipates several objections to this point. These objections have to do with why wrongdoers are punished if they are doing nothing but following their “path,” (i.e., their natures); why the world should be created when all things eventually return to God; and why priority in rank and differences in peoples’ primordial dispositions exist, and how these disparities do not compromise God’s justice. Ṣadrā’s responses to these objections allow him to drive home an important point: although people are all on a straight path with respect to their essential natures (which he calls essential motion), they also have the ability to choose (which he calls volitional motion). Volitional motion allows people to freely choose their destinies within the confines of the possibilities presented to them by their essential natures.

Part VIII (a): *The Nature of Blessings (Tafsīr, 1:124-41)*

This section of the *tafsīr* is prompted by the first part of Q 1:7, which speaks of those upon whom God has bestowed His blessings. Since a good portion of this part of the work is a

reworking of a section of book thirty-two of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, it is one of the least important in terms of the main ideas addressed by Ṣadrā throughout the text. The gist of the reworked section from the *Iḥyā'* is that true blessings have to do with felicity in the next world, although we can speak of blessings in this world as well. When Ṣadrā departs from paraphrasing Ghazālī, we learn that blessings are to be found everywhere, and that the entire universe is actually a theatre for God's blessings, all of which work in harmony with one another.

Part VIII (b): God's Mercy and Wrath (Tafsīr, 1:142-62)

Although Ṣadrā reworks here passages from Qūnawī's *Ijāz* concerning the different levels and functions of God's wrath, the reworked passages from Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt* play a much more significant role. Situating the Qur'anic image of God's "two hands" within the framework of a cosmology largely borrowed from Ibn 'Arabī, Ṣadrā demonstrates how God's mercy will triumph over His wrath for all creatures in the end. He also elucidates the manner in which the cosmos is pure beauty (again reworking a passage from Ibn 'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*), and describes how, as a mirror for the divine, the cosmos relates to the function of *ḥamd*. In a sense, this last section ties together many of the points Ṣadrā makes throughout the *tafsīr* work.

Appendix I: On Some of the Merits of the Fātiḥa (Tafsīr, 1:163-71)

Ṣadrā notes that he decided to include this section, which is quite commonplace in *tafsīr* literature, as a way of supplementing the points made in the *tafsīr* proper. This appendix draws links between the correspondences between the Qur'ān and the cosmos on the one hand, and the Fātiḥa and the Qur'ān on the other. Of course, the Perfect Man is equivalent to the Fātiḥa, as he is a transcription of the cosmos/Qur'ān, and this is a point that Ṣadrā is particularly interested in conveying here. Because the Fātiḥa contains everything, Ṣadrā says that the realized gnostics find in it what is contained in the entire Qur'ān. By extension, the Fātiḥa contains all that one

needs to know about eschatology. Another theme covered in this appendix is the structural and doctrinal similarities shared between the Fātiḥa and the last two verses of *Sūrat al-baqara*, which are traditionally known as the “closing verses” (*khawātīm*).

Appendix II: *On the Order and Structure of the Fātiḥa (Tafsīr, 1:172-5)*

This brief section deals, by and large, with the psychological awareness of the servant’s existential situation, which is then translated into his recital of one of the given verses of the Fātiḥa. Ṣadrā also links the structure of the Fātiḥa with the circle of life: verses two to four deal with the Origin, five to six with the present world, and seven with the Return.

Appendix III: *Selections from Rāzī’s Tafsīr (Tafsīr, 1:176-83)*

This book’s final appendix is a collection of some of Rāzī’s comments on the merits and structure of the Fātiḥa. Ṣadrā provides four discussions from Rāzī’s *tafsīr* as a way of supplementing the book and listing more of the Fātiḥa’s merits. Rāzī observes the importance of the number seven: there are seven verses of the Fātiḥa, seven sensible actions of the ritual prayer, seven levels of man’s creation, and seven levels of the substance of his soul. He also discusses the symbolism of the ritual prayer’s gestures, and explains how the *basmala* formula contains all that is needed to repel the devil’s insinuations.

3.3 – Conclusion

In his philosophical works, Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrates his remarkable familiarity with the textual traditions of theology, philosophy, and mysticism. In his *tafsīr* works, on the other hand, he has the opportunity to display the full range of his synthetic abilities, as he draws on texts and ideas in virtually every major discipline amongst the Islamic sciences in his capacity as a scriptural exegete. In this chapter, we had the opportunity to see how this phenomenon manifests

itself in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. This has allowed us to walk away with a very good idea of the key Qur'anic passages, *ḥadīths*, texts, and figures which appear, either explicitly or implicitly, in this important work. At the same time, we also attempted to provide a concise summary of the main themes and doctrinal issues taken up in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. This exercise has the advantage of enabling us to discern the text's less significant aspects as well as its most important philosophical and mystical ideas.

Chapter 4

***Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa II:* Metaphysics, Cosmology, Anthropology**

In the introduction to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Mullā Ṣadrā explains that, amongst the Qur'ān's "lights" (*lum'ān*), the Fātiḥa is particularly special. Despite its concision, it brings together the secrets of the Origin (*al-mabda'*) and the Return (*al-ma'ād*), as well as the states of people in the afterlife. What is needed in order to understand the Word is submission, an attentive ear, God-fearing, and a pure heart:

The light of guidance and the life of faith proceed from His lights [*lum'ān*], especially this *sūra* which, despite its concision,¹ contains all of the verses of the Qur'ān and the sum total of the secrets of the Origin, Return, and the states of creatures on the final day before the All-Merciful. So listen with the ear of your heart to the recitation of God's verses, and let the lights of the miracle of the Messenger of God penetrate your insides.²

Several points emerge from this important passage. Ṣadrā argues that the Fātiḥa contains the entire Qur'ān. A page earlier, we are told that the Fātiḥa is also called the "mother of the Qur'ān" (*umm al-qur'ān*) because it contains all of the Qur'ān's meanings.³ Since the Fātiḥa contains the entirety of the Qur'ān's meanings, it naturally brings together all of its inner teachings as well.

¹ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:79, 163-4, 174.

² *Ibid.*, 1:2.

³ *Ibid.*, 1:1. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:168. Cf. Qūnawī, *Ijāz*, 104; Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1:35. See also *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. "Fātiḥa." For the interesting parallel drawn by Ibn 'Arabī between the "mother of the book" (*umm al-kitāb*) and the "mother of Qur'ān" and Jesus and Mary, see Gril, "Commentaries on the *Fātiḥa* and Experience of Being According to Ibn 'Arabī," 44. For discussions on the merits of the Fātiḥa in classical Shī'ī and Sunnī exegetical literature, see Ayoub, "The Prayer of Islam: A Presentation of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa in Muslim Exegesis," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Thematic Issue: Studies in Qur'an and Tafsir, ed. Alford Welch) 47S (1979): 638-41 (reprinted in *The Koran: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, 4: ch. 56).

The Qur'ān repeatedly informs its readers that they came from God and, after a short time on earth, will return to Him. From this perspective, it would not be an overstatement to say that the fundamental message of the Qur'ān is the Origin and the Return.⁴ As soon as we speak of these two realities, what lies between them a fortiori becomes all the more important, since our actions in this world will determine the route of our return. Thus, Ṣadrā is calling our attention here in this introduction to the all-encompassing nature of the Fātiḥa. As the Qur'ān's introductory chapter, it in a sense is a foreshadowing of what is to follow.

That Ṣadrā sees in the Fātiḥa the entire enfolding of the human drama is also made clear towards the end of the book, where in an appendix, he draws several links between the Fātiḥa's verses and its correspondences to the three "days" of man's life, that is, his Origin (Q 1:2-4 = morning), mid-way point (Q 1:5-6 = the present day), and Return (Q 1:7 = night). Man's Origin corresponds to God's lordhood (*rubūbiyya*), since it was His will to bring him into existence; man's mid-way point corresponds to his servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*), since during his life on earth he should be concerned with worshipping God and purifying himself; and his Return corresponds to the science of the soul in the afterlife.⁵ Thus, in the Fātiḥa, man has a roadmap which "brings together" all that he needs for his journey.⁶

⁴ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:165, where he states that the Fātiḥa, along with the closing lines of Q 2, contain "the goal of human perfection."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 174-5. Elsewhere in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā offers a justification for his position: "If this *sūra* did not, as we said, contain the secrets of the Origin and the Return and the science of man's wayfaring to his Lord, the reports about its superiority would not have been related. Indeed, [reading *innahā* instead of *annahā*] it is equal to the entire Qur'ān, since, in reality, a thing does not have rank and excellence except on account of its containing divine matters and their states ..." (*Ibid.*, 1:164).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:174. See also Martin Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān: One Book, Many Meanings* (London: Routledge, 2007), 76 for Ghazālī's division of the verses of the Fātiḥa into theoretical and practical dimensions, although Whittingham's suggestion that this division is essentially Aristotelian should be taken with a grain of salt.

Because the Fātiḥa is primarily concerned with the Origin and the Return, Ṣadrā spends a good deal of time discussing these two realities. In this chapter, therefore, we will investigate the manner in which Ṣadrā tackles the first of these two topics. It will be shown how he presents us with a well-ordered and tightly argued picture of the nature of God, the manner in which multiplicity proceeds from Him, and the role of man in the cosmic scheme.

4.1 – The Nameless and the Named

As noted in the previous chapter, Ṣadrā will normally discuss the grammar, derivation, and general meanings of certain key words which occur in the Fātiḥa. One would therefore expect him to devote some discussion to the first verse of the Fātiḥa, namely the *basmala*. Yet in this *tafsīr* work, Ṣadrā pays little attention to the *basmala*. Consequently, we find none of the typical discussions in *tafsīr* literature centred around topics such as the grammatical points concerning the *basmala*,⁷ the debate over the legality of reciting it in the ritual prayer (i.e., whether it was mandatory to recite or not),⁸ and the question of whether or not it is specific to the Islamic community.⁹

⁷ A typical linguistic approach to the *basmala* can be found in Rāzī's *tafsīr*: "We have shown that the *bā'* in 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful' attaches to an object of a preposition. We therefore say: it is possible for this object of a preposition to accompany a noun or a verb, which can either be precedent or antecedent to it in four ways: (1) when the verb is precedent to it you say, 'I begin in the name of God'; (2) when the noun is precedent to it you say, 'The beginning of the discussion is in the name of God'; (3) when the verb is antecedent to it you say, 'In the name of God, I begin'; (4) and when the noun is antecedent to it you say, 'In the name of God is my beginning'" (Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1:101).

⁸ Cf. Ayoub, "The Prayer of Islam," 642. I cite here two interesting approaches to the question. In his *tafsīr*, the important Shī'ī exegete of the Buwayhid era, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan (Abū Ja'far) al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), says the following: "Members of our school agree that the *basmala* is a verse of *Sūrat al-ḥamd* and every [sic] *sūra*, and that whoever neglects it in the prayer, his prayer—whether obligatory or supererogatory—will be invalid. It is mandatory to recite aloud when the recitation of the prayer is aloud, and it is desirable to recite aloud when the recitation of the prayer is silent" (Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Amīn and Aḥmad al-Āmilī

Why Ṣadrā would choose to record the debates and discussions in *tafsīr* literature concerning other verses of the Fātiḥa but not the all-important *basmala* is unclear. What is even more surprising is that he devotes no attention to the Sufi interpretations of the *basmala* formula that we find in the works of such important authors as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021),¹⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī (d. after 520/1126),¹¹ and ‘Abd al-Karīm Jīlī (d.

[Najaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Ilmiyya, 1957-64], 1:38). For Ṭūsī’s life and work, see Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, passim; Abbas Kadhim, “Politics and Theology of the Imāmī Shī‘a in Baghdad in the 5th/11th Century” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006), 107-115. Zamakhsharī, on the other hand, offers two positions on the matter: “The Qur’ān reciters and the legal experts of Madina, Basra, and Sham hold that the *basmala* is not a verse from the Fātiḥa, nor is it a verse in the other *sūras*. It is only there to divide the *suras* and for the blessings of beginning with it, just as every significant matter is begun by saying it. This is the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfa—God have mercy on him—and those who follow him. This is why they do not recite it aloud in the prayer. The Qur’ān reciters and legal experts of Makka and Kufa hold that it is a verse of the Fātiḥa and every [sic] other *sūra*. Shāfi‘ī and his circle—God have mercy on them—hold to this position, which is why they recite it aloud in the prayer” (*Kashshāf*, 1:35).

⁹ The great ‘Irāqī Sufi and exegete, Maḥmūd b. ‘Abd Allāh Ālūsī, offers a fine summary of the problem in his *tafsīr*: “The scholars differ about this: is it specific to this community or not? ‘Allāma Abū Bakr al-Tunīsī has reported that the scholars of every religious community have agreed that God began every book with it. Suyūṭī has narrated, based on what has been transmitted to him from al-Sarmīnī—who holds responsibility for reporting it—that the phrase ‘In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful’ is the opening for every book” (Maḥmūd b. ‘Abd Allāh Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma‘ānī* [Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1970], 1:52).

¹⁰ For a sampling of the Sufi interpretations of the *basmala* offered by Sulamī in his *Ḥaqā’iq*, see Rustom, “Forms of Gnosis in Sulamī’s Sufi Exegesis of the Fātiḥa,” 327-44 (340-1 in particular). Cf. Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique* (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1970), 166-8 (particularly p. 167); Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 88-9. For scholarship on Sulamī’s *tafsīrs*, see the bibliography in Rustom, “Forms of Gnosis in Sulamī’s Sufi Exegesis of the Fātiḥa,” 338-9. To this list we can also add Hussein Ali Akash, *Die sufische Koranauslegung: Semantik und Deutungsmechanismen der iṣārī-Exegese* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2006), passim; Lutz Berger, “Geschieden von allem ausser Gott”: *Sufik und Welt bei Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sulamī (936-1021)* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1998); Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur’ān in Classical Islam*, 69-71.

¹¹ With respect to the *basmala*, Maybudī sees in the beginning of this formula a fundamental metaphysical principle, namely the unfolding of the divine hiddenness into the realm of multiplicity through the name “Allāh.” God’s name here becomes the means of access to Him, and must thus be the starting point for any and all human transactions: “‘In the Name of God’ means, ‘I began in the name of God, so you too begin!’ He says, ‘I began through My name,

832/1428).¹² In fact, there is only one passing reference to the *basmla* formula in the entire work, and even this comes from the pen of Rāzī.¹³

Rather than engage any of the long-established exoteric and esoteric approaches to the *basmla* formula, Ṣadrā chooses to get to the heart of the matter, and he does this very quickly. After discussing the different types of knowers of the Qurʾān, he offers a long meditation on the nature of the name (*ism*) Allāh. Since Q 1:1: begins “with” or “in” the name of God, the very structure of this verse seems to prompt within Ṣadrā several questions: how can God, who is beyond the reach of creation, also be accessible to creation? After all, it is God who begins with/in His own name, but why does this happen? What is the nature of that name of God with/in which He Himself begins? Questions such as these, although implicit, lurk in the background as Ṣadrā introduces his detailed discussion concerning God’s reality.

4.1.1 – *The Essence*

In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* Ṣadrā says that God’s Essence (*dhāt*) is beyond definition, description, name, denotation, and delimitation. In Its pure simplicity and uniqueness, It is only

was united with My name, and commenced in My name, so begin through My name, unite with My name, and commence in My name” (Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār wa-‘uddat al-abrār*, ed. ‘A. A Ḥikmat [Tehran: Dānishgāh, 1952-60], 1:4). This interpretation offered by Maybudī, as we will see below, is very much in keeping with Ṣadrā’s description of the two faces of the divine Essence. For a study of Maybudī’s *Kashf*, see Keeler, *Ṣūfi Hermeneutics*.

¹² For a translation and study of this author’s important work, *al-Kahf wa-l-raqīm*, see ‘Abd al-Karīm Jīlī, *Un commentaire ésotérique de la formule inaugurale du Qoran: “Les mystères cryptographiques de Bismi-Llāhi-Raḥmāni-Raḥīm,”* trans. Jabir Clément-François (Paris: Dar Albouraq, 2002). For other representative Sufi approaches to the *basmla*, see Gril, “Commentaries on the *Fātiḥa* and Experience of Being According to Ibn ‘Arabī”; Martin Lings: *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993, repr. ed.), 148-57; Lory, *Les commentaries ésotériques du Coran d’après ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī*, 169-72; Rizvi, “The Existential Breath of *al-rahmān* and the Munificent Grace of *al-rahīm*: The *Tafsīr sūrat al-fātiḥa* of Jāmī and the School of Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 58-87 (pp. 73-7 in particular).

¹³ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:182. Here, the *basmla* is given its other title, namely the *tasmiya*.

known to Itself, and forever escapes the grasp of the human intellect: “It has neither essential definition [*ḥadd*],¹⁴ nor name [*ism*], nor description [*rasm*], and intellectual perception does not have a way to It.”¹⁵ So beyond the grasp of human cognition is God’s Essence that all we can do is describe It as transcending the very categories which transcend our perception and understanding. Since human beings cannot conceive of anything greater than infinity, we can describe the Essence as being beyond infinity. As Ṣadrā puts it, “His Essence, in the intensity of light, is infinity beyond the infinite.”¹⁶ If the Essence is “infinity beyond the infinite,” this is only because It must be understood in relation to that which the human mind cannot grasp, namely infinity, but the measure and incomprehensibility of which it has some vague notion.¹⁷

¹⁴ Following Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 30, and Walbridge and Ziai, “Glossary,” in Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, 197, I render *ḥadd* as “essential definition,” as opposed to simply “definition,” which is denoted by the general and more widely-applicable Arabic term, *taʿrīf*. Cf. Josef van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAḍudaddīn al-Īcī* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966), 445; index, s.v. ʿ-r-f → *taʿrīf*, who understands *taʿrīf* as “Bestimmung” and “Definition,” but notes that it is different from the term *ḥadd*, which he also translates as “Definition.” See also Kalin, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Realist Ontology of the Intelligibles and Theory of Knowledge,” 82, who renders *ḥadd* as “logical definition.”

¹⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:39. Needless to say, the terms for definitions employed by Ṣadrā here became standard in Islamic philosophy from Avicenna onwards. For the evolution of definitions in early Islamic philosophy, see Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition in Islamic Philosophy*, part 1.

¹⁶ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:44. Cf. the pertinent remarks in Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 71-2.

¹⁷ Technically speaking, even the qualifications “infinite” and “beyond infinity” are not predicable of the divine Essence, since the terms “beyond” and “infinity” presuppose space and time respectively, and hence some mode of delimitation. Delimitation would, therefore, lead to God’s knowability. But if God as such is knowable, the object of knowledge cannot be God. Recall here Teerstegen’s famous remark: “A God understood is no God” [Ein begriffener Gott ist kein Gott]. Yet God *is* an object of knowledge. Thus, the quest to know God becomes, as David Burrell would have it, an attempt at “knowing the unknowable God.” See Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina (sic), Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986). Put metaphysically, there is a manner in which the Essence can and must be delimited, for which, see below.

Ṣadrā's language here indicates his indebtedness to Ibn 'Arabī and his followers' treatment of the divine Essence or the Absolute (*al-muṭlaq*).¹⁸ At the same time, it would not be unreasonable to look to sources other than the school of Ibn 'Arabī. We know that the early Ismā'īlī philosophers in general and Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. 361/971) in particular,¹⁹ had developed an important doctrine of the inaccessibility of God. God was not confined to the category of being. Rather, He was beyond being itself.²⁰ According to this conception, God was

¹⁸ For a penetrating analysis of the Absolute from the perspective of later Islamic thought, see Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 23-38; Qūnawī, *Risālat al-nuṣūs*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1983), 6-10 and passim. See also Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La philosophie mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri* (Ankara: Ministère de la Culture, 1990), 65 ff.; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 59-66; Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 66-8; Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), ch. 1. For the divine Essence as black light (*nūr-i siyāh*), see Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, 100-3. It is interesting to note that Corbin's seminal *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969) does not devote a detailed discussion to the nature of the Absolute or the Essence, since he is more concerned in this work with the modes in which the Essence makes Itself known. When Corbin discuss the Essence, he therefore focuses on the *Deus absconditus*' desire for objective self-awareness, or what Corbin poetically refers to as the "pathetic God" (pp. 112 ff.) who is overcome by "the sadness of the primordial solitude that makes Him yearn to be revealed in beings who manifest Him to Himself insofar as He manifests Himself to them" (p. 184). For an appraisal of the "image" of Ibn 'Arabī in Corbin's work, see Michel Chodkiewicz, "Ibn 'Arabī dans l'oeuvre de Henry Corbin," in *Henry Corbin: philosophies et sagesses des religions du livre (actes du Colloque "Henry Corbin," Sorbonne, les 6-8 novembre 2003)*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Christian Jambet, and Pierre Lory, 81-91 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). See also, Chodkiewicz, "Towards Reading the *Futūhāt Makkiyya*," in Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, 2:51 n. 109 and 53 n. 149.

¹⁹ Paul Walker rightly observes that, unlike the early Ismā'īlī philosophers Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934) and Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), we have a better picture of Sijistānī's views because of the sheer abundance of his writings that have come down to us. See Walker, "The Ismā'īlīs," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor, 81 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For Sijistānī's life and thought, see Walker, *Early Philosophical Shī'ism: The Ismā'īlī Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²⁰ For lucid presentations of the general Ismā'īlī teaching on the God beyond being, see Corbin, *Historie de la philosophie islamique*, 122-6; Madelung, "Aspects of Ismā'īlī Theology: The Prophetic Chain and the God Beyond Being," in *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 57-9 (Tehran: Imperial Iranian

“not-being.” This apophatic²¹ theology necessarily entails that the most we can say about God is simply that He is “not” like anything we know, which is in keeping with the Qur’anic picture of God’s transcendence. Since God is not like anything we know, He is also not like being itself, and, thus, is “not being” but beyond being.

We also find a similar doctrine in earlier authors, such as Plato and Plotinus.²² Yet the Ismā’īlī philosophers develop the notion in a slightly different manner, confining themselves to

Academy of Philosophy, 1977) (reprinted in Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* [London: Variorum, 1985], XVII); Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 203-55; Daniel De Smet, *La quiétude de l’intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l’oeuvre de Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī (X^e/XI^e s.)* (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), ch. 2.

²¹ “Apophasis” refers to a mode of discourse about God which necessarily entails negation. This, as will become clear below, is the most basic sense in which Michael Sells employs the term in his groundbreaking *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), since he goes beyond the notion of apohasis as merely negative theology, arguing for its rootedness in language and the new mode of mystical discourse which its ambiguities necessarily engender.

²² Plato’s reference to the good (*to agathon*) as being “beyond being” (*epekeina tes ousias*) is to be found, *inter alia*, in *Republic* 509^b (Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997], 1130). My thanks go to Babak Bakhtiarynia for providing me with this reference. For Plotinus’ treatment of the One who is beyond being, see Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 137 ff. See also Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 4 for references to other, earlier Chinese and Indian treatments of apophasis. We cannot, however, attempt to draw an explicit connection between Ismā’īlī apophasis and Neoplatonism. Although Neoplatonism had a definite influence upon Ismā’īlī teachings (particularly in cosmological matters), the full range of Plotinus’ apophatic teachings could not have reached them. As Sells (*ibid.*, 220-1 n. 14) points out, Plotinus’ most “intense” apophatic teachings never found their way into the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*. Furthermore, Ismā’īlī apophatic teachings differ in one important respect from their Neoplatonic counterpart, for which, see p. 155. For a useful discussion of the influence of Greek ontology upon Islamic thought, see Parviz Morewedge, “Ontology: Greek Sources of Some Islamic Philosophies of Being and Existence,” in *idem*, *Essays in Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism* (Oneonta: Department of Philosophy, State University of New York at Oneonta, 1995), 47-123 (originally published as “Greek Sources of Some Near Eastern Philosophies of Being and Existence,” in *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval*, ed. *idem*, 285-336 [New York: Fordham University Press, 1982]).

what Michael Sells calls the lower scale of apophatic discourse's "performative intensity."²³ Thus, not only is God not being, He is also not not being.²⁴ In other words, to say that God is not being is, nonetheless, to impose a limitation upon God, for if we say that He is not being, we are still confining Him both linguistically and intellectually by trapping Him in negation. Since God transcends all conceptual and linguistic frameworks, the statement that He is not being in some way traps Him within our own thought and language worlds.

By negating the original negation, the Ismā'īlī philosophers overcome this difficulty, since God is *not* not being, which is to say that that prior attempt to maintain God's transcendence, confining as it was, is itself negated so as to do away with any notion of limitation upon God. However, as Sells astutely observes, the very nature of apophatic discourse necessarily results in an infinite regress in which each statement made about God is then corrected by a counter statement, ad infinitum.²⁵ The reason the Ismā'īlīs do not go beyond the double-negation of God's transcendence is likely because their fundamental concern, especially by the time we get to Sijistānī, was to articulate a coherent theoretical perspective on God's

²³ See Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 3.

²⁴ See Walker, "The Ismā'īlīs," 82. See also the selection from Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Knowledge and Liberation*, trans. Faquir Hunzai in *An Anthology of Ismaili Literature: A Shi'i Vision of Islam*, ed. Hermann Landolt, Samira Sheikh, and Kutub Kassam, 102-5 (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008) (the translation presented here was revised from Hunzai's complete translation of this text: *Knowledge and Liberation: A Treatise on Philosophical Theology* [London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1998]); Sijistānī, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, trans. Paul Walker (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 49-50 (also translated in Corbin (ed.), *Trilogie ismaélienne* [Tehran: Département d'Iranologie de l'Institut francoiranien, 1961]).

²⁵ See Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 2.

transcendence which could adequately fit into their wider, cosmological system.²⁶ Thus, Ismā‘īlī apophasis functions differently than it does in a figure like Plotinus, whose treatment of apophasis is intimately tied to “naming,” which significantly extends the problem of conceptually delimiting God through saying that He is “beyond being” by focusing on the limitations of language and the act of “naming.”²⁷ The Ismā‘īlī double negation, on the other hand, does not seem to concern itself with the problem of language in this regard. Their double negation of God, therefore, more or less serves as a heuristic device which is designed to help pave the way for explanations of the nature of the universe, and the role of the Imam and man within it.

Even when we turn to the Ismā‘īlī writings of Ṭūsī, we notice an emphasis on apophasis only insofar as it serves as the fundamental basis for a much more intricate presentation of cosmology, psychology, and anthropology. Yet Ṭūsī’s discussion of God’s transcendence, which closely follows in the wake of Sijistānī’s presentation, may have had a role to play in the formation of Ṣadrā’s understanding of God’s transcendence. After all, Ṣadrā was very well-versed in Ṭūsī’s writings from his Twelver Shī‘ī phase, and some of these writings, as we now know, were not always free of distinctively Ismā‘īlī content.²⁸

While Ṭūsī’s Ismā‘īlī writings may have had an influence upon Ṣadrā’s understanding of God’s transcendence, Ṣadrā’s ontology may have also been formed in response to the implications of Ismā‘īlism’s radical emphasis on God’s transcendence. Ṣadrā’s ontology, which

²⁶ For Ismā‘īlī cosmology, see Heinz Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismā‘īliya: eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1978); Samuel Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā‘īlism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), ch. 1; Sijistānī, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, 52 ff.

²⁷ See Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 15 ff.

²⁸ See pp. 74-5.

posits the univocality of being, squarely contradicts the Ismā‘īlī emphasis on the fundamental discontinuity between God and creation.²⁹ For the Ismā‘īlīs, the term “being” can only equivocally relate to God (who is beyond “being”) and His creation, a thesis defended by Mullā Rajab—himself influenced by Ismā‘īlī notions of divine transcendence³⁰—in a treatise which attempts to refute Ṣadrā’s thesis concerning the univocal nature of the term *wujūd*.³¹

If Ṣadrā’s ontology was in fact informed by his engagement with Ṭūsī’s Ismā‘īlī writings, by the time we get to his presentation of God’s inaccessibility in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, any naturalization of Ṭūsī becomes doubly obscured, since in this text, Ṣadrā clothes his ontology in less philosophical (and hence more religious) terminology. Readers familiar with Ṣadrā’s philosophical writings are sure to notice the parallels between the descriptions of God’s Essence as discussed here and his treatment of the nature of *wujūd* or “being” in his more philosophical writings. To be sure, terms such as the “Absolute” and the “Essence” are, in the language of theology and mysticism, what “being” is in the language of philosophy, at least from the perspective of the school of transcendent philosophy. The reason being is identical to God’s Essence is because they both denote God’s “reality.”³² Since God in His reality is completely hidden and inaccessible, and the terms “being” and “Essence” refer to this reality, they too are hidden and inaccessible, and therefore completely unknown.

²⁹ See the astute comments in Madelung, “Aspects of Ismā‘īlī Theology,” 63.

³⁰ See Corbin’s remarks in his *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 83-96.

³¹ See p. 35 for a discussion of this work.

³² See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 14 and Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 64. It must be noted that the term “God” in this context does not refer to that God who is an object of worship. Rather, “God” as used here refers to the Absolute, that is, the God beyond all conception and accessibility. See below for a discussion of this crucial point.

That we are justified in identifying being with the Essence is clearly evidenced in Ṣadrā's *Mashā'ir*. As we saw in chapter two, in the beginning of the *Mashā'ir* we are told that the reality of being is completely indefinable. This discussion parallels Ṣadrā's treatment of the utter transcendence of the Essence in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. Yet there is another sense in which being and God's Essence are one and the same reality: they are also the most evident of things, since there is nowhere that being and God's Essence are not to be found. This point will become clear if we recall our discussion of Ṣadrā's treatment of being in chapter two of this study, since whatever can be said about being in purely philosophical terms can be said about the Essence in theological and mystical terms.

We saw above that Ṣadrā described the Essence as “perfect” and “simple” in Its reality, and that It is “unseen” and “infinity beyond the infinite.” When he seeks to explain the notion of the Essence's accessibility, he employs the traditional language of theology and mysticism, just as he employs the standard language of philosophy in his explication of being's accessibility. Like the particularizations of being, the Essence's particularizations are to be found everywhere as well. In more poetic language, Ṣadrā refers to the modes of being as “drops of the ocean of the Necessary Reality” and “rays of the sun of Absolute Being.”³³ Indeed, the Essence, like being, can only make Itself known through particularizations of Itself. Once the Ultimate Reality becomes particularized, we can speak about It in more concrete and manageable terms. In other words, the vagueness which envelops all things disappears, in a sense, once we are able to delimit God's Essence.

³³ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:36. See also Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 124.

4.1.2 – *The Names*

The Essence can only become delimited when we provide an essential definition of It. By defining It, we bring It into the scope of our own partial and limited frames of reference. Yet how can the Essence in Itself remain indefinable and inaccessible on the one hand, and definable and accessible on the other? As with a number of the crucial points made in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā addresses this question based on a statement made by Ibn ‘Arabī in the *Fuṣūṣ*. In the text in question, Ibn ‘Arabī says that God lies at the root of every definition given in the cosmos: “The Real is defined by every essential definition [*al-ḥaqq maḥdūd bi-kull ḥadd*].”³⁴ Ṣadrā affirms this point on the logic that since all things in the cosmos point to God, He is “defined” by all things in the cosmos.³⁵ Yet the God defined in the cosmos is not the Essence proper. With the concern of a theologian, Ṣadrā seeks to clarify Ibn ‘Arabī’s point:

What was intended by “the Real” in Ibn ‘Arabī’s saying “The Real is defined by every essential definition,” was that which is meant by [*muḥād*] the word “God” [*allāh*] from the standpoint of its universal meaning and intellectual concept, not from the standpoint of the reality of its meaning, which is the Essence of Exclusive Oneness [*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*] and the Unseen of the unseens [*ghayb al-ghuyūb*], since It has neither essential definition, nor name, nor description, and intellectual perception does not have a way to It.³⁶

The distinction which Ṣadrā makes here between the Unseen of the unseens³⁷ and God corresponds to Ibn ‘Arabī’s well-known distinction between the Essence’s Exclusive Oneness

³⁴ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 67; cited at Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:39.

³⁶ *Ibid.* For a related passage from Ṣadrā’s *Asfār*, see Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 182-5.

³⁷ For the term *ghayb al-ghuyūb* in Ṣadrā’s writings, see *Asfār*, 2:345 ff.; *idem*, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 31, 103-4 n. 35. For a similar term (*ghayb al-ghayb*), see Mu’ayyid al-Dīn Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1982), 707.

(*aḥadiyya*) and Its Inclusive Oneness (*wāḥidiyya*).³⁸ Some Sufi theoreticians couch the same dichotomy in different terms, referring to the levels of the non-entified Essence (*lā taʿayyun*) and the first entified Essence (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*)³⁹ from which multiplicity proceeds, or the non-manifest and manifest faces of the Essence.⁴⁰ Whereas the non-manifest face of the Essence remains inaccessible and unattainable forever except to Itself, Its manifest face is that to which humans have access and to whom they return.⁴¹

³⁸ See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 90-4 (for a discussion of *aḥadiyya*); Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 112, 115 n. 8. See also Dagli's note in Ibn ʿArabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, 81 n. 13.

³⁹ See Jandī, *Sharḥ*, 707.

⁴⁰ See Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī, *Muntahā l-madārik* (Cairo, 1876), 1:15 ff. Talk of the manifest and non-manifest faces of the Essence is tantamount to speaking about God as the Manifest (*al-zāhir*) and the Hidden (*al-bāṭin*). See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 95; Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, 186 ff.

⁴¹ Ṣadrā also refers to the “pervasiveness” (*shumūl*) of being, which is identical to the manifest face of the Essence. One of his standard philosophical expressions for the pervasiveness of being, which we discussed in chapter two of this study, is “self-unfolding being” (or “the self-unfolding of the light of being” (*inbisāt nūr al-wujūd*)). Other terms for the manifest face of the Essence (or being) employed by Ṣadrā, the first two of which we have encountered in chapter two, are “the Breath of the All-Merciful” (or “the All-Merciful breath” (*al-naḥas al-rahmānī*)), “the Real through whom creation takes place,” and “the mercy which encompasses all things” (*al-rahmat al-latī wasīʿat kull shayʿ*). See Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib*, 100; idem, *Mashāʿir*, 59. See also, Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 183-4; Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present*, 226. A fine discussion of the unfolding of the Essence can also be found in Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 66-9, although here Corbin discusses the Essence's self-unfolding in three stages: (1) the Essence as unconditioned (*lā bi-sharṭ*), (2) the Essence negatively conditioned (*bi-sharṭ lā*), and (3) the Essence unconditioned by a negative condition (*bi-lā sharṭ bi-sharṭ lā*). The last two really belong to the same movement of the Essence, that is, the turning of Its face to the cosmos. Here, this movement is divided into two steps because of the logical precedence of the Essence's becoming “negatively conditioned” in order for It to enter the domain of negative unconditionality. Along with Corbin's discussion, see also the sophisticated presentation in Landolt, “Simnānī on Waḥdat al-Wujūd,” in *Collected Papers on Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Hermann Landolt, 93-111 (Tehran: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, 1971). This article served as the basis for part one of Landolt's lengthy piece: “Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāṣānī und Simnānī über *Waḥdat al-Wuḡūd*,” *Der Islam* 50 (1973): 29-81 (reprinted in idem, *Recherches en spiritualité iranienne*, 245-300; see pp. 257-67 in particular).

The Essence must in one respect remain hidden, for if It were to be known even in Its hiddenness, It would not be absolute, but relative. That is, It would not remain completely unconditioned and therefore unknown if It were conditioned by the knowledge of a knower outside of It. Yet insofar as the Essence makes Itself known, It must make Itself relative in one sense. The only manner in which It can do this is by turning one side of Its face to the cosmos. In the language of Islamic theology,⁴² the Essence makes Itself known through the divine names.

As Ṣadrā puts it:

With each quality, the Essence takes on a [specific] name—the names articulated in speech being the “names of the names”—and the multiplicity in them is in accordance with the multiplicity of the [names’] characteristics and attributes. This multiplicity is nothing but the standpoints [*i’tibārāt*] of His unseen levels and His divine tasks [*shu’ūn ilāhiyya*],⁴³ which are “the keys to the unseen” [*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*], whose shadows and reflections fall upon the existing things.⁴⁴

The cosmos, therefore, is composed of the names of God. Since these names are nothing other than particularizations of the manifest face of the Essence, each name denotes a specific aspect of the Essence’s relationship to the cosmos. Thus, the multiplicity introduced into the Essence is nothing other than Its own multiple standpoints and faces turned towards the cosmos, or what Ṣadrā calls, following Ibn ‘Arabī and his school, the “divine tasks.” As seen in the passage above, the divine tasks are a synonym for the Qur’anic expression “keys to the unseen.” These terms refer to the multiplicity which comes about by virtue of the disclosure of the Essence’s

⁴² For a helpful attempt at widening the notion of “theology” in classical Islam, see Winter, “Introduction,” 2-4.

⁴³ Following Sachiko Murata (*Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light: Wang Tai-yü’s Great Learning of the Pure and Real and Liu Chih’s Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000], index s.v. “tasks”), I render *sha’n* (derived from Q 55:29) as “task.” Although “operation” or “function” may also be suitable translations, “task” is a more concrete (and hence less abstract) term, and conveys something of the “concern” of the Essence in Its mode of deployment. See below for a more extensive discussion of the divine tasks’ relationship to the manifest face of the Essence.

⁴⁴ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:34. For the “keys to the unseen,” cf. Qūnawī, *Nuṣūṣ*, 57 ff.

manifest face. Once the Essence takes on different positions with respect to that which is strictly speaking outside of It, the names emerge with their own particularized qualities, which allow them to be distinguished from one another on the one hand, and from the Essence on the other. The level at which this takes place is what is denoted by the terms “divine tasks” and “keys to the unseen.” Şadrā points out that it is the shadows and reflections of the divine tasks and keys to the unseen which fall upon existent things. These shadows are nothing but names which appear in the cosmos, and which Şadrā refers to as the “names of the names,” a point which again harks back to Ibn ‘Arabī.⁴⁵ The names of the names are the tasks of the Essence found throughout the cosmos, which is to say that they are Its properties and traces.

Since the Essence must remain utterly hidden and inaccessible, how do the names come about from It without compromising Its fundamental obscurity? In the following passage, Şadrā asserts that the names have no proper existence of their own. Rather, they are relationships formed between the Essence and the cosmos. Since they are relationships, no change is introduced in the Essence:

All that is in the world of contingency is a form of one of the names of God and a locus of one of the tasks. So God’s names are intelligible meanings in the Unseen Being of the Real, meaning that the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is that which the intellect has no way of conceiving, since, were It to “exist” or occur to the intellect in order for the intellect to grasp It, these meanings would be divested from It, and the intellect would [be unable to] qualify It with itself. Thus, given Its unity and simplicity, the Essence of Exclusive Oneness allows for the predication of these meanings to It without there being an added quality [to It]⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For the names of the names, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 34-6. Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 120; Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 101.

⁴⁶ Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:34. The passage continues: “Like all of the universal concepts, these meanings are, in themselves, neither existent nor nonexistent, neither general nor specific, and neither universal nor particular. They are not like the existential ipseities which are existent in themselves and individuated in their ipseities, since these latter are like rays and connections to the existence of the Real: when they come to one’s mind, something bound to God’s Essence—which is existent through His existence and necessary through His necessity—is thought of. They are

Since the divine names are nonexistent entities which come about in relation to a particular face of the manifest Essence, they denote a particular reality of God's Essence. As was seen in chapter two, the concept of being is known through particularizations of being. The particularizations of being can only be apprehended through quiddities, since quiddities, as entities entirely devoid of any reality, only emerge by virtue of the gradation of being. Likewise, each divine name denotes the Essence, but all the divine names are nonexistent entities. It can be noted here that the divine names with respect to the Essence do not correspond, in philosophical language, to quiddities with respect to being. Although both the names and quiddities are actually nonexistent, the names are relationships between the manifest face of the Essence and the cosmos, whereas the quiddities are not relational, but, rather, mental abstractions which emerge through the concretizations attendant upon the gradation of being.

That which corresponds to the notion of quiddity in Ṣadrā's philosophy to his explication of the unfolding of the Essence in his religious writings is the notion of the fixed entities (*al-a'yān al-thābita*).⁴⁷ As Ibn 'Arabī tells us, the fixed entities are nothing but the objects of God's

unlike the universal meanings because they may become universal in the mind, but particular externally; and they may be existent in the intellect, but nonexistent in reality. Yet they do have properties and effects in actual existence. Rather, the properties of existence are applied to them accidentally, and, from the pre-eternal necessity and oneness, the properties become illuminated through His light and tinged with His colour" (ibid., 1:34-5). Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 37; Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 408.

⁴⁷ For the fixed entities, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 83-8 (here Chittick has "immutable entities"). For why "fixed entities" is a more accurate translation than "immutable entities," see idem, *The Self Disclosure of God*, xxxviii. Several sound arguments have been made in favour of alternate translations and (even interpretations) of this expression. See, amongst others, A. E. Afifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyīd-Dīn Ibnul 'Arabī* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1939), 47-53; Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 104 n. 89; idem, *Sufism and Taoism*, 159 ff.; Dagli, "Translator's Introduction," in Ibn 'Arabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, xviii-xix. See also Alma Giese, "Glossar," in Ibn 'Arabī, *Urwolke und Welt: Mystische Texte des größten Meisters* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), 349. Interestingly, the term as understood by Ibn 'Arabī and his followers seems to have been known to

knowledge as they are known to Him forever. Whether God brings them into existence or not, the fixed entities never leave their state of fixity, and, hence, nonexistence. When and if they are brought into existence, they can only do so by virtue of the names. As we saw in the above-cited passage, Ṣadrā says that “All that is in the world of contingency is a form of one of the names of God, and a locus of one of the tasks.” The objects in the cosmos are loci of God’s self-disclosure (*maẓāhir*), which is to say that they are receptacles which come about in accordance with their fixity. The loci are, in other words, nothing but the existentiated objects of God’s knowledge “forever” known to Him (i.e., the fixed entities). In order for these fixed entities to emerge, the manifest face of the Essence must turn to them, and as soon as the Essence makes Its turn to the these entities, relationships and hence names emerge between the manifest face of the Essence and the fixed entities, which at this later stage are to be understood as the names’ loci.

While it is true that Ṣadrā does not refer to the fixed entities in this *tafsīr* work in the context of his explication of his ontology, talk of “loci” presupposes the notion of fixed entities, since the loci are simply the fixed entities in their state of existentiation, which is to say that each fixed entity is a “form of one of the names of God, and a locus of one of the tasks.” Furthermore, the reason quiddities in Ṣadrā’s metaphysics correspond to the fixed entities is because they both

later Islamic philosophical theology. For Taftazānī’s (d. 791/1389) disapproval of this concept, see Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 153-4 and 340 n. 78. Although this particular phrase seems to have been coined by Ibn ‘Arabi, he acknowledges his debt to the Mu‘tazilites (who spoke of the *ashyā’ ma’dūma*, etc.) for first discussing the notion. See p. 120 n. 43 and Nyberg’s introduction in Ibn ‘Arabi, *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn ‘Arabi*, ed. H. S. Nyberg (Leiden: Brill, 1919), 44 ff. See also Chodkiewicz, “Les trops cailloux du Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī,” in *Mystique Musulmane*, ed. G. Gobillot, 147 (Paris: Cariscript, 2002) for an interesting suggestion concerning Ibn Sab‘īn’s rejection of the Mu‘tazilite notion of the *ma’dūmāt* as actually being aimed at Ibn ‘Arabi’s doctrine of the fixed entities.

denote the same thing: the particular reality of the thing in question, that is, its “what-it-is-ness.” This is a point which Ṣadrā himself states elsewhere.⁴⁸

On account of the fact that the fixed entities denote the quiddities, we may be justified in asking what the divine names denote. In other words, do the divine names have an equivalent in Ṣadrā’s philosophical system? Indeed, the function of the standpoint of the existent with respect to existence, which emerges as a result of the gradation of being and which determines the nature of the resultant quiddity, is akin to the function of the divine names in their relationality to the Essence on the one hand, and their colouring the loci⁴⁹ on the other. Technically speaking, however, the divine names do not figure in Ṣadrā’s philosophical writings, since there is no direct conceptual equivalent in his philosophical lexicon. This is perfectly understandable, since the divine names are theological categories and thus more appropriately belong to Ṣadrā’s “religious” writings, which is why they figure so prominently in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.

4.1.3 – *The Name Allāh*

What prompted Ṣadrā’s long meditation on Q 1:1 was the divine name Allāh. According to a long-standing tradition in Islam, this name is unlike God’s other names. Whereas each divine name denotes a specific aspect of the Essence’s manifest face,⁵⁰ the divine name Allāh does not function in the same way. Firstly, it does not denote any particular quality of the Essence, as, for example, “al-raḥmān” would denote the mercifulness of the Essence’s manifest

⁴⁸ See Ṣadrā, *Mashā‘ir*, 81, where he identifies the quiddities with the fixed entities in his famous “conversion” account: “the quiddities are the fixed entities [*al-māhiyyāt hiya al-‘ayān al-thābita*].” For the passage in translation, see Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, 104. See also Chittick’s note in Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 106-7 n. 15.

⁴⁹ That is, the existentiated fixed entities, i.e., quiddities.

⁵⁰ From the perspective that the names denote the Essence, It can also be called the “Named” (*al-musammā*). See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* 385 n. 6.

face, or “al-qahhār” would denote the dominating aspect of the Essence’s manifest face. As the Islamic tradition suggests, Allāh is a proper name (*ism ‘alam*). Since the name Allāh signifies God’s Essence but does not denote a particular quality of It, it is what the Sufi tradition refers to as an All-Gathering name (*ism jāmi‘*), which is to say that it brings together all of the meanings of the divine names, each of which denote the Essence in a particular way.⁵¹

In keeping with a fundamental axiom of Ṣadrīan metaphysics, “the simplicity of reality is all things [*basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa kull shay’*],”⁵² the name Allāh brings together all the standpoints which the Essence assumes with respect to the cosmos in terms of the Essence’s manifestness, since it

⁵¹ The term *jāmi‘* in this context is fairly difficult to translate in a completely unambiguous manner. Following Chittick (*The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 110 n. 43), I have rendered it as “All-Gathering” in order to convey the sense, when qualifying the term *ism* and describing the function of the word Allāh, of “bringing together,” “collecting,” and “encapsulating” all of God’s divine names. For the name Allāh and its signification of the Essence, see *ibid.*, 66-7.

⁵² See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 104-6; Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 2:368-72. See also Rizvi, “‘Au-delà du miroir’ or Beyond Discourse and Intuition,” 269 n. 61 for some references to the Neoplatonic roots of this doctrine. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 39, says that, in Islamic thought, this teaching was first introduced by Ṣadrā. It is unclear why Rahman would say this. The Islamic philosophical doctrine which states that “None proceeds from the One but the one” (*lā yaṣḍuru ‘an l-wāḥid illā l-wāḥid*)” can arguably be viewed as another way of saying the same thing. For this doctrine in Islamic thought, which is inspired by yet distinct from the Neoplatonic teaching on how multiplicity emerges from the One, see Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 137-8; Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of the Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 75 ff.; John Dillon and Lloyd Gerson (ed. and trans.), *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 83-6, 264, 266-7; Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, trans. Michael Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 328-30 (especially p. 330: “from one, inasmuch as it is one, only one proceeds”); Mullā Rajab, “The Fundamental Principle.” For Ghazālī’s rejection of the notion that only one proceeds from the One, see Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Michael Marmura, 2nd ed. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 65 ff. For Ibn ‘Arabī’s nuanced understanding of this doctrine, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 18-9, 148-9, 229 (objection); 75, 137, 169 (approval). Cf. Qūnawī, *Nuṣūṣ*, 74. I am grateful to Lloyd Gerson and Michael Marmura for sharing their insights with me concerning this teaching, and for pointing me to some relevant sources.

is the one name which denotes the entire manifest aspect of the Essence on account of its being the first level of the Essence's self-unfolding:

According to the great ones amongst the gnostics, the name "God" [*ism allāh*] is an expression of the All-Gathering Divine Level [*martabat al-ulūhiyya al-jāmi'a*] for all of the tasks, standpoints, descriptions, and perfections, within which all of the names and attributes—these being nothing but the flashes of His light⁵³ and the tasks of His Essence—are ranked. This Level marks the first instance of multiplicity to come about in existence, and⁵⁴ is an isthmus between the Presence of Exclusive Oneness [*al-ḥadra al-aḥadiyya*] and the loci of creation and the engendered Command [*al-mazāhir al-amriyya wa-l-khalqiyya*].⁵⁵ In itself, this name brings together every contrary quality and opposing name, as you have already come to know.⁵⁶

From the perspective that the Essence is everywhere, the names are to be found everywhere as well. And since the cosmos is saturated with the names which name God, all that is in the cosmos also names Him. Taken as a whole, the entire cosmos names the Essence by naming the name Allāh.

Since all things in the cosmos name Allāh, they can be said to "define" Him, since everything in the cosmos denotes an aspect of the reality of the name Allāh which itself denotes the Essence. Since the name Allāh brings together every other name, it is the least particularized of the Essence's particularizations and is, thus, the most entitled to being called the Essence's

⁵³ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:39: "The people of unveiling and witnessing cannot attain a flash of the Essence's light except after the passing away of their identities, and the crumbling of the mountain of their existence." The "crumbling mountain" mentioned in the passage is a clear reference to Q 7:143. As will become clear in what follows, the name Allāh is more apt to be called the Essence's "light."

⁵⁴ Although the printed version of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* does not contain the *wāw*, the lithograph version of the text (Ṣadrā, *Majmū'at al-tafsīr*, 9) does. Without the conjunction, the passage is incomprehensible.

⁵⁵ It will be recalled from the preceding discussion that the loci of God's self-disclosure, here referred to as "the loci of creation and the engendered Command," are the fixed entities (i.e., the objects of God's knowledge forever fixed in His "mind") in their state of existentiation through their receiving the divine names, that is, through the particular aspect of the manifest face of the Essence turned towards them.

⁵⁶ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:34.

manifest face⁵⁷ simply because it is the “the first instance of multiplicity to come about in existence.” The name Allāh, therefore, corresponds to what we normally refer to as “God,” that is, the God that is worshipped by people and to whom they will return in the next life.⁵⁸ Since any talk of the name Allāh automatically brings us into the sphere of the ultimate end of religion, Ṣadrā’s concern with Ibn ‘Arabī’s statement that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*)—a term that is synonymous with the name Allāh⁵⁹—is defined in every definition, therefore becomes clear. In fact, Ṣadrā goes on to tell us that although the name Allāh is defined in every definition, it itself cannot be exhausted in its meanings:

The concepts [*maḥmūmāt*] of all the divine names and their existential loci [*maẓāhir*], which are parts of the cosmos—both outwardly and inwardly—despite their multiplicity, [form] a real definition [*ḥadd ḥaqīqī*] in signifying God’s name [*ism allāh*]. It follows that all the meanings of the realities of the cosmos are a definition of God’s name, just as all the meanings of the divine names define Him, except that it is possible for the human intellect to encompass [*iḥāṭa*] all the definitions of defined things in their particulars, as opposed to the meanings of the particulars of His definition, because the meanings cannot be confined [*ghayr maḥsūra*].⁶⁰

The Essence of Exclusive Oneness, therefore, forever remains out of the reach of the cosmos by virtue of the fact that It does not turn Its face towards the cosmos. And when It does turn to the cosmos, that which emerges are the names, which are not, strictly speaking, ontological entities, but relationships. In fact, the name which denotes the manifest face of the Essence, namely Allāh, cannot be exhausted and defined in its entirety, since, as Ṣadrā explains, this name brings

⁵⁷ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 66.

⁵⁸ This distinction is important with respect to Ṣadrā’s cosmology and soteriology, which will be dealt with in the following section of this chapter and the second section of the next chapter respectively.

⁵⁹ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 49.

⁶⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:39. Here Ṣadrā follows Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 67, which is cited at Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:38. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:44: “What escapes the servant is infinitely more than what is witnessed. Thus, He is unseen by everything in His perfect, simple reality, even though He is witnessed by the servant.”

together all of the names and hence all of the meanings in the cosmos.⁶¹ Thus, although all things in the cosmos define God, they cannot confine Him through their act of definition, seeing as it is that they themselves are particularized definitions which “define” the whole.

4.2 – The Cosmology of Praise

4.2.1 – *The Perfect Words Revisited*

After commenting upon the first part of Q 1:1 and devoting some discussion to God’s attributes of mercy and compassion,⁶² Ṣadrā turns his attention to Q 1:2, the first part of which announces the famous *ḥamdala* formula: “Praise is for God [*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*], the Lord of the worlds.” Indeed, by the time we get to Q 1:2, we have already encountered God as He is in terms

⁶¹ It can be noted here that the pronoun *huwa* (“He,” “It”) which, as Ṣadrā notes, is “that which is praised for His Essence in His Essence” (*Tafsīr*, 1:44), denotes the Essence in an even more primary sense than does the name Allāh. However, as Ṣadrā observes, *huwa* does not “define” the Essence in any way, and is the exclusive preserve of the spiritually elect in their invocation of God once they have transcended the particularized names of the Essence, and even the name Allāh: “Know that the relationship of the name ‘He’ to the name ‘God’ is like the relationship of being to quiddity in a contingent thing, except that the Necessary has no quiddity other than being [*anniyya*]. It has already been discussed that the concept of the name ‘God’ is one of the things that has a true essential definition, but that intellects are unable to encompass [*iḥāṭa*] all of the meanings that enter into its essential definition. For the form of a definition is only known when the forms of the essential definitions of all the existents are known. If this is not the case, then the form of the essential definition cannot be known [*wa-idh laysa fa-laysa*]. As for the name ‘He,’ It has no definition and no allusion can be made to It. So It is the most exalted station and the highest rank. For this reason, the perfect arrived ones have been singled out [*yukhtaṣṣu*] with perpetually being [*mudāwama*] in this noble invocation [cf. Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1:147]. A fine point in this is that when the servant invokes God with some of His attributes, he is not drowned in knowledge of God, because when he says ‘O All-Merciful,’ he is invoking His mercy, and his nature inclines to seeking it ... [cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:44-5]. But when he says ‘O He!,’ while knowing that He is a pure ipseity which is uncontaminated by generality, specificity, multiplicity, plurality, finitude, and definition, this [then] is the invocation which does not denote anything at all except Perfect Existence [*al-aniyya al-tāmma*], which is uncontaminated by a meaning dissimilar to It. At that time, the light of Its invocation will settle in the servant’s heart. This light cannot be defiled by the darkness generated by invoking other than God. This is the perfect light and the complete unveiling (Ibid., 1:42-3).

⁶² See p. 198 ff. for Ṣadrā’s treatment of God’s mercy.

of His hiddenness and accessibility. According to Şadrā, Q 1:2 addresses another key point: the manner in which the cosmos comes about through the Supreme Reality.⁶³ The notion of “praise” (*ḥamd*) which figures in this verse is all-important for Şadrā, since it is the link between the manifest face of God and the cosmos, which is traditionally defined in Islamic texts as “everything other than God” (*mā siwā-llāh*).

It was mentioned last chapter that Şadrā’s actual *tafsīr* on the Fātiḥa is preceded by a fairly lengthy commentary on the *isti‘ādha* formula, a part of which is derived from Rāzī’s *tafsīr*. In his treatment of the *isti‘ādha*, Şadrā raises several important points concerning the nature of God’s Speech in the generation of the cosmos, but does not develop them in any significant manner. As shall be made clear in this section, these points inform his treatment of Q 1:2, particularly with reference to the function of praise.

In an important section in his discussion of the *isti‘ādha*, Şadrā returns to the theme of the nature of God’s Speech which he developed in the *Maḥāṣin*.⁶⁴ After stating that God’s Speech is not of the order of the genus of sounds and letters, or of the order of the genus of substances and accidents, Şadrā reiterates his teaching that it comes about through God’s Words by virtue of His Command. As the first existentiations from the manifest aspect of God, that is, as parts of His Speech, these Words are God’s “Perfect Words,” an important phrase which we encountered in chapter two. Since the realm of multiplicity and change emerges through the Perfect Words, their emergence into the cosmos is gradational and not spontaneous. It is worth citing Şadrā’s

⁶³ Şadrā also tells us towards the end of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* that the *ḥamdala* formula contains an allusion to the proof of God’s existence, and that it also alludes to the beginning of the chain of existents. See *ibid.*, 1:170 and 174 respectively. For the *ḥamdala*’s relationship to the emergence of existence, see pp. 171-4.

⁶⁴ See p. 89 ff. for Şadrā’s treatment of God’s Speech and its relation to his scriptural hermeneutics.

explanation here in the context of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, since it will help set the stage for his discussion of the cosmic function of “praise”:

There is a fine point [*daqīqa*] here: the origination of bodies—their substances, dark and other accidents, natures, and natural effects—is only gradational [*tadrijī*], [proceeding] bit by bit.⁶⁵ [This is] similar to motion, which is the exiting [*khurūj*] from potentiality into actuality. As for innovated things, their existentiating and exiting [potentiality and going] into actuality only obtains in one instant: *And Our Command is nothing but one, like the blink of an eye* [Q 56:5]. When the Command is like this, its origination from God resembles the origination of letters which only come to exist in one instant, that is, at that very indivisible moment.⁶⁶ Because of this likeness, their completion is their very beginning. That which comes about through the carrying out of His determination is called the “Word,” and is described as “Perfect.”⁶⁷

4.2.2 – *The Act of Praise*

Like his predecessors in the Qur’anic exegetical tradition, Ṣadrā’s commentary on Q 1:2 typically discusses the linguistic sense of *ḥamd* and how it relates to other cognate but structurally different terms, such as *madḥ* and *thanā’*.⁶⁸ He treats these discussions as more of a

⁶⁵ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:84-5.

⁶⁶ As was seen in chapter two, Ṣadrā refers to the “alphabetical” nature of existents in explaining how the cosmos and its contents form a “text” which is penned by the wise Author. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:135: “All of the cosmos is His writing. Indeed, the writing of authors derives from His writing which He caused to be written through the medium of the hearts of His servants. So there is nothing astonishing about an author. Rather, there is astonishment over the one who subjected him.”

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:10-1. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:85. A well-known position of Ṣadrā’s is that quiddities, as fundamentally non-existent, are “evil.” Thus, by answering the question of how quiddities come about, Ṣadrā can explain how evil comes about: “The first of existent things to issue from Him is the world of His Command and Decree, in which there is fundamentally no evil (as has been mentioned), except, by God, what becomes hidden under the radiance of the First Light. This is the murkiness which necessitates contingent quiddities, which arise from the diminution of their existential ipseities from the divine Ipseity” (*ibid.*, 1:16).

⁶⁸ For representative discussions of the differences between *ḥamd* and cognate terms, see Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1:218 ff.; and, in the following order, Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1:8-11; Bayḍawī, *Anwār*, 1:25; ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-tanzīl wa-ḥaqā’iq al-ta’wīl*, ed. Marwān Muḥammad Sha‘‘ār (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 1996), 1:32. Ṣadrā seems to follow the latter quite closely in his discussion of *madḥ* and *thanā’*.

formality, perhaps because he would like to demonstrate how different his approach will be. This is clearly evidenced early in his commentary upon Q 1:2.

Şadrā observes that for the people of unveiling, “‘praise’ is a kind of speech [*nawʿ min al-kalām*].”⁶⁹ Referring to his earlier treatment of the nature of “speech,” he notes that speech is not that which is spoken by the tongue.⁷⁰ As we saw in chapter two and above, God’s Speech arises from His Command. The Word of God is, thus, something that comes about through the divine will. Praise is a “part of speech” because it comes about through speech. Since speech is an act, praise, too, is an act:

The reality of praise, according to the verifying gnostics, is the act of making God’s attributes of perfection manifest [*izhār al-ṣifāt al-kamāliyya*]. This could either be through words [*qawl*]—as is well-known amongst the masses—or it could be in act [*bi-l-fiʿl*], which is like God’s praise for Himself and the praise of all things for Him.⁷¹

This passage is crucial for the distinctions Şadrā will set out to explicate for the remainder of his commentary upon Q 1:2. Praise, as an act, makes “God’s attributes of perfection manifest.” This can be done in one of two ways. Either the attributes of perfection are made manifest through words of praise, usually through the *ḥamdala* formula. Or, God’s attributes of perfection are made manifest through the act of praise, which, Şadrā tells us, is akin to God’s self-praise and all things praising Him. Insofar as God is the object of praise through speech, the praise that is allotted to Him in human speech may not bring about His attributes of perfection in a complete manner. This is because that which is denoted by words may actually differ from the

⁶⁹ Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:74.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

word itself.⁷² A human being can, for example, praise God with his tongue, but if his mind is not focused upon God at that moment, his praise of Him may be nothing more than an empty set of words. In fact, his act of praising God while something else is on his mind is akin to his praising that thing upon which his mind is fixated. But when God's praise is completely actualized, it is the very act of praise that does complete justice to His attributes of perfection.⁷³ It is, therefore, this second notion of praise which draws Ṣadrā's interest.

Ṣadrā says that the act of praise which brings about God's attributes of perfection is akin to God's praising Himself. But how does God praise Himself? This is made clear once we consider the wording of Q 1:2. In this verse, the speaker is none other than God, and He declares His own praise. While human praise, when done properly, can only bring about God's attributes of perfection by way of declaring them, God's praise for Himself, which is pure actuality, does more than simply "declare" God's perfection. As Ṣadrā tells us, God's praise for Himself is nothing but His act of bringing things into existence:

God's praise for Himself—which is the most exalted level of praise—is His existentation [*ijād*] of every existing thing.... His existentation of every existent is "praise" in the infinitive sense, similar to the way speaking denotes beauty [of voice] through speech. The existent itself is "praise" in the sense of actualizing the infinitive.⁷⁴

As was said above, the cosmos only comes about by virtue of the divine Essence's turning towards the fixed entities. But why did the Essence wish to bring about the cosmos? The Sufi tradition tells us that it is because It wanted to know Itself objectively, whereas before It had

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:74-5. Cf. Landolt, *Recherches en spiritualité iranienne*, 274-6; *idem*, "Simnâni on Wahdat al-Wujūd," 104-6.

known itself in a purely subjective manner.⁷⁵ And the manner in which God qua Absolute can know Itself objectively is by bringing Itself into the realm of relativity. The act of praise is therefore a form of existention primarily with respect to God's self-knowledge. By praising Himself, God proceeds from obscurity into apparentness, from hiddenness into manifestness. Yet God's praise for Himself necessitates that the objects of His knowledge become objectified, for it is through the objects of His knowledge that He can come to know Himself. Hence, praise pertains as much to God's self-awareness as it does to the existention of His creatures, for they are, in a sense, two sides of the same coin.

Since God, who is pure being, brings about the cosmos by praising Himself, each existent which arises out of His self-praise is itself a mode of that act of praise. As modes of the act of praise, or what Ṣadrā calls the specification (*takhṣīṣ*) of praise,⁷⁶ each existent is "praised," meaning that each existing thing is both a form of praise and that which praises:

In this sense, it is valid to call every existent thing "praise." And just as every existent is a "praise," so too is it a praiser [*ḥāmid*], because of its being composed of an intellectual constituent and a rational substance.... This is why this intellectual denotation has been expressed in the Qur'ān as "speech," [*nuṭq*]: "God, the one who causes all things to speak, caused us to speak" [Q 41:22]. Likewise, every existent, with respect to the totality of its arrangement, is a single praise and a single praiser [cf. Q 59:24, 62:1].⁷⁷

All things in existence, as specified instantiations of God's single act of praise, cannot but praise God because they themselves are acts of praise.⁷⁸ And the act of praise, as Ṣadrā pointed out, is

⁷⁵ For a fine discussion of this point, see Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, 112-7. Also, see below.

⁷⁶ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:76-7 (cited at n. 85 below).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:75.

⁷⁸ There is a telling narrative in Ṭabarī and Tha'labī which states that Adam's first words were "Praise is for God, the Lord of the worlds" (the same wording as Q 1:2). See Chodkiewicz, "The Banner of Praise," trans. Cecilia Twinch in *Foundations of the Spiritual Life: Praise*, ed. Stephen Hirtenstein, 45 n. 1 (Oxford: Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī

the most complete manner in which God's attributes of perfection become manifest. "Praise," therefore, is "for God" (*li-llāh*) because existence belongs to Him.

4.2.2 – *The Muḥammadan Reality*

Just as every existent is a word of God proceeding from His Perfect Words which arise out of His Command, so too is each creature an act of praise which proceeds from God's self-praise. Yet there seems to be an ontological fissure here between God's self-praise and the emergence of the individual instantiations of this praise (i.e., the cosmos and its contents). As Ṣadrā demonstrated, the cosmos does not come about as a result of the Command, but through the intermediary of the Perfect Words, which can be understood as so many fragmented portions of the single Command "Be!" Since in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* Ṣadrā wishes to connect his cosmology of the Command and the Perfect Words with his cosmology of praise, there must be something which takes the place of the Perfect Words in his cosmology of praise. To be sure, although Ṣadrā does not make the connection explicit, he provides us with the missing link in the following crucial passage. Each existent in the cosmos is both an act of praise and praise itself, Ṣadrā explains, because

the sum total [*al-jamī*] is like one large man with one reality, one form, and one intellect. This is the First Intellect, which is the form and reality

Society, 1997). It is clear how Ṣadrā would understand this tradition. Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:76-7: "All levels of existents (with respect to spirit, body, intellect, and sense perception) in every tongue (with respect to speech, act, and state) praise God, glorify Him, and magnify Him in this world and the next world in accordance with their primordial disposition [sic: *fiṭra aṣlī*] as required by their essential drive [*al-dā'iya al-dhātīyya*]. There is no doubt that every innate act [*fi'l gharīzī*] has an essential end and original calling [*ghāya dhātīyya wa-bā'ith aṣlī*]. It has been established that His Essence is the Final Goal of final goals [*ghāyat al-ghāyāt*] and the End for [all] objects of desire. For this reason, it is possible that His saying, *Praise is for God* [*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*] [Q 1:2] is an allusion to the Origin of existence and its End. Likewise, the [first] *lām* in *for God* [*li-llāh*] is [an allusion] to the Final Goal, or to the specification [of praise]." See also Ayoub, "The Prayer of Islam," 643.

of the world, and is the complete Muḥammadan reality [*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya al-tamāmiyya*]. So the most exalted and most tremendous level of praise is the level of the Muḥammadan Seal, which subsists through the existence of the Seal [*al-martaba al-khatmiyya al-Muḥammadiyya al-qā'ima bi-wujūd al-khātam*] on account of his arrival at the promised praiseworthy station in His saying, *Perhaps your Lord will raise you to a praiseworthy station* [Q 17:79]. So his hallowed essence is the utmost level of praise through which God praises Himself. This is why he has been singled out with the banner of praise [*liwā' al-ḥamd*], and was called *ḥammād*, *aḥmad*, and *maḥmūd*....⁷⁹

By the time Ṣadrā wrote these words, it had become commonplace to speak of the Muḥammadan Reality as the root and form of the world. Yet Ṣadrā's linking the level of the Muḥammadan Reality with what he calls the "most exalted and most tremendous level of praise" is very telling in the context of his commentary on Q 1:2. The Muḥammadan Reality is nothing other than the eye through which God sees Himself objectively in the cosmos. As Ibn 'Arabī makes clear in the *Fuṣūṣ*, each Prophet is a manifestation of the Muḥammadan Reality, a reality which, from the time God brought the cosmos into existence, has percolated throughout the generations and become particularized in God's many messengers and prophets sent to humanity. Since the Muḥammadan Reality is the first thing created by God, Ibn 'Arabī also calls it the Word of God. As was seen above, God's Word only comes about by virtue of the Command. Indeed, there is a clear correlation between the act of praise and God's creative Command (*al-amr al-takwīnī*). Just as God causes the cosmos to come about by saying "Be!," so too does He cause the cosmos to come about by praising Himself. And, just as the Perfect Words are the first entities which emerge by virtue of the Command, so too does the Muḥammadan Reality emerge by virtue of God's act of self-praise. This parallel is all the more telling since the Command is a form of speech which produces that which is related to speech, namely "words,"

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1:75. Ṣadrā goes on to explain that the Muḥammadan Reality, as the utmost level of praise, does not contradict the Prophet's elemental existence as a part of the macrocosm since all things are stronger than a single denotation, namely a part of the world. Cf., *ibid.*, 1:79-80; *idem*, *Asrār*, 110-2.

just as the act of praise (*ḥamd*) is a form of speech which produces something which is related to it, namely that which is praised (Muḥammad). This interpretation is given further support by Ṣadrā's own statement, discussed above, that *ḥamd* is "a form of speech."⁸⁰

Although Ṣadrā states that the Perfect Words emerge through the Command, it is not incorrect to say that one single Word or Logos emerges from the Command. This is why he referred to that which emerges from the Command as "a Perfect Word." Since a Perfect Word is nothing but a fragmentation of the Command, one Word must logically precede the others. That Ṣadrā wishes to equate the Muḥammadan Reality with the first Perfect Word is clear by the identification—which was well-established in theoretical Sufism several centuries before him—of the Muḥammadan Reality with the First Intellect.⁸¹

Since the First Intellect is the first entity to come about in the cosmic order, and the act of bringing into existence is nothing other than the actualization of "praise," Ṣadrā describes the Muḥammadan Reality as the highest level of praise through which God praises Himself. In other words, since God brings about the cosmos by praising Himself, the first entity to emerge as a result of this act of self-praise is the Muḥammadan Reality. As the highest level of God's self-praise, the Muḥammadan reality is also the being which praises God most, which, as Ṣadrā

⁸⁰ We can also note that there has been a long-standing debate in *tafsīr* literature over whether or not the *ḥamdala* formula is a declarative sentence (*al-jumla al-inshā'iyya*) or an informative sentence (*al-jumla al-khabariyya*). If it is the former, then it is to be understood not as "Praise is for God, the Lord of the worlds," but as "Praised be God, the Lord of the Worlds." Thus, understood as a declarative sentence, the *ḥamdala* would correspond to God's creative Command. Although Ṣadrā is silent on this question, Ibn 'Arabī's position is that the *ḥamdala* can only be an informative statement and not an *inshā'ī* one, although by *inshā'ī* he understands the notion of "declaration" and not necessarily "command." See Chodkiewicz, "The Banner of Praise," 45.

⁸¹ For the Muḥammadan Reality as the First Intellect, see Rustom, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī," 57 ff. For an important distinction between the Muḥammadan Spirit (*rūḥ Muḥammadi*) and the Muḥammadan Reality, see Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, ch. 2.

explains, is why the person of the Prophet—who is the physical manifestation of the Muḥammadan Reality—is given the banner of praise (*liwā' al-ḥamd*) on the final day.⁸²

4.3 – The Perfect Man

After laying out the fundamentals of his metaphysics and cosmology, Ṣadrā then proceeds in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* to discuss what can be called his anthropology. Drawing on a well-known theme in Sufi literature and later Islamic philosophy, he discusses the nature of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). His treatment of this topic does not exactly follow his discussion of the Muḥammadan Reality, since in explicating the nature of the Muḥammadan Reality he was more concerned with demonstrating the manner in which the Muḥammadan Reality, as the highest level of praise, comes about through God's act of self-praise. At the same time, since the Perfect Man is nothing but a particular manifestation of the Muḥammadan Reality, it seems clear that Ṣadrā's treatment of the cosmology of praise was intended to serve as a lead-in of sorts to his treatment of the Perfect Man. What is certain is that Ṣadrā's discussion of the Perfect Man ties into an important point with respect to the *Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, namely the identification of one with the other.

In introducing the notion of the Perfect Man, Ṣadrā takes his lead from a discussion on Q 1:2 in Bayḍāwī's *Anwār*, in which the author discusses the different senses of the word *'ālam*

⁸² Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:76-7: "The reality of existence (or all its individual parts) is 'for' God [*li-llāh*]. Since they are 'for' Him, He is also 'for' them. As the Prophet says, 'Whoever is for God, God is for him.' God's Essence is the Final Cause of all things and the Final Goal of the perfection of every form of existence, either without an intermediary, as is the case with the Muḥammadan reality, which is the form of the world's arrangement and its root and origin; or through the medium of His most holy effusion and His hallowed existence, as is the case with the rest of the existents. In this lies the secret of intercession and the banner of praise." For a subtle treatment of the Muḥammadan Reality, see Frithjof Schuon, "The Spiritual Significance of the Substance of the Prophet," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 48-63 (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

which figure in the verse.⁸³ Ṣadrā is particularly interested in demonstrating the manner in which man shares an intimate relationship with the cosmos by virtue of his very constitution. Just as the world contains signs through which God can be known, so too does man contain signs through which God can be known. Bayḍāwī explicitly says that gazing upon the cosmos and man are equal acts, since they share the same qualities.⁸⁴ Ṣadrā concedes that most people are created in a manner similar to the macrocosm, although he notes that most of them do not ever escape their animal nature and rise to the station of the intellect.⁸⁵ But how can man contain within himself, even potentially, the cosmos? In explaining this question, Ṣadrā draws on his earlier discussion of God’s names and attributes:

With respect to the point of view that man contains something of all that is in the macrocosm [*al-‘ālam al-kabīr*], it is because his perfect configuration [*nash’atuhu al-kāmila*] is the locus of all the divine names and attributes, and is the gathering place of all of the existential realities, as is known to those who assiduously pursue the signs in the horizons and within the selves.⁸⁶ So man is a prototype for all of what is in the cosmos. From this perspective, he is a small world [*‘ālam ṣaghīr*], which is why he is called the “microcosm” [*al-‘ālam al-ṣaghīr*].⁸⁷

⁸³ I provide here Ṣadrā’s citation of Bayḍāwī’s explanation of the meaning of this term: “In Bayḍāwī’s *tafsīr*, [he says the following]: ‘It is said that by it He means ‘people,’ for every one of them is a ‘world’ insofar as he contains, in a manner similar to the macrocosm, the substances and accidents through which the Artisan is known, just as He is known through what He created in the macrocosm. This is why gazing upon the two is equal. God says, *And within yourselves—do you not see?* [Q 51:21]’” (*Tafsīr*, 1:79). See also Ayoub, “The Prayer of Islam,” 642-4.

⁸⁴ Cf. Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1:53-4, who limits his treatment of the term *‘ālam* to several basic lexical considerations.

⁸⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:79.

⁸⁶ An allusion to Q 41:53, which is a common Qur’anic proof-text for this position: “We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves, until they know that He is the Real.” For a discussion of the complementary relationship shared between humans and the cosmos, see Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

⁸⁷ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:79. See also Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 412-3 for a useful discussion of the Perfect Man as the microcosm.

As was seen earlier, the cosmos is nothing but a synthesis of God's names, which themselves come about as relationships between the manifest face of the Essence and Its respective loci of manifestation. Just as the cosmos is the theatre for the manifestation of God's qualities, so too is man, who was, as the famous tradition tells us, created in the image of Allāh.⁸⁸ As mentioned earlier, the name Allāh is an All-Gathering name since it brings together all of the divine names. It will also be recalled that the divine names are found throughout the cosmos, which, as Ṣadrā explained earlier in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, as a whole “defines” Allāh. Thus, created in the image of Allāh, man contains all of the divine names within himself. Since the divine names are found throughout the cosmos, man also contains the cosmos within himself. But Ṣadrā does not just have in mind any man, since, as he notes, it is man's “perfect configuration” that is the locus of all of God's names and attributes. The man with a “perfect configuration” can only be the Perfect Man.

We saw at the beginning of this chapter how Ṣadrā follows a long tradition of commentators upon the Qur'ān when he says that the Fātiḥa contains all things. It is in the context of his anthropology that he seeks to make the logical connection between the Fātiḥa and the Perfect Man:

The relationship of the *Sūrat al-fātiḥa* to the entire Qur'ān is like the relationship of man—who is the small world—to the world, which is the great man. And just as the Perfect Man is a succinct book [*kitāb wajīz*] and an abridged transcription [*nuskha muntakhaba*] within whom is found all that is in the All-Gathering great book [*al-kitāb al-kabīr al-jāmi'*]⁸⁹... so too is the Opener of the book, within which, despite its

⁸⁸ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:163; idem, *Asrār*, 158-60.

⁸⁹ Cf. Qūnawī, *Ijāz*, 98, 106. Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 492 n. 43 notes that Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 210-8 discusses the relationship between the Kabbalah and the Torah, which Jambet connects with the idea of the Perfect Man's identity with the Qur'ān. See also Leo Schaya, *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), 21 for the relationship shared between the *Seferoth* and the Ten Commandments.

brevity and concision, is found the sum total [*majāmi'*] of the aims of the Qur'ān and their secrets and lights. This All-Gatheredness [*jāmi'iyya*] is not for the other Qur'anic *sūras*, just as none of the forms of the world's parts have what man has with respect to [his bringing together] the form of the Divine Gatheredness [*al-ṣūra al-jam'iyya al-ilāhiyya*].⁹⁰

Since the Fātiḥa contains all things, and man is potentially the entire cosmos, man potentially contains the Fātiḥa within himself. As a prototype of the cosmos the Perfect Man is a microcosm. Likewise, as prototypes of the book of being, he and the Fātiḥa are “small books.” Both the Perfect Man and the Fātiḥa share in common the qualities of gatheredness: they both bring together what is contained in the “big book,” that is, the macrocosm. Since the Fātiḥa and the Perfect Man are identical, the Perfect Man contains within himself all of the Fātiḥa's secrets concerning the Origin and the Return.⁹¹ This is an important point, for it is from the perspective of the Perfect Man that Ṣadrā goes on to reveal some of the Fātiḥa's secrets, as we will demonstrate in the following chapter.

4.4 – Conclusion

A close reading of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*'s teachings in metaphysics reveals that Mullā Ṣadrā, taking his lead from Q 1:1, was able to successfully recast his sophisticated ontology of the fundamentality of being into a theological and scripture-based framework. This allowed him to then go on to address two questions which are central to his theoretical scriptural hermeneutics (as demonstrated in chapter two of this study): (1) what is the nature of the

⁹⁰ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:163-4. Cf. Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 413 and 492 n. 43; idem, *Se rendre immortel* (Saint-Clément-de-Rivière: Fata Morgana, 2002), 105.

⁹¹ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:164: “The gnostic who verifies the truth within himself [*al-ʿarīf al-muḥaqqiq*] understands from this one *sūra* all of the sciences and universal forms of knowledge spread throughout the verses and *sūras* of the Qur'ān.” For an inquiry into the significance of realization or *taḥqīq* in Ṣadrā, see Morris, “The Process of Realization (*taḥqīq*): Mullā Ṣadrā's Conception of the *Barzakh* and the Emerging Science of Spirituality,” in *Eschatology, Exegesis, Hadith*, 93-102.

cosmos?, and (2) what is the nature of man? By presenting his ontology in less philosophical language (and relying, instead, upon the language Ibn ‘Arabī and some of his “followers”), Ṣadrā demonstrates how these two theoretical questions are to be answered in the context of his commentary upon the Fātiḥa.

The mention of *ḥamd* or “praise” in Q 1:2 gives Ṣadrā the opportunity to explicate how his doctrine of the gradation of being, when wedded with his understanding of the deployment of the Perfect Words in the cosmic order, results in a picture of the cosmos in which all things are simply modes of praise for God, beginning with God’s own act of self-praise. He seems to want to connect his cosmology of praise with his answer to his other theoretical hermeneutical question concerning the nature of man. If all things are modes of praise in the cosmos, then human beings are themselves modes of God’s praise. As a manifestation of the Muḥammadan Reality, the Perfect Man is the most perfect mode of praise for God amongst all of His creatures. Since the Perfect Man is the highest mode of praise for God and the Fātiḥa contains all that is in the Qur’ān, and, hence, in existence, the Perfect Man and the Fātiḥa share a special relationship. It is, therefore, only the Perfect Man who can interpret the Fātiḥa, since, in reading it, he offers a reading of himself.

Chapter 5

***Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* III: Theology and Soteriology**

In the previous chapter we had the opportunity to evaluate the manner in which Mullā Ṣadrā recasts his ontology in his commentary on the Fātiḥa. It was shown that he was able to weave his distinctly philosophical position concerning the fundamentality of being into the fabric of his commentary in seamless fashion. This then allowed for a proper exposition of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*'s sophisticated cosmology of praise and its attendant anthropology. We will now turn our attention to two related themes addressed in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, both of which are natural corollaries of the topics covered in chapter four. By extension, the discussions introduced here are also corollaries of Ṣadrā's worldview when applied to the content of the Fātiḥa.

In this chapter, we will highlight how Ṣadrā attempts to shed light on two important issues in Islamic thought, namely the idea of the God created in beliefs (theology), and the problem of the all-pervasive nature of God's mercy in the afterlife (soteriology). As will become clear, Ṣadrā's discussions in this *tafsīr*, particularly with respect to soteriology, have clear antecedents in his other writings. But since the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* serves as the locus in which he refines his earlier positions, these discussions reemerge in this text in their fully worked out form. To be sure, we still lack a comprehensive picture of Ṣadrā's theology (as defined here) and soteriology, and this is because his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* has largely been ignored. Apart from bringing to light some unknown aspects of Ṣadrā's teachings, this chapter will also demonstrate how influential Ibn 'Arabī has been upon these teachings.

5.1 – Beyond Idol Worship

5.1.1 – *From Outer to Inner*

We demonstrated in chapter two that Ṣadrā has very little patience for the more exoteric types of *tafsīr*, although he was thoroughly conversant in its methods. It is clear that Ṣadrā acknowledges non-mystical and non-philosophical scriptural exegesis as a legitimate enterprise, but nowhere in his corpus does he devote a lengthy discussion to account for why these approaches exist, and how they ultimately tie into the wider picture of his metaphysics. One of the major exceptions to this is to be found in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. Here, Ṣadrā attempts to explain why there are different types of readers of the Qur’ān, the exposition of which is closely linked to his treatment of the diversity of approaches to understanding God.

Since people take different positions with respect to God, they will naturally have different understandings of His Word.¹ According to Ṣadrā, this fact is itself proof of the Qur’ān’s perfection. It, like God, is open to all types of readings, although not all interpretations are necessarily correct:

Just as there are differences of opinion [*ikhtilāf wa-tafāwut*] in peoples’ positions and beliefs concerning God—i.e., between the one who declares God bodily [*mujassim*] and the one who declares Him dissimilar [*munazzih*]; the philosopher [*mutafalsif*] and denier of God’s attributes [*mu’aṭṭil*]; the one who ascribes partners to God [*mushrik*] and the one who declares Him one [*muwahḥid*]²—so too are there differences of opinion between them in understanding [the Qur’ān]. This is one of proofs of the Qur’ān’s perfection, for it is a deep ocean in whose current most people drown, and from which none are saved except a few.²

¹ As we will see below, Ṣadrā has in mind a hierarchical typology of the different knowers of the Qur’ān. For an earlier example of this type of approach, see Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights*, trans. David Buchman (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 36-8. See also Landolt, “Ghazālī and ‘Religionwissenschaft’: Some Notes on the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* for Professor Charles J. Adams,” *Asiatische Studien/Etudes Asiatiques* 45, no. 1 (1991): 19-72 (reprinted in idem, *Recherches en spiritualité iranienne*, 25-82); Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur’ān*, 110 ff.

² Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:30.

People may either remain on the surface of an ocean or plunge into it. The deeper one goes, the more likely he is to reach its bottom and resurface with its hidden treasures. Likewise, there are many positions on God, but not all of them are correct, since some of them are necessarily more superficial than others. It is only those who plumb the depths of being who can lay claim to understanding God, just as it is only those who plumb the depths of the ocean of the Qurʾān who can lay claim to understanding His Word.³

The point Ṣadrā is trying to make here would be difficult to understand without contextualizing his discussion. Before introducing the idea of the correspondence between different approaches to understanding God and the Qurʾān, he devotes some space to explaining how people have employed various linguistic tools in their attempts to comprehend the meanings of the Qurʾān's verses. Such people (whom Ṣadrā, in keeping with the long-standing Sufi tradition, refers to as the *ahl al-ʿibāra* or “the people of outward expressions”)⁴ are used by God for a higher purpose. God has effectively set them up to learn these partial sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-juzʿiyya*), rooted as they are upon the Qurʾān's linguistic forms only. These people thus act as servants (*khawādim*) and instruments (*ālāt*) for the true purpose behind the Qurʾān, namely

³ As we saw in chapter two, there is a clear correlation between being and the Qurʾān, a point which, although lurking in the background, is made more explicit by Ṣadrā later.

⁴ See *ibid.*, 1:28: “Know, O one concerned with understanding the meanings of the book!—God guide you to the right way—that here there are investigations into written expressions [*lafẓ*]. Some of these are related to the imprints of the letters and their written appearances, and forms of words and their sonal qualities, for [all of] which God put in place a people—such as scribes, reciters, and memorizers—and rendered the utmost of their endeavours to be knowledge of the proper recitation and beautiful writing of these expressions. Some of these are related to knowing the states of [their] structure, derivation, the states of inflection, and the building of words. And some of these are related to knowing the primary senses of the individual and composite terms. All of these [forms of investigation] fall short of the furthest goal and the loftiest station [*al-maqṣad al-aqṣā wa-l-manzil al-asnā*]. A party of each of these [investigators] has reached the boundary of the end and risen therein to the utmost expanse [of these investigations into written expressions].”

man's perfection.⁵ Human perfection, Ṣadrā assures us, is not attained through outward, formal learning. Although outward knowledge is a necessary preparatory step for most seekers of truth, it cannot in and of itself lead to that truth.⁶ Thus, the more outward forms of learning related to the Qur'ān exist as a means of facilitating a deeper understanding of the book.

In Sufi *tafsīr*, the term *ibāra* is often juxtaposed with the term *ishāra*, a word denoting the allusion to or indication of something which, by virtue of its depth, escapes outward expression.⁷ Expressions, in other words, deal with the outer form of a deeper reality which can

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ At *ibid.*, 1:31-2, Ṣadrā says that the one who wants to know the Qur'ān's meanings has to go through some very rigorous training. He must know all the *tafsīrs* and, like Ghazālī, be completely conversant with all the different creeds and sects (he recounts here Ghazālī's autobiographical sketch of his quest for truth in his famous *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*—Ṣadrā was fond of this book, as is evidenced, for example, in *Mafāṭīḥ*, 123-4). This is to be done until the bonds of blind faith (*taqlīd*) are broken, which will induce within the seeker of knowledge a sense of deficiency and longing for the truth until God opens up a way for him and he comes to know the secrets of the Qur'ān. Yet slightly earlier (*Tafsīr*, 1:29), Ṣadrā says that “the people of God” (for whom, see below) do not need to bother with accumulating a great deal of knowledge of the exoteric sciences. Judging by the amount of emphasis Ṣadrā places on exoteric learning in his other writings, it seems that the people of God must go through the same process as those advised several pages later. If this is the case, then after having “arrived,” they need not busy themselves excessively with formal learning since they now partake in a different mode of knowing—what Ṣadrā, in keeping with many of his predecessors, calls “unveiling” (*kashf*). Indeed, this appears to be the very manner in which Ṣadrā himself gained access to unveiling. See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 1-30.

⁷ The distinction appears to have first been made in an early Sufi Qur'anic exegetical maxim, often attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. See Nwyia, “Le tafsīr mystique attribué à Ğa'far Ṣādiq,” *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 43 (1967): 179-230; Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*, MS British Museum Or. 9433, fol. 2a (translated in Rustom, “Forms of Gnosis,” 329). See also Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics*, 55, 96 n. 2; Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*, 175. Cf. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:116; Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'ān in Classical Islam*, 35. The term *ibāra* is not to be confused with a word we also encounter in Sufi *tafsīr*, namely *ītibār*. This latter term has a positive connotation, and, according to Gril (who renders it as “transposition symbolique” or “symbolic transposition”), is equivalent to *ishāra*, although *ītibār* is more explicit than *ishāra* in its reliance on the existence of an intimate relationship between the book, the self, and the cosmos. See Gril, “L'interprétation par transposition symbolique (*ītibār*) selon Ibn Barraġān et Ibn 'Arabī,” in *Symbolisme et*

only be denoted by allusions. Because of the limitations of language and discursive thought (to which language is intimately tied), we can only allude to the Qur'ān's inner realities. Thus, if the ocean of the Qur'ān has outward expressions (i.e., its surface and waves), it also has an inner reality (i.e., its hidden pearls). In the following passage, Ṣadrā relates this basic exoteric/esoteric dichotomy in the cosmos to several cosmic realities, and explains the fundamental difference between those concerned with the outer and inner dimensions of the Qur'ān:

Expressions are like the enshrouded dead person whereas allusions are like the subtle, recognizing, knowing [faculty] which is man's reality. Expressions come from the World of the Visible [*‘alam al-shahāda*], whereas allusions come from the World of the Unseen [*‘alam al-ghayb*]. Expressions are the shadows of the unseen, just as man's individuation [*tashakkhuṣ*] is the shadow of his reality.

As for the people of outward expressions and writing [*ahl al-‘ibāra wa-l-kitāba*], they have wasted their lives away in acquiring words and foundations, and their intellects have drowned in perceiving exposition and meanings. As for the people of the Qur'ān and the Word [*ahl al-qur'ān wa-l-kalām*]⁸—and they are the people of God [*ahl allāh*] who have been singled out for the divine love, lordly attraction, and prophetic proximity—God has facilitated the way for them and accepted from them few works for the journey. That is because of the purity of their intentions and their hearts.⁸

Since God's being encompasses outward and inward realities, like the readers of the Qur'ān, it will necessarily be comprised of people who swim on the surface of its ocean and those who plunge into its depths. Those who plunge into its depths are the “people of God,” just as those who plunge into the Qur'ān's depths are the “people of the Qur'ān.” As we have seen earlier in this study, modes of being (*anḥā' al-wujūd*) are darker, murkier, denser, and more shadow-like (i.e., manifest more essence) the lower they stand on the scale of being. The higher they stand on its scale, the less concretized they are, which is to say the less defined they become

herméneutique dans la pensée de Ibn ‘Arabī, ed. Bakri Aladdin, 147-61 (Damascus: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2007) (he makes the point on p. 147). Cf. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 263-5.

⁸ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:28-9. Cf. *ibid.*, 6:10. See also Sa'idi, “Illumination, Unveiling and Intuition in Mullā Ṣadrā's Qur'ānic Commentary,” 532.

by their own outward forms or “expressions.” As modes of being, the more individuated they are, the less shadow-like their natures, meaning they manifest more being, more depth, more “allusion,” and less “expression.”

At the beginning of chapter four we saw that Ṣadrā refers to the Qur’ān as being one of the rays of God’s light. Elsewhere in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* he refers to it as “one of the flashes of His Essence.”⁹ Since God’s light pervades the cosmos, all of the latter’s contents, in one form or another, reveal the light of God’s being. However, some things reveal this light more clearly than others. This is to say that some things can either convey the nature of this light by their very existence, or they can play a subtler role by way of alluding to this principial Light of which all things are merely rays.¹⁰ Since being and the Qur’ān are two sides of the same coin, the most outward forms of knowledge of the Qur’ān, like the most outward forms of knowledge of God, are less real and furthest from that form of knowledge only accessible to the people of the Qur’ān.

5.1.2 – *Idols of Belief*

Approaches to the Qur’ān which are confined to the surface necessarily limit the Qur’ān’s treasures from emerging. As has been seen throughout the history of Islamic thought, such a tendency is often an extension of, and/or something that informs, a more exoteric approach to scripture. It would be an unhelpful exercise on our part if we were to attempt to determine whether one’s reading of scripture colours one’s understanding of reality, or whether one’s

⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:30. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:36.

¹⁰ For an excellent exposition of this point, see Izutsu, “The Paradox of Light and Darkness in the Garden of Mystery of Shabistari,” in *Anagogic Qualities of Literature*, ed. Joseph Strelka, 288-307 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971) (reprinted in Izutsu, *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things*, 38-65).

understanding of reality informs one's reading of scripture. This is because these approaches are not mutually exclusive, as they both seem to inform one another.

In Mullā Ṣadrā's case such a question becomes all the less important, since he sees the Qur'ān as the prototype of being (from one perspective). It is perhaps for this reason that in his *tafsīrs*, Ṣadrā will often not draw as explicit a link between approaches to scripture and approaches to God. Thus, when he discusses the controversial question of the nature of idols of belief in the context of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, he takes it for granted that his discussion is as much concerned with understanding the verses of the Qur'ān as it is with understanding the nature of God.

In texts of Islamic thought, particularly Sufī writings, it was commonplace to say that concern with anything other than God was tantamount to idolatry. One of the first authors to make an explicit connection between self-absorption and idolatry was the early master of moral psychology, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), who spent a good deal of time demonstrating the manner in which *riyā'* (religious ostentation) acts as a hidden form of idolatry (*al-shirk al-khafī*).¹¹ This hidden form of idolatry can manifest itself in a variety of forms. This explains why in Sufi literature we come across many synonyms for the hidden idolater, amongst which are

¹¹ See 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Ri'āya li-ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā' (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1971), 177-355.

such pejorative titles as “form-worshipper” (*ṣūrat-parast*)¹² and “habit worshipper” (*‘ādat-parast*).¹³

If preoccupation with the idols of the self is a form of idolatry, then surely the intellectual constructs of God conjured up by the self can also be called “idols.” Although this idea lurks in the background of numerous Sufi texts, the first explicit, theoretical discussion of the notion of “idols of belief” is to be found in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī, who spoke of the “God of one’s belief” (*al-ilāh al-mu‘taqad*) and “the God created in faiths” (*al-ilāh al-makhlūq fī-l-‘aqā'id*).¹⁴ As he famously (and controversially) puts it, “Neither [the worshipper’s] heart nor [his] eye ever witness anything except the form of his belief concerning God”;¹⁵ and “there are none but idol worshippers.”¹⁶ After Ibn ‘Arabī, a number of authors took up this idea, particularly the great Persian Sufi poet, Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. 740/1339).¹⁷

¹² Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī-yi ma‘nawī*, ed. and trans. R. A. Nicholson as *The Mathnawī of Jalālu’d-dīn Rūmī* (London: Luzac, 1924-40), 1:710 (book 1, line 710) (cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983], 102):

Go, strive towards meaning, O form-worshipper! [*raw bi-ma‘nā kūsh ay ṣūrat-parast*]
For meaning is the wing of form’s body [*zānki ma‘nā bar tan-i ṣūrat par ast*].

¹³ ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 98: “O friend! If you want the secrets of the unseen to be manifested to you, then desist from habit-worship, for habit-worship is idol worship [*but-parast*].”

¹⁴ See Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 162-5; idem, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 335-44; Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 124, 195-200.

¹⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 121.

¹⁶ Cited in Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 150.

¹⁷ For an excellent study of Shabistarī’s life and thought, see Leonard Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Maḥmūd Shabistarī* (Richmond: Curzon, 1995). See also idem, “The Transcendent Unity of Polytheism and Monotheism in the Sufism of Shabistarī,” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, 2:379-406. For some striking parallels between Ibn ‘Arabī’s position and a ninth/fifteenth century Ismā‘īlī author, see Shafiqe Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 148-54.

By the time we get to Mullā Ṣadrā, references to the “God created in faiths” or “idols of belief” would have immediately been recognizable as having derived from Ibn ‘Arabī and his school. This was the case with a number of important terms, such as the “Oneness of Being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), the “Perfect Man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*), and the “Five Divine Presences” (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya al-khams*). Ṣadrā’s writings are replete with discussions of these terms.¹⁸ But when it comes to the notion of idols of belief, the only extensive discussion he devotes to it is to be found in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. The section in this *tafsīr* where Ṣadrā takes up the question occurs in the context of his treatment of Q 1:1.

After explaining the nature of the divine names and how they relate to the All-Gathering Name Allāh, Ṣadrā ventures into a fairly detailed excursus to explain the fact that most people do not worship God as He should be worshiped. Confined as they are to their own methods and intellectual constructs (like the people of expressions’ approaches to the Qur’ān), they fashion and carve God in their own image, and according to their own beliefs. Having crafted an image of the deity with their own interpretive tools, He then becomes fit for their worship:

¹⁸ For the Oneness of Being in Ṣadrā, see idem, *Asfār*, 1:53, 433; 2:291, 300, 335, 339; 4:183; 6:18, 24, 335, 348; idem, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Chāpkhānah-yi Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1346 Sh/1967), 51. See also Nasr, “Mullā Ṣadrā and the Doctrine of the Unity of Being.” For the Perfect Man in Ṣadrā, see idem, *Asfār*, 6:296; 7:7, 181-3, 188-91; 8:140; 9:61, 284. I have not as of yet come across the Arabic term for the Five Divine Presences (likely to have been coined by Qūnawī) in Ṣadrā’s writings, although his cosmology and anthropology clearly assume the same (or a similar) cosmic picture. For a good summary of the development of the doctrine of the Five Divine Presences in Islamic thought, see Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī,” *Muslim World* 72 (1982): 107-28. See also Ṣadrā, *Elixir*, 53, 110 n. 43. For a thorough index of books, names of figures and schools, technical terms, and scriptural references in Ṣadrā’s *Asfār*, see Sayyid Muḥsin Mīrī and Muḥammad Ja‘far ‘Alī (ed.), *Fihrist-i mawḍū‘ī-yi Kitāb al-Ḥikma al-muta‘āliya fī-l-asfār al-arba‘a* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat, 1374 Sh/1995). A useful—but by no means exhaustive—glossary of technical terms in Ṣadrā’s writings can be found in Samīḥ Dughaym (ed.), *Mawsū‘at muṣṭalahāt Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 2004).

Most people do not worship God insofar as He is God. They merely worship the objects of their beliefs in accordance with what they have formed for themselves as objects of worship. In reality, their gods are those imaginary idols which they form [*yataṣawwarūna*] and carve [*yanḥitūna*] with the potency of their intellectual or imaginary beliefs.¹⁹

Like Ibn ‘Arabī, Ṣadrā closely follows the Qur’ān’s wording when discussing the idea of “carving” an idol.²⁰ Whereas the people of Abraham carved an idol out of physical matter, those who worship the objects of their beliefs carve idols out of the “stuff” of their soul. As Ṣadrā puts it, these objects of belief are “formed and sculpted” through man’s use of his imagination and intellect, or what he also refers to as the “hands” of man’s intellect.²¹

Idolatry, therefore, is not only worship of a physical image or even preoccupation with other than God. It is also to conceive of God in accordance with one’s own selfish whims and desires. Since a mental image of God cannot be God as such, it can only be an object of one’s belief, created by the self for the self. Because this is the case, there is no difference between those who worship physical idols and those who worship the God of their beliefs:

A believer amongst the veiled ones—those who create the divinity in the forms of the object of their belief and nothing else—only worships a god on account of what he creates within himself and forms [*taṣawwara*] using his imagination. In reality, his god is created for himself and sculpted with the hand of his potent free-disposal. So there is no difference between those idols which are taken as gods [externally] and his god, owing to the fact that they are all created for the self, whether they be external or internal to it.²²

¹⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:40.

²⁰ See Q 37:95, where Abraham says to his people, “Do you worship what you carve [*tanḥitūna*]?” According to Chittick (*Imaginal Worlds*, 185 n. 7), Ibn ‘Arabī clearly has this verse in mind when he says that “Every believer has a Lord in his heart that he has brought into existence, so he believes in Him.... They worship nothing but what they themselves have carved” (cited in *ibid.*, 151).

²¹ See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:41.

²² See *ibid.*, 1:40.

Why do people create idols? Ṣadrā, again following Ibn ‘Arabī, offers an explanation. He says that an idol is taken as an object of worship simply because of the belief on the part of the one worshipping the idol that it is divine, and therefore worthy of worship:

External idols are also only worshipped because of their worshipper’s belief in their divinity. The mental forms are the objects of their worship essentially, and the external forms are their objects of worship accidentally. Thus, the objects of worship of every idol-worshipper are nothing but the forms of his beliefs and the caprices [*ahwā’*] of his soul, as has been alluded to in His saying, *Have you seen the one who takes his caprice for his god?* [Q 65:23]. Just as worshippers of bodily idols worship what their hands have created, so too do those who have partial beliefs concerning God worship what the hands of their intellects have gathered.²³

Ṣadrā acknowledges in this passage that it is essentially “caprice” which incites one to fashion an idol. This caprice forms into a mental image first, and then, in the case of a physical idol, is made into a physical image. Whether the image remains physical or mental, the God created by the self for the self is only worshipped because the self considers it to be divine. Thus, what the self ultimately worships is nothing but its own whims and desires, since an idol—whether physical or mental—is nothing but a projection of the self. Since one’s caprice is a projection of the content of the self, when one forms an idol one is really only worshipping oneself. All beliefs in which God is delimited by the self are nothing but constructions of the self. This explains why one believes in the divinity of the idol which he himself creates: the image is “divine” because it is proximate to the self, which is to say that it *is* like the self.

From another perspective, it is God’s self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*) which determine a servant’s object of worship. Since some of the divine names predominate over others in each individual, it is these divine names that become the servant’s object of worship. In other words, by delimiting God with his intellectual and imaginal faculties, the servant necessarily brings

²³ Ibid., 1:40-1. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:6, 30.

within his field of worship certain qualities of the divinity to the exclusion of others. Most people, therefore, worship God from behind the veil of some of His self-disclosures. But because God's self-disclosures are perpetually different, perspectives on Him, that is, idolized delimitations of His true nature, will naturally be different as well. Depending on which self-disclosure veils the servant, he will deny God in His other self-disclosures because he is unable to recognize anything as divine other than the idol that he has created for himself. This, according to Ṣadrā, is the height of displaying poor etiquette (*adab*) towards God.²⁴

5.1.3 – *The Religion of the Perfect Man*

If people are idol worshippers who must necessarily limit God according to their own specifications, thereby allowing some of God's self-disclosures to be operative within them rather than others, what does this mean with respect to their fate in the afterlife? Are those who deny God in all of His self-disclosures condemned “forever” for their idolatry? In one passage, Ṣadrā juxtaposes God's true servants (on whom, see below) with those who are servants of their own opinions and caprices. He implies here that the latter are unable to love and seek God by virtue of their self-imposed limitations on knowing God's true nature. But then he says that by virtue of God's mercy and compassion, those who do not worship Him as He truly should be worshipped are nevertheless upon a path of guidance facilitated by God:

The Real, out of the perfection of His compassion [*raʿfa*] and mercy [*rahma*] towards His servants, the all-encompassing nature [*shumūl*] of His benevolence [*ʿatifa*], the unfolding [*inbisāf*] of the light of His being towards the contingent things, and the self-disclosure [*tajallī*] of the [manifest] face of His Essence to the existent things, made for each of them a likeness [*mithāl*] which they could imitate, a refuge [*mathāba*]

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:42: “From this veiling, differences amongst people in matters of belief come about. Thus, some of them anathematize others and some curse others, while every one of them affirms for the Real what the other denies, thinking that what they opine and believe is the highest form of exaltation of God! But they err and display bad etiquette towards God while they think that they have attained the highest rank in knowledge and etiquette!”

towards which they could strive, a path which they could traverse, a direction towards which they could aspire, a *qibla* with which they would be satisfied,²⁵ and a law in accordance with which they could act. He says, *For everyone there is a direction to turn, so vie for the good. Wherever you are, God will bring you all together* [Q 2:148]; *For each of you We have made a law and a way* [Q 5:48]; *Each party rejoicing in what is with them* [Q 30:32].²⁶

As we will see later on in this chapter, Ṣadrā's notion of the path specific to each individual mentioned in this passage has the utmost importance for his soteriology. For our purposes at the present moment, we can note that this passage also provides us with an added nuance to Ṣadrā's stance on how people see their created idols as "divine." From one perspective, it is because of their caprice that people fashion an idol of God. But from another perspective, it is because God allows Himself to be delimited so that they can serve Him in a form suitable to their natures.

Ṣadrā also acknowledges the possibility of there being a group of individuals who do not confine God to their own intellectual and imaginary constructs, and who thus follow God as He should be followed.²⁷ The religious positions taken by most people are always in accordance with their caprices, or what they love. But the position of the people of God is in accordance with their object of love, namely God.²⁸ Since God is their only object of love, they can be completely sincere towards Him in their "religion."²⁹ From this perspective, their religion *is* God, and they

²⁵ This is an allusion to Q 2:144.

²⁶ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:30. Ibn 'Arabī is more explicit on this point: "If God were to take people to account for error, He would take every possessor of a belief to account. Every believer has delimited his Lord with his reason and consideration and has thereby restricted Him. But nothing is worthy of God except nondelimitation.... [S]o He delimits, but He does not become delimited. Nevertheless, God pardons everyone" (cited in Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 153).

²⁷ His position in this regard is similar to Ibn 'Arabī. See Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:151-5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:30.

²⁹ An allusion to Q 3:39, which Ṣadrā himself makes at *Tafsīr*, 1:30.

are effectively “the servants of the All-Merciful” (*ibād al-raḥmān*) mentioned in Q 25:63.³⁰ Significantly, the only time in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* Ṣadrā makes an explicit personal claim occurs in the context of his treatment of the religion of the people of God. At a climactic moment in the text, he interjects the following couplet:

Those who love out of caprice take diverse positions.
As for me, I have a single position, and dwell in it alone.³¹

Himself one of the “people of God” or “servants of the All-Merciful,” Ṣadrā is able to lay claim to a special position (*madhhab*) when it comes to conceptualizing and worshipping the divinity. Unlike people who delimit God according to their own needs, Ṣadrā’s position allows him to worship God in all of His multiplicity, thereby always showing proper etiquette to God because of his perpetual affirmation of Him in all of His self-disclosures.³² This quality, Ṣadrā reminds us, only belongs to the Perfect Man. Since the Perfect Man does not deny God in any of His self-disclosures, He is able to witness Him in everything, and recognize Him in every form:

As for the Perfect Man, he knows the Real in every object of witnessing [*mashāhid*] and religious rite [*mashā’ir*]. He worships Him in every homestead [*mawṭin*] and locus of manifestation, so he is the servant of God [*abd allāh*] who worships Him in all of His names and attributes. On account of this, the most perfect of human individuals—Muḥammad, God bless him and his family—was given this name. Just as the divine name [Allāh] brings together all the names—which are unified because of the Exclusive Unity of All-Gatheredness—so too does its path bring together the paths of all the names, even if each of these paths are specified by a name which sustains its locus, and each locus is worshipped and its straight path particular to it is traversed from that perspective.³³

The path of the Perfect Man is the path of the name Allāh, which naturally entails that those traversing it not delimit God in any fashion. The path of the name Allāh brings together all the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Madhāhib shattā li-l-muḥibbīn fī-l-hawā / wa-lī madhhab fard a’īshu bihi waḥdī* (ibid.).

³² Ibid., 1:42.

³³ Ibid., 1:41-2.

other names. Since each divine name is a delimitation of the Essence, it manifests a delimited and therefore particularized form of God's true nature. Particularized forms of God result in idols and particular forms of worship. Since the name Allāh contains all the other names, its path contains all the other particularized paths to God. The one on the path of the name Allāh has thus transcended both physical and what Corbin would call "metaphysical" idolatry.³⁴ By virtue of having smashed "the idols of the age of ignorance,"³⁵ such an individual is able to behold that formless form which contains all forms.³⁶

Free of human limitations and having transcended divinizing only particular self-disclosures of God to the exclusion of His other self-disclosures, the gnostic is able to perceive God in any of the forms in which He discloses Himself. When he looks at the world, which is created upon the form of God's beauty, he cannot help but see Him. The gnostic thus gazes upon

³⁴ That is, idolâtrie métaphysique. For Corbin's most extensive treatment of this idea, see Corbin, *Le paradoxe du monothéisme* (Paris: L'Herne, 1981), 7-17. Thanks go to Tom Cheatham for supplying the reference. See also Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:289, where he uses this phrase to render the Arabic term *tashbīh*.

³⁵ I take this phrase from a title of one of Ṣadrā's treatises on the spiritual life in which he criticizes false Sufis. See Ṣadrā, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhū (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1962). An English translation of the book has recently been published: *Breaking the Idols of Ignorance: Admonition of the So-called Sufi*, trans. M. Dasht Bozorgi and F. Asadi Amjad (London: ICAS Press, 2008).

³⁶ Since the Perfect Man can only perceive the formless with the heart, that is, his instrument of spiritual "cognition," the heart itself must be formless. Only by being nothing can one contain everything. The heart, literally no-thing because it acts as a perfect mirror in which God sees His own formless form, is thus not possessed of any forms and is itself formless. For a discussion of this phenomenon in Sufism, see Rustom, "The Metaphysics of the Heart in the Sufi Doctrine of Rumi," *Studies in Religion* 37, no. 1 (2008): 3-14 and the references therein. Cf. Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 491 n. 29. For a preliminary attempt at understanding Ṣadrā's treatment of the heart, see Paul Ballanfat, "Considérations sur la conception du coeur chez Mullā Sadrā," *Kār-Nāmeḥ*, no. 5 (1999): 33-46, 67-84. See also the insightful points in Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:234. One of the key aspects of Ṣadrā's teaching on the heart is its close connection to self-knowledge. Although he does not discuss this point in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, he devotes some attention to it in a few of his other works. In his *Sih aṣl* in particular, he makes this point explicitly. See pp. 103-4 n. 95.

God within the multiple refractions of forms in the mirror of the cosmos, beholding His beauty in all things, in every object of worship, and through every form of belief. He is thus in love with the cosmos, since it is nothing other than his Beloved:

It has been reported that God is beautiful and He loves beauty. He is the artisan of the cosmos and brings it into existence in His form [*shākila*], as He says, [*Say:*] “*everyone acts according to their form*” [Q 17:84]. . . . So the entire cosmos is of the utmost beauty because it is a mirror for the Real. This is why the knowers become enraptured by it and the verifiers realize love for it. For He is the object of gaze in every eye, the beloved in every form of love, the object of worship in every act of worship, and the Final Goal in both the unseen and the seen. The entire cosmos prays to Him, praises Him, and glorifies Him.³⁷

This passage draws an important link with Ṣadrā’s cosmology of praise outlined in the previous chapter. The Perfect Man is able to see the manner in which all things in the cosmos are modes of praise for God, and by virtue of this fact, nothing appears to him as ugly. Rather, as the passage states, the cosmos is “of the utmost beauty.” As the mirror in which the divine Beloved’s face is reflected in all of its unitary multiplicity, the Perfect Man also understands the teleological purpose of the cosmos: not only is it the arena in which the One manifests Itself in Its multiplicity. It also signals, by its very nature, that all of its contents—which are so many modes of praise—must return to the Object of all praise and glorification.³⁸ The minute we speak

³⁷ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:153-4. This passage is a reworking of Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:449 (translated in Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 28). For a complete translation of the passage, a part of which I have followed here, see Ibn ‘Arabī, “Towards God’s Signs.” Also, see p. 217 ff. for more examples of Ṣadrā’s appropriation of texts from the *Futūḥāt* and their incorporation into the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, as well as a discussion of this phenomenon. For replies to Ibn ‘Arabī’s position on the fact that God is the sole object of worship in the cosmos, see Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 342 n. 112. For Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatment of this idea, see *Fuṣūṣ*, 68-74. See also Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, ch. 9; idem, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 356-81; idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 86-7; Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 184 ff.

³⁸ We can also say that the Perfect Man glorifies God through every act glorification to be found in the cosmos, since the Perfect Man himself is a transcription (*nuskha*) of the cosmos. Thus, the very act of glorification becomes

of a return of all modes of praise to their Object of praise, we are naturally faced with a much wider problem: if all things come from the One and return to the One, then do they not all, in their being reabsorbed back into the One, end in a state similar to their origin? In order to understand how Mullā Ṣadrā approaches this question, we must now turn our attention to his soteriology.

5.2 – The Triumph of Mercy

In Islamic thought, the basic principle that all human beings will return to God after their bodily deaths has, for the most part, been a given.³⁹ Yet according to both the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*,

“inscribed” upon the Perfect Man’s being, and he therefore glorifies God by his very nature in every one of his modes. Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:77. See also pp. 174-80.

³⁹ We know, for example, of views during the formative period of Islamic thought amongst the Qadirites and Jahmites which maintained that Heaven and Hell would eventually cease to exist, and that only God would remain. See Binyamin Abrahamov, “The Creation and Duration of Paradise and Hell in Islamic Theology,” *Der Islam* 79 (2002): 87-102 (particularly p. 99); Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment, and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 117-8. It is interesting to note that when we consider the charges of heresy laid against such figures as Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. ca. 245/860 or 298/912) or Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925 or ca. 323/935), they were never accused of not believing in the Return to God, even if, in the case of Rāzī, he upheld a doctrine of reincarnation. See Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), chs. 2-3 in particular. See also Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 95-109 who, in addition to Ibn al-Rāwandī and Rāzī, lists Omar Khayyām amongst the so-called “freethinkers of Islam,” likely following Fitzgerald’s romanticized depiction of Khayyām. A much more nuanced approach to Khayyām’s thought can be found in Mehdi Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005). Taking her lead from authors such as Fakhry, Stroumsa sees no problem in employing the term “freethinker” to refer to the intellectual activity of the likes of Ibn al-Rāwandī and Rāzī, and even attempts to justify this appellation in the context of medieval Islam (see Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam*, 8-10). Stroumsa’s justification for her usage of the term ultimately hinges back on the idea that her freethinkers in Islam thought outside of the confines of revelation since they rejected the Qurʾān. But owing to the particular late European usage of this term and its original meaning as connoting those who think “freely” or “independently” of the Church (that is, an organized governing religious body), applying the term “freethinker” to individuals belonging to a completely different cultural and religious milieu in which there was no

the return to God is not the same for all individuals. The fortunate are promised Paradise and the unfortunate are promised Hell. This basic picture of Islam's anthropology of the next life, however, has posed some serious difficulties for a number of leading Muslim thinkers. By the second/eighth century we already encounter important debates in Islamic theology concerning the question of not only the cessation of Hell as a place of torment, but also whether or not Hell itself was/is eternal.⁴⁰

Despite the fact that both Sunnī and Shī'ī teachings erred on the side of caution and maintained the eternal nature of Hell and its torments,⁴¹ in later Islamic thought we find several coherent arguments, all based upon statements in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, amongst thinkers of

centralized human authority from whom one needed to think freely, is somewhat misleading. Cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Freethinkers" (by R. Z. Laurer), where the author even classes al-Kindī (incorrectly implying that he was a precursor to the Mu'tazilites) as a "freethinker."

⁴⁰ See Abrahamov, "The Creation and Duration of Paradise and Hell in Islamic Theology"; Georges Vajda, "A propos de la perpétuité de la rétribution d'outre-tombe en théologie musulmane," *Studia Islamica* 11 (1959): 29-38 (reprinted in idem, *Etudes de théologie et de philosophie arabo-islamiques à l'époque classique*, ed. D. Gimaret, M. Hayoun, and J. Jolivet, ch. 2 [London: Variorum, 1986]). Cf. Josef Van Ess, "Das Begrenzte Paradies," in *Mélanges d'Islamologie: volume dédié à la mémoire de Arman Abel par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, ed. Pierre Salmon, 108-27 (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

⁴¹ For a presentation of the eternal nature of chastisement in Hell, see Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 79-83. Although Rustomji's concern with portrayals of Islam's eschatological landscape is confined to its re-presentations in medieval Islamic material culture, discussions of Hell's pleasurable nature (for which, see below) may have also had some type of influence upon Islamic material culture, if not directly, then at least indirectly (i.e., metaphysically). After all, some of Islam's most basic geometric patterns reflect the unity of all things and, by extension, the return of all multiplicity to this principal state of unity. For the logic behind Islamic patterns, see Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns: An Analytical and Cosmological Approach* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976). With respect to Islamic architecture, one of the first places to look for reverberations of Sufi metaphysical doctrines, particularly because of the amount of stress the work places upon Ibn 'Arabī's teachings (which are seminal for what is to follow in this chapter), is Samer Akkash, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

very different intellectual persuasions in favour of the cessation of punishment in Hell and the ultimate salvation of all human beings. Amongst the most influential authors who upheld such positions, we can mention Ibn ‘Arabī,⁴² Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328),⁴³ and the latter’s student, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350).⁴⁴ We are also told that the first Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam and important interpreter of Qūnawī, Muḥammad b. Ḥamza al-Fanārī (d. 834/1431), believed that punishment in Hell would eventually come to an end.⁴⁵

Ibn ‘Arabī seems to have been the most unequivocal on the question of the cessation of punishment in Hell, even arguing that Hell’s flames will become a source of pleasure for its inhabitants, a position which has aptly been described as “sweet torment”⁴⁶ and “infernal felicity.”⁴⁷ Although Ibn ‘Arabī’s argument in this regard is quite unique, rooted as it is in his metaphysics, he does not seem to have been the first Islamic thinker to uphold the view that Hell would become a place of comfort. According to the crypto-Ismā‘īlī Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), the famous *adīb* al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 256/868) believed that since Hell’s inhabitants will not be chastised in the Fire eternally, they will eventually end up becoming a part of the Fire’s constitution.⁴⁸

By the time we get to Mullā Ṣadrā, therefore, the problem of the cessation of punishment in Hell and the possibility of mercy for all had already been almost a millennium in the making

⁴² See below.

⁴³ See Mohammad Hassan Khalil, “Muslim Scholarly Discussions on Salvation and the Fate of ‘Others’” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007), ch. 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See Winter, “Ibn Kemāl (d. 940/1534) on Ibn ‘Arabī’s Hagiology,” in *Sufism and Theology*, 157 n. 97.

⁴⁶ See Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabi*, ch. 9.

⁴⁷ See Winter, “Ibn Kemāl (d. 940/1534) on Ibn ‘Arabī’s Hagiology,” 157 n. 97.

⁴⁸ See Shahrastānī, *Milal*, 60. My thanks go to Mohammad Hassan Khalil for drawing my attention to this passage. See also Khalil, “Muslim Scholarly Discussions on Salvation and the Fate of ‘Others’,” 99-100.

in texts of Islamic thought. But what distinguishes Şadrā's approach to the question of the eternity of Hell from the likes of an Ibn Taymiyya is that Şadrā, like Ibn 'Arabī before him, roots his treatment of the problem as dealt with in scripture within the wider framework of his ontology. As we saw last chapter, a principle of Şadrīan metaphysics is that being is one and, at the same time, multi-level. Thus, not only does the oneness of being pervade the cosmos, but, a fortiori, all of the multiplicity in the cosmos must eventually return to its original state of oneness.

Since scripture and being for Şadrā are one and the same reality, it is all the more fitting that scripture would also detail the ultimate return of all things to God. Thus, since all things come from the One, who is the Source of all beauty and goodness, so too must they return to the One, enveloped by Its goodness and beauty. This means that Hell, which is a place of torment, anguish, suffering, and distance from the One, must be finite; for all creatures, regardless of their actions, must return to their original home. Indeed, such a position seems to be the logical outcome of the wedding of religious eschatological teachings with an ontology that posits absolute oneness as the basis for the multiplicity in the cosmos. This is why we find similar discussions amongst a number of medieval Christian scriptural exegetes. The ancient Christian doctrine of *apokatastasis* or "restoration" was upheld by such important figures as St. Clement of Alexandria (d. 216), Origen (d. 254), Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 395), and Scottus Eriugena (d. ca. 877).⁴⁹ We also find similar discussions in Jewish mysticism. As Moshe Idel notes, the famous

⁴⁹ See Edward Baxter, "A Historical Study of the Doctrine of *apokatastasis*" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988); Steven Ray Harmon, "*Apokatastasis* and Exegesis: A Comparative Analysis of the Use of Scripture in the Eschatological Universalism of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997); Willemien Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 210-9. Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*

Spanish mystic and disputed author of the Zohar, Moses de Leon (d. 1305 CE), is known to have believed in the finite nature of punishment in Hell. He argues that since the soul is a “part” of God, it is impossible for God to punish Himself eternally.⁵⁰

Despite the fact that we have a relatively comprehensive picture of Mullā Ṣadrā’s eschatology, especially with respect to the “bodily” nature of the Return,⁵¹ how his doctrine of “salvation” fits into his eschatology has received very little attention. This is quite surprising, owing to the fact that, as will be seen below, this is a question which occupied Ṣadrā from early on in his career. The first treatment of Ṣadrā’s soteriology is to be found in Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s seminal English article on Ṣadrā written over four decades ago.⁵² In that article, Nasr notes that Ṣadrā upholds the view that Hell’s punishments will eventually come to an end, and that all human beings will return to God. A decade later, in his study of Ṣadrā’s *Zād al-musāfir*,

(Leiden: Brill, 2007), part 3. For an interesting discussion of the reception of Origen’s teachings in the middle ages, see Henri De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis (Vol. 1: The Four Senses of Scripture)*, trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), ch. 4. This is not to say that a restoration in God negates torment in the next life. For the reality of Hell in Scottus, see Donald Duclow and Paul Dietrich, “Hell and Damnation in Eriugena,” in *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and his Time*, ed. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne, 347-66 (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 2002). Thanks go to John Kloppenborg for sharing his insights with me on *apokatastasis* in medieval Christian thought.

⁵⁰ See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*², s.v. “Kabbalah” (by Moshe Idel). Idel goes on to note that this position is implied in the Zohar.

⁵¹ See Āshtiyānī, *Ma’ād-i jismānī: Sharḥ bar Zād al-musāfir* (Mashhad: Mu’assasah-yi Chāp wa-Intishār wa-Grāfīk-i Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī, 1976); Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 4:84-115; Jambet, *The Act of Being*, part 3; idem, *Mort et résurrection en islam*; idem, *Se rendre immortel*, 7-117; Zailan Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, 154-65; Nasr, “Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā),” in idem, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, 288-92; Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 257-62; Rustom, “Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination.” For translations from relevant texts in Ṣadrā, see Jambet, *Mort et résurrection en islam*, 225-85; Ṣadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, part 4; idem, *Traité de la résurrection* (in Jambet, *Se rendre immortel*, 119-71); Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, part II (c).

⁵² Nasr, “Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī,” 292.

the late scholar of Islamic philosophy, Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, also noted the presence of this idea in Ṣadrā's writings.⁵³ The appearance in 1981 of James Morris' English translation of one of Ṣadrā's later works may have complicated matters, since in that text, Ṣadrā seems to take a different stance on the question.⁵⁴

The most extensive discussion we have to date on Ṣadrā's soteriology can be found in Khwājawī's *Lawāmi' al-ʿarīfīn*.⁵⁵ Khwājawī notes that Ṣadrā does not treat the problem specifically; rather, he states the different views on the issue and is aware of the position of the school of Ibn ʿArabī. Khwājawī then goes on to cite several passages, all in Persian translation, of Ṣadrā's treatment of the problem. In all cases cited, Ṣadrā is portrayed as siding with the position that punishment in Hell is eternal for those who did not believe in God's unity. In the process, however, Khwājawī overlooks a number of important passages within Ṣadrā's oeuvre which clearly complicate the author's cut-and-dry presentation of the problem.⁵⁶ Lurking in the background of Khwājawī's discussion is a failure to distinguish between two important issues, namely the problem of the eternality of Hell and the question of the ultimate felicity of all humans. As we will see in the following section, this distinction lies at the heart of Ṣadrā's soteriology.

5.2.1 – *From the Mabda' to the Asfūr*

One of the first instances in which Ṣadrā addresses the question of the problem of Hell's eternity is to be found in his *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*. This text is Ṣadrā's first full-length book,

⁵³ See Āshtiyānī, *Ma'ād-i jismānī*, 193.

⁵⁴ See pp. 234-5.

⁵⁵ Khwājawī, *Lawāmi'*, 96-8.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bīdārfar, "Taḳdīm," 1:46-50, which closely follows Khwājawī. As will be seen below, Ṣadrā's most comprehensive treatment of this problem is to be found in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, which, ironically, was edited by Khwājawī.

and was completed in 1015/1606,⁵⁷ which places its composition in the period of his retreat in Kahak. Although this is Ṣadrā's earliest book, it already represents his mature thinking, and is written, like every other work which follows this one, from the perspective of *aṣālat al-wujūd*. Indeed, the date of its completion coincides with the commencement of Ṣadrā's magnum opus (the *Asfār*), a project which he did not complete until 1037/1628.⁵⁸

In the context of his discussion of common mistakes amongst people when it comes to interpreting eschatological realities, Ṣadrā introduces another mistaken belief to which most people adhere, namely the fact that (a) grave sinners (*ahl al-kabā'ir*) will reside in Hell for eternity (*khulūd*), and (b) God's mercy will never reach them. In refuting this belief, Ṣadrā calls attention to the fact that such a perspective both engenders despair amongst those aspiring towards God and contradicts the primary purpose of revelation, which is to facilitate for human beings a path to salvation:

They do not know that God's mercy is all-encompassing, that His forgiveness takes precedence, and [that] the shortcoming is from us. They do not realize that this opinion is one of the things on account of which man despairs of God's mercy and thus diminishes in [both his] desire for the pleasures of the Garden and in [his] awe of the chastisements of the Fire.⁵⁹ For those seeking God, heading towards Him, and longing to meet Him, having little desire and awe makes the path leading to God and His Dominion distant.⁶⁰

Every belief and position which is inconsistent with God's mercy and guidance and makes the path leading to Him distant is

⁵⁷ Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 64.

⁵⁸ We know that Ṣadrā underwent his conversion to the position of the fundamentality of being some time during his stay in Kahak. According to Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 14, the Kahak period is likely to have lasted for a period of five years. Judging from our knowledge of Ṣadrā's whereabouts in 1010/1601-2, we can safely estimate that the Kahak period was from 1013/1604 to 1018/1609. If this is the case, then we can assume that his conversion took place before 1013/1604, which would be before he began the *Mabda'* and *Asfār* in 1015/1606.

⁵⁹ Lit., "and decreases in desire for the pleasure of the Gardens and being in awe over the chastisement of the Fires."

⁶⁰ Alternatively, this last line could be translated as follows: "Having little desire and awe makes distant from the path leading to God and His Dominion those seeking Him, heading towards Him, and longing to meet Him."

undoubtedly false. For such a position is inconsistent with the establishment of revealed religions and contradicts the sending of Messengers and the revealing of scriptures, since the purpose behind all of these is nothing but to lead creatures close to their Lord's mercy by way of the nearest of paths and the easiest of means.⁶¹

This passage is significant for a number of reasons. Not only does it give us a window into Ṣadrā's earlier thought on the question of eternal suffering, but it also provides us with a clear picture of his view of the purpose of religion and revelation. As we will see later in this chapter, it is not without purpose that Ṣadrā ends this passage by saying that the purpose behind revelation is to provide for human beings the "nearest of paths" and "easiest of means" to their Lord's mercy.

Furthermore, it was noted above that by this point Ṣadrā had espoused the position of the fundamentality of being. *Wujūd* for Ṣadrā, it must be remembered, is identified with *rahma*, as is the case with Ibn 'Arabī.⁶² Thus, the very nature of being itself necessitates mercy, since revelation is nothing but the deployment of being. This explains why, as Ṣadrā says in no

⁶¹ Ṣadrā, *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1976), 460-1. Although Ṣadrā's point is clear, his Arabic style in this passage forbids an entirely eloquent translation of some sentences. For this reason, I provide here a complete transliteration of the text:

wa-lam ya'lamū anna-l-rahma wāsī'a wa-l-maghfira sābiqa wa-l-quṣūr minnā wa-lam yatafaṭṭanū bi-anna hādihā al-ra'y mim mā yaqnuṭu bihi al-insān min raḥmat allāh ta'ālā wa-yuqallilu al-raqhba wa-l-rahba fī na'im al-janān wa-ʿadhāb al-nirān wa-qillat al-raqhba wa-l-rahba yubʿidu al-ṭarīq ilā allāh ta'ālā wa-malakūtihi ʿalā al-ṭālbīn lahu wa-l-qāsīdīn naḥwuhu wa-l-marghūbīn fī liqāʾihi wa-kullu i'tiqād wa-madhhab yunāfī raḥmat allāh wa-hidāyatahu wa-yubʿidu al-ṭarīq ilayhi subḥānahu fa-huwa bāṭil lā maḥāla fa-inna dhālika tunāfī waḍʿ al-sharāʿ wa-tuḍāddu irsāl al-rusul wa-inzāl al-kutub idhā al-gharaḍ min-jamīʿihā laysa illā siyāqat al-khalq ilā jiwār raḥmat rabbihim bi-aqrab ṭuruq wa-aṣṣar wajh.

⁶² For the identification of *wujūd* with *rahma*, see idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:70 (cited below). It can also be noted here that in the previous chapter we identified the Essence (*dhāt*) with *wujūd*. This is because God's Essence, insofar as we can and cannot speak about It, is nothing other than *rahma*. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:48. See also the pertinent remarks in Lawson, "Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in Islam: Their Reflection in the Qurʾān and Quranic Images of Water," in *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, ed. Reinhard Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, 250 (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), where the notion of the cosmos as "mercification" is discussed in juxtaposition to other philosophical cosmologies in medieval Islamic thought.

uncertain terms, that any position which goes against the basic teaching of God's mercy is false, for such a position would have to negate being itself, which is impossible.

Ṣadrā returns to the problem of the question of eternal chastisement towards the end of the *Asfār*, treating the issue under the subheading “On How the People of the Fire Abide in the Fire Eternally” (*fī kayfīyyat khulūd ahl al-nār fī-l-nār*).⁶³ He begins this section by saying that the question of eternal chastisement is a theologically difficult problem, and one concerning which there are differences of opinion, both amongst the exoteric scholars (*‘ulamā’ al-rusūm*) and the people of unveiling (*ahl al-kashf*).⁶⁴ He summarizes the position of those who believe that God's chastisement is not eternal. They maintain that since all people are created with yearning (*‘ishq*) for existence and longing for its perfection, the essential end of all is their source, which means that they all end up in goodness because all things seek God and yearn to meet Him as He is the source of love and longing.⁶⁵ There are indeed obstacles on the way to Him, but they are not eternal, for if this were the case, then people would be unable to search for what is good.⁶⁶ To this effect, Ṣadrā cites a prophetic tradition which states that those who love to meet God, God

⁶³ Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:346-62. For an English translation of this section, see idem, *Spiritual Psychology: The Fourth Intellectual Journey in Transcendent Philosophy: Volumes VIII & IX of The Asfar*, trans. Latimah Peerwani (London: ICAS Press, 2008), 666-80. If we were to assume that the book's order reflects the order of its chronological composition, then this would place Ṣadrā's treatment of this problem closer towards 1037/1628, roughly two decades after he dealt with the issue in his *Mabda’*.

⁶⁴ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:346-7.

⁶⁵ The Avicennan notion of love moving all things in the cosmos is commensurate with Ṣadrā's understanding of substantial motion, since motion can be defined as the inclining (*mayl*) of one thing towards another. Since the Ṣadrīan doctrine of substantial motion posits that all things in existence are in an upward flow of motion back to their Source and thereby increasing in intensity, their very inclination to and arrival at their Source necessitates that they increase in love at every stage of their upward ascent, and, at the time of their arrival, become reabsorbed into their Source of love once again.

⁶⁶ Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:347. Cf. idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 235-6.

loves to meet them, whereas those who dislike to meet Him, He dislikes to meet them. Then Ṣadrā says that since love is essential and disliking is accidental, the people who love to meet God do so as a result of an intrinsic quality (*bi-l-dhāt*), whereas those who dislike to meet Him do so in an accidental manner (*bi-l-ʿaraḍ*).⁶⁷

As for those who uphold the view that Hell and its chastisement are eternal, Ṣadrā goes on to explain their position, playing it seems the role of devil's advocate. He states that without sin, pain, and difficulties, the order of the cosmos would become corrupted, and this would nullify God's wisdom. Thus, the order of things can only be upheld through the existence of lowly and base things. Since divine wisdom demands that there be different ranks, levels, and preparednesses of people, His decree requires that some of these people be felicitous and some wretched.⁶⁸

Ṣadrā clearly does not favour this position. In fact, he says that since each party—whether felicitous or wretched—comes about by virtue of God's will and in accordance with a particular divine name, they will still return to their essential natures. Returning to one's essential nature itself entails delight and bliss. But the contrary qualities of the divine names must still obtain. Be they names of beauty (*jamāl*) or majesty (*jalāl*), God's names must always have their respective loci in which they can manifest His infinite self-disclosures.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:347. Nevertheless, there are people who do not like to meet God. Concerning them, Ṣadrā states the position that after some time in which the sicknesses in their souls are cleansed through chastisement, they will either return to their original disposition or, after their chastisement, will return to their sickness but with the difference that the chastisement and pain will be removed in place of a second disposition which will be a form of despair (*qunūt*) over God's mercy, although God's general mercy will be available to all. Ṣadrā does not develop this position here, and it remains somewhat unclear until he discusses the notion of disparity in Hell in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, for which, see below.

⁶⁸ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:348. Cf. idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 236-8.

⁶⁹ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:348-9.

Ṣadrā cites a passage from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt* which states that people will enter either Heaven or Hell on account of their actions, and will remain in their respective abodes by virtue of their intentions. Although this means that there will be people in Hell who are eternally tormented, Ibn ‘Arabī says that this torment will be agreeable to their natures, meaning their “torment” will actually be pleasure. This is primarily because, as the *ḥadīth qudsī* says, “My mercy outstrips My wrath,” which means that God will not simply punish His servants without allowing mercy to predominate. In fact, Ibn ‘Arabī asserts, were the people of Hell to enter Heaven, they would feel pain because its “pleasures” would not be agreeable with their natures.⁷⁰ Although we will see below how Ṣadrā returns to this idea in the *Asfār* and in his commentary on the Fātiḥa, it is worth citing one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s more detailed explanations of this point elsewhere in the *Futūḥāt*. The passage occurs in the context of his discussion of the two forms of chastisement in Hell which are mentioned in the Qur’ān, namely Fire (*nār*) and Bitter Cold (*zamharīr*):

The person of a cold constitution will find the heat of the Fire pleasant, and the person of a hot constitution will find the Bitter Cold pleasant. Thus Gehenna brings together the Fire and the Bitter Cold—because of the diversity of constitutions. What causes pain in a specific constitution will cause bliss in another constitution that is its opposite. So wisdom is not inoperative, for God keeps the Bitter Cold of Gehenna for those with hot constitutions and the Fire for those with cold constitutions. They enjoy themselves in Gehenna, for they have a constitution with which, were they to enter the Garden, they would suffer chastisement, because of the Garden’s equilibrium.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid., 9:349, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:648. Cf. Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 239. In section 5.2.2, we will return to Ibn ‘Arabī’s argument—reproduced by Ṣadrā in the *Asfār* as well as the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* (but with one very important difference)—concerning the manner in which chastisement in Hell becomes a form of pleasure for its inhabitants.

⁷¹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:207 (cited in Chittick, “Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Hermeneutics of Mercy,” 165).

Ṣadrā also cites a passage from Qayṣarī’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, which states that God’s chastisement is not eternal. Rather, it is there to purify people, just as gold and silver are placed in fire in order to separate base metals from pure substances.⁷² Thus, chastisement in Hell is there insofar as humans need to be purged of the base characteristics which they acquired on earth and which prevent them from being in God’s company.

There is clearly a contradiction in the reports cited by Ṣadrā. Ibn ‘Arabī says that the chastisement is eternal, but that it is somehow pleasurable for those subjected to it because it is agreeable with their natures. Qayṣarī, on the other hand, says that punishment in Hell is simply there to purge people of their sins, and, once purified, they will no longer be chastised. Ṣadrā assures us that there actually is no contradiction between these two accounts. People can simultaneously be punished eternally and yet this punishment can come to an end:

If you say that these statements which indicate that the cessation [*inqiṭā’*] of chastisement for the people of the Fire is inconsistent with what I have just said concerning the lastingness of pain for them, I say [the following]: I do not agree that these are inconsistent with one another [*munāfāt*], for there is no inconsistency between the non-cessation [*‘adam inqīṭā’*] of eternal chastisement for the people of the Fire and its cessation for each of them at one moment.⁷³

What Ṣadrā means by this statement is not altogether clear. We know that he is trying to defend a position which reconciles the idea of some form of abiding punishment in Hell with God’s all-encompassing mercy. Several pages later, he clarifies his point. He says that the statements of the “people of unveiling” regarding the cessation of punishment in Hell are not inconsistent with those Qur’anic verses which speak of chastisement in Hell. Much like the Kabbalist doctrine of

⁷² Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:349-50. The idea that punishment is a form of cleansing is not unique to Qayṣarī. For similar points made by Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya, and especially Ibn al-Qayyim, see Khalil, “Muslim Scholarly Discussions on the Afterlife and the Fate of ‘Others’,” chs. 2 and 4.

⁷³ Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:350 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 669). Cf. idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 237 n. 238; Nasr, “Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī,” 292, 301 n. 71.

transmigration (*gilgul*), which sees at the root of the transmigration (and therefore punishment) of souls an act of God's mercy,⁷⁴ Ṣadrā maintains that something can both be chastisement and mercy at one and the same time: “the existence of something as chastisement in one respect does not negate its being mercy in another respect.”⁷⁵

How, then, can something be punishment and mercy at one and the same time? Although he alluded to a solution earlier when he spoke of the intrinsic and accidental qualities with respect to those loving/disliking the meeting with God, Ṣadrā returns to this question later on in the text. He cites Ibn ‘Arabī’s meditation on the fact that since God created people for the sole purpose of worshipping Him, their innate disposition (*fiṭra*) is to only worship Him.⁷⁶ As Ibn ‘Arabī argues elsewhere, one of the verses upon which this argument is based is Q 17:23: “And your Lord has decreed [*qaḍā*] that you worship none but Him.” For Ibn ‘Arabī, the “decree” in this verse is not merely prescriptive (*taklīfī*), but engendering (*takwīnī*), meaning that it is in the very nature of things, based on the divine decree, that God be the only object of worship in the cosmos.⁷⁷ Thus, when people worship gods other than God, they do so because of their belief that their worship will bring them closer to God, which explains Q 39:3, “We only worship them to draw us closer to God’.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*², s.v. “Gilgul” (by Gershom Scholem).

⁷⁵ Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:353 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 672).

⁷⁶ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:350-51, citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:24 (translated in Chittick, “Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Hermeneutics of Mercy,” 162). Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:465 (translated in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 338). For the concept of *fiṭra* in Islam, see Geneviève Gobillot, *La conception originelle: ses interprétations et fonctions chez les penseurs musulmans* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2000).

⁷⁷ For Ibn ‘Arabī’s argument as laid out in the *Futūḥāt*, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 342-3, 381.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:353, where he cites Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:225. See also Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 86-7.

Since God's creatures ultimately worship none but Him, albeit in different forms, they all truly uphold their primordial covenant with God that they would worship none but Him. Ṣadrā notes that behind all forms of worship lies essential worship, and that that which is accidental, that is, what comes about by virtue of man's choices made during his life, will be accountable and chastised. Thus, the human constitution (*nash'a*), which is accidental and animal, will face torment whereas the substance related to man's soul (*jawhar nafsānī*) will not receive corruption.⁷⁹ This means that the lowly qualities which a person acquires during his stay on earth will eventually be effaced through torment and chastisement in the afterlife. After this period of torment, he will return to his innate disposition. As for the one who had incorrect and false beliefs concerning God, his suffering will also come to an end, but he will be unable to return to his innate disposition (*fiṭra*) and will thus be "transferred to another innate disposition."⁸⁰

Yet by virtue of the economy of the divine names, there are some who must indeed reside in the fire, that is, who have been destined to come under the purview of God's names of majesty and wrath. Ibn 'Arabī takes his lead from two important texts, one a verse from the Qur'ān and the other a *ḥadīth*. Q 7:36 refers to the "people of the fire" (*aṣḥāb al-nār*) as residing in it eternally (*hum fihā khālidūn*). The Prophet says that "none will remain in the Fire except for those who are its folk [*al-ladhīna hum ahluhā*]." The fact that these references in scripture refer to the people of the Fire as being "people" and "folk" gives Ibn 'Arabī cause to explain his position on why punishment in Hell is a good thing for its inhabitants: since Hell was always meant to be their home and is therefore suitable to their natures, were they to leave it, they would

⁷⁹ Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:351.

⁸⁰ Ibid. (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 671). This, Ṣadrā explains, is the sense in which they will have "eternal" punishment, since they will suffer from "the punishment of compound ignorance [*adhāb al-jahl al-murakkab*]." Cf. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 101-2.

suffer immensely because of departing from their homestead.⁸¹ As we saw earlier, this means that were the “people” or “folk” of the Fire to be taken out of Hell and led into the Garden, they would actually suffer pain because their constitutions would not be suited to the joys of the Garden. The reason their constitutions are not suited to other than the Fire, Ibn ‘Arabī tells us, is because God has given them a constitution which is only suitable for residence in Hell.⁸²

Mullā Ṣadrā stands in complete agreement with Ibn ‘Arabī concerning the pleasurable nature of residence in Hell. At the same time, he notes that he considers Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding of the terms *aṣḥāb* and *ahl* used in the aforementioned Qur’anic verse and *ḥadīth* to be weak. Ṣadrā understands the terms *aṣḥāb* and *ahl* to be have relational meanings, which means they do not indicate “residence.”⁸³ He then seems to disagree with Ibn ‘Arabī again, noting that the only way the people of the Fire’s departure from their homestead could be an intense chastisement would be, if by “departure,” the “natural homestead [*al-mawṭin al-ṭabī‘ī*] is meant.”⁸⁴ Although Ibn ‘Arabī speaks of a constitution being given to the people of the Fire so that they can bear and derive pleasure from its torments, it is unclear whether there is any real disagreement here between Ṣadrā and Ibn ‘Arabī’s positions. This is because they both indicate that Hell will, in one manner or another, be a necessary permanent abode for some people whose natures will be made suitable for it. Ibn ‘Arabī refers to this nature as a “constitution,” while Ṣadrā refers to it as a “natural homestead.”

Where Ṣadrā stands in clear agreement with Ibn ‘Arabī is on how Hell will become agreeable:

⁸¹ Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:352; citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:24 (translated in Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 188).

⁸² Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:352.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 671).

There is no doubt that the entry [into Hell of] the creature whose end is that he should enter Hell—in accordance with the divine lordly decree—will be agreeable [*muwāfiq*] to his nature and will be a perfection of his existence. For the end, as has been stated, is the perfection of existents. The perfection of something which one finds agreeable to his nature [*al-muwāfiq lahu*] is not chastisement with respect to him. It is only chastisement with respect to others who have been created in higher ranks.⁸⁵

If Ṣadrā is in fact disagreeing with Ibn ‘Arabī, it could have to do with the particular details of how this “natural homestead” comes about. If this is the case, then Ṣadrā understands Ibn ‘Arabī to say that the people of the Fire take up residence in it after their natures have been made agreeable to it, whereas Ṣadrā’s position is that the “natural homestead” of the people of the Fire has always been, by virtue of the divine decree, the Fire and nothing else. Since Ṣadrā understands the Fire to be the natural homestead for some people, it is a form of perfection for them in accordance with the principle of substantial motion, namely that all things are constantly in motion towards their substantial perfection as they ascend the scale of being. The most important point which emerges from this discussion is that Ṣadrā sets forth an argument for how punishment in Hell can be eternal while not compromising the fundamentality of God’s mercy.

Yet what, exactly, does Ṣadrā mean when he speaks of “the creature whose end is that he should enter Hell?” The reason Hell comes about, Ṣadrā will go on to say, is because of the configuration of the cosmos itself. The cosmos is nothing but differentiated modes of God’s creative and engendering Word. The duality which emerges in the cosmos, therefore, is a natural and necessary result of the dispersion of God’s Word which becomes fragmented the further it falls away from its Source. The two “rivers” which proceed from the Ocean of Oneness, therefore, account for the ontological roots of both good and evil.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:352 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 671-2).

⁸⁶ Idem, *Asfār*, 9:355-6.

Because Hell exists by virtue of the “left” side of the river, and insofar as the “left” represents God’s names of wrath and majesty, it must necessarily manifest God’s qualities of wrath.⁸⁷ Although the river branches off into two, it comes from the same source of water. This source of water is nothing other than God’s mercy, which for Ṣadrā, as we have already seen, is a synonym for being.

By the time we get to the *Asfār*, therefore, Ṣadrā is mostly concerned with reconciling the problem of eternal suffering in Hell with God’s mercy. In fact, in the relevant sections of the *Asfār*, he relies mostly upon Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*. Yet in one of these sections Ṣadrā consciously or unconsciously rephrases a key passage from the *Futūḥāt*. This paraphrase could be read as an attempt on Ṣadrā’s part to explain why God’s mercy must prevail.⁸⁸ Reproduced on the following page is the text from the *Futūḥāt* and the same text cited by Ṣadrā in the *Asfār*. I have juxtaposed these texts with one another in order to facilitate a line-by-line comparative reading. Both in the translation and its accompanying transliteration, Ṣadrā’s alterations to the text of the *Futūḥāt* have been indicated in bold.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See also *ibid.*, 9:357.

⁸⁸ It is unlikely that the manuscript of the *Futūḥāt* in Ṣadrā’s possession offered this alternate reading. For one thing, of all of Ibn ‘Arabī’s books, the *Futūḥāt* has historically been the best-preserved and the one most faithfully transmitted throughout the generations. See Chodkiewicz, “Towards Reading the *Futūḥāt Makkiyya*,” 5-7 and Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l’oeuvre d’Ibn ‘Arabī* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1964), 1:201-35 for the text’s mss. and their accompanying *samā’* certificates. Secondly, other parts of the *Futūḥāt* are cited by Ṣadrā elsewhere in the same discussion in the *Asfār*, and in all cases his citations are almost identical to the text of the *Futūḥāt* that has come down to us. See *Asfār* 9:349 → *Futūḥāt*, 3:648; *Asfār*, 9:350 → *Futūḥāt*, 3:24; *Asfār*, 9:353-5 → *Futūḥāt*, 2:225; *Asfār*, 3:357-9 → *Futūḥāt*, 3:462-3.

⁸⁹ Except in cases where Ṣadrā’s reading differs from Ibn ‘Arabī’s, I have reproduced the passages in both cases from Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 188-9.

Futūhāt, 3:25

The two abodes will be populated, and mercy will take precedence over wrath and *embrace everything* [Q 7:156], including Hell and everyone within it. God is *the Most Merciful of the merciful* [Q 12:64], as He said about Himself. We have found in ourselves, who are among those whom God has innately disposed toward mercy, that we have mercy on all God's servants, even if God has decreed in His creating them that the attribute of chastisement will remain forever with them in the cosmos. This is because the ruling property of mercy has taken possession of our hearts. The companion of this attribute is I and my peers, and we are creatures, companions of caprices and personal desires. God has said about Himself that He is *the Most Merciful of the merciful*. So we have no doubt that He is more merciful than we are toward His creatures, while we have known from our own selves this extravagant mercy. So how could chastisement be everlasting for them when He has this all-inclusive attribute of mercy? God is nobler than that. This is all the more true because rational proofs have affirmed that the Author is neither benefited by acts of obedience nor harmed by acts of opposition; that everything flows in accordance with His decree, His measuring out, and His judgment; and that the creatures are compelled in their choosing.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ *fa-ʿamurat al-dārān wa-sabaqat al-raḥma al-ghaḍab wa-wasīʿat kull shayʿ al-jahannam wa-man fihā wa-llāh arḥam al-rāḥimīn kamā qāla ʿan-naḥsihi wa-qad wajadnā fī nufūsinā mimman jabbalahum allāh ʿalā al-raḥma annahum yarjūna jamīʿ ʿibād allāh ḥattā law ḥakamahum allāh fī khalqihī lā zālū ṣīfat al-ʿadhāb min al-ʿālam bi-mā tamkunu ḥukm al-raḥma min-qulūbihim wa-ṣāḥibu hādihā al-ṣifa anā wa-amthālī wa-naḥnu makhlūqūn aṣḥāb al-ahwāʾ wa-aghrāḍ wa-qad qāla ʿan-naḥsihi jalla ʿalāhu annahu arḥam al-rāḥimīn fa-lā shakk anna-hu arḥam minnā bi-khalīqihī wa-naḥnu qad-ʿarfanā min-nufūsinā hādhihi al-mubālagha fī-l-raḥma fa-kayfa yatasarmadu ʿalayhim al-ʿadhāb wa-huwa bi-hādhihi al-ṣifa al-ʿamma min al-raḥma anna allāh akram min-dhālika wa-lā siyyamā wa-qad qāma al-dalīl al-ʿaqlī ʿalā anna al-bārī lā tanfaʿuhu al-ṭāʿāt wa-lā yaḍurruhu al-mukhālafāt wa-anna kull shayʿ jārr bi-qaḍāʾihī wa-qadarihi wa-ḥukmihi wa-anna al-khalqa majbūrūn fī ikhtiyārihim.*

Asfār, 9:352-3 (citing Futūhāt, 3:25)

The two abodes will be populated—that is, the **abodes of felicity and fire**—and mercy will take precedence over wrath and *embrace everything* [Q 7:156], including Hell and everyone within it. God is *the Most Merciful of the merciful* [Q 12:64]. We have found in ourselves [that we] are among those who have been innately disposed towards mercy. Since God has decreed it in His creation, He will remove the attribute of chastisement in the cosmos. God has given this quality, and the giver of perfection has more claim to it. The companion of this attribute is I and my peers, and we are servants, creatures, companions of caprices and personal desires. **There is no doubt that He is more merciful than we are towards His creatures. And He** has said about Himself that He is *the Most-Merciful of the merciful*. So we have no doubt that He is more merciful than we are towards His creatures, while we **know** from our own selves this **extravagance. You could say that** rational proofs have affirmed that the Author is neither benefited by acts of obedience nor harmed by acts of opposition, that everything flows in accordance with His decree **and His measuring out**, and that the creatures are compelled in their choosing. **So how could chastisement be everlasting for them?**⁹¹

⁹¹ *fa-ʿamurat al-dārān ay dār al-naʿīm wa-dār al-jaḥīm wa-sabaqat al-raḥma al-ghaḍab wa-wasīʿat kull shayʿ al-jahannam wa-man fihā wa-llāh arḥam al-rāḥimīn wa-qad wajadnā fī nufūsinā mimman jubbila ʿalā al-raḥma bi-ḥaythu law makkannahu allāh fī khalqihī la-azāla al-ʿadhāb ʿan al-ʿālam wa-allāh qad-aʿāhu hādhihi al-ṣifa wa-muʿṭī al-kamāl aḥaqq bihi wa-ṣāḥib hādihā al-ṣifa anā wa-amthālī wa-naḥnu ʿibād makhlūqūn aṣḥāb ahwāʾ wa-aghrāḍ wa-lā shakk annahu arḥamu bi-khalīqihī minnā wa-qad qāla ʿan-naḥsihi annahu arḥam al-rāḥimīn fa-lā nashukku annahu arḥam bi-khalīqihī minnā wa-naḥnu ʿarfanā min nufūsinā hādhihi al-mubālagha wa-laka an taqūla wa-qad qāma al-dalīl al-ʿaqlī ʿalā anna al-bārī subḥānahu lā yanfaʿuhu al-ṭāʿāt wa-lā yaḍurruhu al-mukhālafāt wa-anna kull shayʿ jārr bi-qaḍāʾihī wa-qadarihi wa-anna al-khalq majbūrūn fī ikhtiyārihim fa-kayfa tasarmadu al-ʿadhāb ʿalayhim. For a different translation of this passage, see Ṣadrā, *Spiritual Psychology*, 672.*

In Ṣadrā's important addition to the *Futūḥat* text, "God has given this quality, and the giver of perfection has more claim to it," the quality in question here is, of course, the mercy towards which God has allowed some to be predisposed. This insertion at least gives us a window into why Ṣadrā feels so strongly about the ultimate end for all being in mercy. But by far Ṣadrā's most important alteration to this passage is where he has "Since God has decreed it in His creation, He will remove the attribute of chastisement in the cosmos"⁹² for Ibn 'Arabī's, "even if God has decreed in His creating them that the attribute of chastisement will remain forever with them in the cosmos." The effect produced here by Ṣadrā's reading is that those who are innately disposed towards mercy simply act in conformity with the nature of God's will, namely that He does not wish for chastisement to persist in the cosmos. This alteration further drives home the point that Ṣadrā would like to make: it is in the very nature of the divine decree that all things end in mercy and that chastisement come to an end, the knowledge and realization of which is the exclusive purview of those who have been innately disposed towards God's mercy.

For Ibn 'Arabī, the attribute of chastisement must remain in the cosmos by virtue of the distribution of the divine names. This is something that Ṣadrā would not disagree with. But why then does he alter the passage to make it seem like chastisement will not at all remain in the cosmos? This could be because, as Ṣadrā and Ibn 'Arabī see it, the root of "chastisement" is actually mercy, and from this perspective, the attribute of chastisement qua pain and punishment

⁹² Another possible reading of the passage could be, "For if God has decreed it in His creation, then He will remove the attribute of chastisement in the cosmos." In both cases, the Arabic particle *law*, which indicates an impossible or unlikely hypothetical clause, is to be read in conjunction with *bi-ḥayth*, thus losing its sense of impossibility/improbability. The construction *ḥattā law* in the *Futūḥat* to be found in place of Ṣadrā's *bi-ḥayth law*, also carries the effect of the *law* losing its sense of impossibility/improbability, and is thus translated by Chittick as "even if" See p. 215 n. 90-1 for the respective passages in transliteration.

must eventually perish. It can again be recalled that since the root of the cosmos is being and being and mercy are the same reality, all that is accidental to being must eventually come to an end. Likewise, since wrath is accidental to mercy, so too must it come to an end.

5.2.3 – *The Tafṣīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa's Soteriology in Context I*

Ṣadrā's treatment concerning the ultimate fate of human beings in the afterlife is quite consistent in the *Mabda'* and the *Asfār*. The most important point we walk away with from his discussion in the *Mabda'* is that the purpose of religion is to lead people back to God's mercy through the shortest route possible. In the *Asfār*, Ṣadrā drives home the message that it is in the nature of things itself that there be mercy and wrath, and that, ultimately, all things must devolve back on God's mercy. In elucidating his point in the *Asfār* Ṣadrā draws quite freely on Ibn 'Arabī's soteriology, or at least the terms in which Ibn 'Arabī expressed it. It will also be recalled that he recasts an important point in the *Futūḥāt* to read not that both mercy and chastisement will persist in the cosmos, but that only mercy will persist. Upon closer inspection, this reading of Ṣadrā's is not incongruous with Ibn 'Arabī's point. This is why he seems to use Ibn 'Arabī's soteriology to justify his position that there is no incongruity between calling a thing mercy and punishment at one and the same time.

Yet in neither the *Mabda'* nor the *Asfār* does Ṣadrā attempt to explain his soteriology as such. We know from these two texts that he takes a number of positions for granted. But he does not present us with a coherent argument for how mercy will triumph in the end. What we have, rather, are tidbits of information which, when pieced together, give us a glimpse into Ṣadrā's reflections on the issue. But it would be extremely difficult to draw any concrete conclusions from Ṣadrā's pronouncements in the *Mabda'* and the *Asfār* concerning soteriology other than the

fact that he upholds a position that all creatures will end up in God’s mercy, despite the outward appearance of punishment for some (which is in accordance with the divine will).

Turning our attention to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we find a much more detailed and internally coherent explication of Ṣadrā’s soteriology. In a sense, Ṣadrā’s discussions in this text have in mind the relevant sections of the *Mabda’* and the *Asfār* (as will become clear shortly, this is more true for the latter). But he also draws some important connections between ideas in these texts against the backdrop of his commentary on the Fātiḥa. It is as if Ṣadrā is prompted by the verses of the Fātiḥa to redress his treatment of soteriology, and by virtue of the unity of the *sūra*, is compelled to bring unity to his ideas on the issue.

In his commentary upon the Qur’ān’s opening *sūra*, Ṣadrā returns to an important point to which he alluded in the *Asfār*, namely that mercy is essential whereas wrath is accidental.⁹³ Freely employing the language and symbolism of scripture to state his point, he introduces the problem of mercy’s essentiality in philosophical yet familiar terms:

Know that God’s mercy embraces all things with respect to existence and quiddity. So the existence of wrath, in terms of the entity of wrath [*‘ayn al-ghaḍab*], is also from God’s mercy. For this reason, His mercy outstrips His wrath, since being is that very mercy which encompasses [*shāmila*] everything, as He says, *And My mercy embraces all things* [Q 7:156].⁹⁴ Amongst the totality of entities and quiddities—all of which the existential mercy [*al-raḥma al-wujūdiyya*] reaches—are the entities of wrath and vengeance. Through mercy, God gives existence to the

⁹³ For the essential nature of mercy and the accidental nature of wrath, see Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 113; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 177-80; Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99 ff; Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 217.

⁹⁴ Note the allusion to the *ḥadīth qudsī* discussed above: “My Mercy outstrips My wrath.” Along with Q 7:156, another important verse, which Ṣadrā does not draw upon in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, is Q 6:12, part of which states that God has written mercy upon Himself (*kataba ‘alā nafsihi al-raḥma*). For a variety of medieval and modern Muslim interpretations of this verse, see Feras Hamza, Sajjad Rizvi with Farhana Mayer (ed.), *An Anthology of Qur’anic Commentaries*, ch. 3.

entity of wrath, so its root is good, as is what results from it, such as pain, sickness, tribulation, trial, and the like....⁹⁵

Since all things arise from being and return to being, they are nothing in and of themselves, which means that their qualities are at best accidental. Things which seem to be evil, such as sickness or pain, spring up therefore within being, but by virtue of being's diminution and not its perfection. Yet since they are modes of being, their source is good, even if they bring along with them some temporary harm. This temporary harm and perceived evil is a necessary part of the structure of reality, which, by its nature, is graded and multi-level. The multi-level nature of the stratification of being entails that those modes of being which come about at the lower end of the scale of being be more dense, dark, tenebrous, material, and hence "evil." Thus, sicknesses and tribulations are simply deprivations of being. Stated another way, they are "non-existence."⁹⁶

In non-philosophical language, we can say that since things arise out of mercy and return to mercy, whatever negative qualities become attached to them must naturally peel away. Creatures who return to God with negative qualities encounter God's wrath. Yet just as negative qualities are accidental, so too is the quality of wrath which they encounter. Wrath only arises out of mercy, which means that God's wrath is nothing but His mercy. However, because wrath

⁹⁵ Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:70-1. Cf. *ibid.*, 151-2. Cf. Rizvi, "The Existential Breath of *al-raḥmān* and the Munificent Grace of *al-raḥīm*," 70.

⁹⁶ See Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:71: "Whoever closely examines the concomitants of wrath [*lawāzim al-ghaḍab*], such as sickness, pain, poverty, ignorance, death, and others, will find all of them to be nonexistent in themselves [*bi-mā hiya*] or nonexistent matters considered to be amongst the evil things. With respect to them being existents, they are all good, pouring forth from the well-spring of the mercy that is all-embracing and the existence that pervades all things. Because of this, the intellect will judge that the attribute of mercy is essential to God and that the attribute of wrath is accidental, which arises out of the causes either because the contingent existents lack perfection in accordance with the ranks of their distance from the Real, the Self-Subsisting, or because of the incapacity of matter to receive existence in the most perfect manner."

is one of God's qualities, like mercy, it must embrace all things.⁹⁷ But because God's mercy outstrips His wrath, the essentiality of mercy will necessarily outstrip the accidentality of wrath. This is why Ṣadrā, following Ibn 'Arabī (but not acknowledging his source), says very early on in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* that “the end for all is mercy.”⁹⁸ Despite the fact that the end for all is mercy, Ṣadrā insists that the routes individuals take to return to their Source of mercy are radically divergent.

5.2.2.1 – *Paths to Mercy*

In the context of his commentary on Q 1:6 Ṣadrā makes a number of important statements which shed a great deal of light on remarks made earlier in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. Following his meditations on the *ṣirāṭ* made in the *Asfār*,⁹⁹ Ṣadrā says that each individual has a path that he must traverse, and which ultimately leads him to God:

Know that the path [*ṣirāṭ*] is not a path except through one's traversing it. An allusion has been made to the fact that every creature is heading towards the direction of the Real, towards the Causer of causes [*musabbib al-asbāb*] in an innate manner of turning [*tawajjuh gharīzī*] and a motion of natural disposition [*ḥaraka jibilliyya*]. In this motion of natural disposition, diversion and fleeing from what God has fixed for each of them cannot be conceived of with respect to them. God takes them by their forelock, as He says, “*There is not a creature except that He takes it by its forelock. Verily my Lord is upon a straight path*” [Q 11:56].¹⁰⁰

This path that an individual traverses belongs to him in an “innate manner of turning” and is a “motion of natural disposition.” The path, therefore, is traversed in accordance with what Ṣadrā identified as the *fiṭra* in the *Asfār*. But it would seem that, despite the fact that everyone is

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1:151-2.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 1:71. For the statement in Ibn 'Arabī, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 120, 130, 226, 338.

⁹⁹ The relevant section in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is 1:111-23, which is based on *Asfār*, 9:284-90. The latter itself serves as the basis for a similar discussion in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 191-7.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:111; based on *Asfār*, 9:284. Cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 605; idem, *Maḥāṭib*, 732-4. Ṭūsī, *Āghāz*, 7, may be an indirect source.

heading to God in an innate manner of turning, there are nevertheless differences amongst them in the route of their return, and, ultimately, their final fate.

Understanding these different routes taken by people to their destination (which is in accordance with their innate disposition and to which they innately turn) can only be made sense of once we have understood the nature of the path itself. The path, according to Ṣadrā, is nothing other than the human soul:

On the day of resurrection, and according to the view of the people of insight who have been overcome by witnessing the configuration of the afterlife, it is spread out for you as a sensory bridge [*jisr maḥsūs*] extended over the surface of Hell, its start being in [this] place, and its end being at the door of Paradise. Whoever witnesses it will know that it is of his design and building, and that it is an extended bridge in this world over the surface of his Hell in the fire of his nature within which is the shadow of his reality.¹⁰¹

Ḥasanzādah Āmulī seems to stop short of suggesting that Ṣadrā borrowed the idea of the soul being the path from Ṭūsī’s *Āghāz wa-anjām*.¹⁰² Yet, as with all ideas which Ṣadrā derives from his predecessors, they take on a completely different character by virtue of his unique philosophical outlook. One important principle of Ṣadrā’s doctrine of substantial motion—which, as Corbin astutely notes, lies at the heart of Islamic teachings on the Origin and the Return¹⁰³—is that the very idea of change occurs within the category of substance itself. Indeed,

¹⁰¹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:122; based on idem, *Asfār*, 9:289 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 610). Cf. idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 196. See also Maria Massi Dakake, “The Soul as *Barzakh*: Substantial Motion and Mullā Ṣadrā’s Theory of Human Becoming,” *Muslim World* 94 (2004): 107-30. Ṣadrā may derive his teaching on Hell’s correspondence with the earth from Neoplatonic sources. See, for example, Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-ḥaṣhr*, ed. and trans. Muḥammad Khwājāwī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1362 Sh/1983), 110-1 (Arabic text). As Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 100 notes, this treatise was completed in 1032/1623.

¹⁰² See Ṭūsī, *Āghāz*, 129 (section containing Āmulī’s *Ta’līqāt*).

¹⁰³ See Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 1:302.

this is an important departure from traditional Aristotelian substance metaphysics.¹⁰⁴ Ṣadrā tells us that the soul is “corporeal in temporal origination and spiritual in subsistence [*jismāniyyat al-ḥudūth rūḥāniyyat al-baqāʾ*].”¹⁰⁵ As the underlying stuff of the human totality, the soul partakes in substantial motion (read “change”), or what Ṣadrā also calls “essential motion” (*ḥaraka al-dhātiyya*).¹⁰⁶ Since the very substance or essence of the soul partakes in motion, the distance it traverses is nothing other than itself.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the higher the soul ascends the scale of being, the more real it becomes, meaning the more it strips itself of its materiality and returns to its true nature.¹⁰⁸

One of the implications of the identification of the soul with the path is that, because all of one’s actions in this world are imprinted upon the soul, the nature of the human soul itself determines the route one will take in his journey back to God. The state of the soul, in other words, will become imaginalized in the next world, thus creating a pathway for man to his ultimate place of residency. The soul extends from Hell to Paradise by virtue of the fact that Hell for Ṣadrā is nothing other than the corporeal world in which the soul is pinned down by matter.¹⁰⁹ If the soul cannot rise beyond the prison of corporeality, it will end up in Hell, that is, it will remain in its fallen state. Souls which have become fully actualized will on the other hand enter Paradise, which was/is their original home.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ For a helpful discussion of substantial motion in Ṣadrā, see Kalin, “Between Physics and Metaphysics.” See also Corbin’s comments in *En islam iranien*, 4:84-95 and in Ṣadrā, *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 226 n. 108.

¹⁰⁵ See Chittick, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxviii.

¹⁰⁶ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:112.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1:112. Cf. idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 193.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:80, 113. See also Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 414.

¹⁰⁹ See Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:356.

¹¹⁰ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:175. Since the Perfect Man is the original end purpose of creation, Ṣadrā says that he is guided, blessed, and under the divine solicitude from his beginning to his end. He also makes it clear that those who do not

Man, Ṣadrā tells us, gradually proceeds from the most manifest to the most inner, or from the most dense to the most subtle, “until he ends at his homestead which has been fixed for him by God.”¹¹¹ The idea that man’s destiny is inextricably linked to his place of return is something we have already seen in the *Asfār*. In the context of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā attempts to answer the problem of how, if everyone simply follows their instinctive nature and original disposition in accordance with the divine decree, the wicked amongst them will be punished while the righteous will be rewarded. He says that there is a difference between being distant from God but nevertheless felicitous, and being proximate to Him by way of the removal of intermediaries.¹¹² Yet it could be asked that if everyone is created with the disposition of love and desire for God, how can there be differences amongst humans with respect to these types of proximity and distance?¹¹³

These differences amongst creatures, Ṣadrā tells us, exist because souls are not created with the same innate disposition: some souls are more disposed towards purity than others, receive this solicitude are afflicted (ibid., 1:102-3). Cf. the following passage: “Just as these special qualities [*khaṣāʾiṣ*] and miracles—such as being created upon the form of the All-Merciful, having been breathed into with His Spirit, ennobled with the miracle of being taught the names, entrusted to the land of the body and the sea of spirits, kneaded in the clay of the soul and intellect by the two hands, specified [*makhṣūṣ*] with being God’s representative in the great and small worlds, prostrated to by God’s angels in the bodily and spiritual constitutions—are only for the Real Spiritual Man, not these resemblances and likenesses in formal numbers, so too is arrival to Him through the ascent of the spirit and the inner journey on the straight path of God specified [*yukhtaṣṣu*] for him and not others. If this were not so, then every walking animal and others would be traversing His path which He has specified [*yakhuṣṣuhu*], heading towards the direction [an allusion to Q 2:144] of the Real” (ibid., 1:108). The Perfect Man, unlike others, receives this distinction because he has extinguished the fire of his Hell with the light of his faith. Cf. idem, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 197.

¹¹¹ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:113. He goes on to cite Ibn ‘Arabī to prove substantial motion. See ibid., 1:114. Cf. Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 185, where the author suggests that Ṣadrā’s doctrine of substantial motion was intuited on the basis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s “theosophy.”

¹¹² Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:116. Cf. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 113-9.

¹¹³ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:117.

whereas others are more disposed towards murkiness. In the material realm, various factors in the world also have an effect upon the reason for why souls are so disparate. At the same time, while all creatures are created upon the path of uprightness (*‘alā nahj al-istiqāma*), it is their choices which end them up in either proximity to or distance from God.¹¹⁴ Despite these points, Ṣadrā concludes that, ultimately, these souls differ because “of the preeternal decree.”¹¹⁵

God’s preeternal decree is what determines a soul’s starting point, and, by virtue of the limitations imposed upon a human being by virtue of his inborn capacity, his ending point as well. This explains why Ṣadrā is adamant that each soul has its own mode of return back to God which is specific to it alone. As he puts it, every soul comes from “a specified point of origin [*ma‘dan makhṣūṣ*] amongst the spirits’ points of origin [*ma‘ādin al-arwāḥ*],” which necessitates that each soul comes from a point of origin unique unto itself alone.¹¹⁶ Since for Ṣadrā the point of one’s origin is also the point of one’s return, the place to which one returns is also specific for each individual. If the point of origin and place of return for each soul is different, then surely the path that each soul treads along—namely what it becomes, for the soul is the path itself—will be

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 1:111.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1:118. Ṣadrā also anticipates another objection: why is there preference/priority in rank and difference in the *fiṭra* itself, and does that not compromise God’s justice? He begins by answering that, firstly, this question has given many thinkers a particularly hard time. The differences exist as a result of the very structure and order of being. If there were no gradation, there would not be a multiplicity of things. It is because of God’s justice and equanimity that grades exist. See *ibid.*, 1:119-22. In this context, Ṣadrā states: “In sum, the disparity in creation in terms of perfection and imperfection and felicity and wretchedness is either by way of substantial essential matters, or by way of accidental matters acquired by means of religious devotions and actions. So the difference is in accordance with the essential matters by way of the pure divine solicitude, which calls for beauty of order and excellence of arrangement [in the cosmos]” (*ibid.*, 1:121). For the logic underlying this position, see Kalin, “Mullā Ṣadrā on Theodicy and the Best of All Possible Worlds.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1:108.

different. When humans ask God to guide them along the straight path in Q 1:6, therefore, they ask for nothing but guidance upon their own path, which will lead to their felicity.¹¹⁷

The foregoing considerations seem to be on Ṣadrā's mind from early on in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. In a very crucial passage which occurs in the context of his discussion of the different paths of belief, Ṣadrā identifies the words *ṣirāṭ* and *sabīl*.¹¹⁸ He makes a subtle distinction between the different paths available to an individual and the path appropriate for him:

It is just as He says, *And do not follow the paths [al-subul], for they will divert you from His path [sabīlihi]* [Q 6:153], that is, the path which is for you contains felicity and salvation, for if this were not the case, then all paths would lead to Him, since God is the end-point of every purpose and the Final Goal [*ghāya*] of every endeavour.¹¹⁹ However, not everyone who returns to Him will attain felicity and salvation from dispersion and chastisement. For the path to felicity is one: *Say: "This is my path [sabīl]. Upon insight I call to God myself and those who follow me"* [Q 12:108].¹²⁰

This statement requires some clarification. It is significant that Ṣadrā draws on Q 6:153 to make his point. The verse distinguishes between “paths” and “His path,” and then Ṣadrā glosses the latter by saying “the path which is for you contains felicity and salvation [*al-sabīl al-latī lakum fīhā al-sa'āda wa-l-najāt*].” But then Ṣadrā surprises us. He goes on to say that the path that is particular to an individual brings felicity and salvation. Had this not been the case, then all paths would lead to God. But by virtue of the nature of being, we know that all paths do in fact lead to God. What Ṣadrā seems to have in mind here is that since each individual has a path to God

¹¹⁷ Recall the famous Sufi dictum which states that there are as many paths to God as there are children of Adam. See Algar, “Silent and Vocal *dhikr* in the Naqshbandī Order,” in *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, ed. Albert Dietrich, 38-46 (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), which takes this saying as its point of departure.

¹¹⁸ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:42.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:166.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:42.

specific to him, the other paths which are available to him are not actual options in terms of his return to God. He has the option to tread upon them, but the truth is, in accordance with his innate disposition, there is only one path that is open to his soul, and it is that path that he must follow. Ṣadrā then says that not everyone who returns to God will attain felicity. This is because, in accordance with the divine decree, there are some who must end up in misery and wretchedness, and some who must end up in felicity. Thus, while all souls return to God, some meet His names of beauty and others His names of majesty.

Yet there is a further complication: Ṣadrā clearly does not have in mind a cut-and-dried presentation of the nature of the afterlife where some end up in bliss and others suffer eternally.¹²¹ As we have seen, he seeks to retain the truth of scriptural statements concerning infernal punishment; but, by virtue of the precedence of God's mercy, he argues that this punishment is actually a form of comfort. Since the name Allāh is the All-Gathering name, every servant, Ṣadrā reminds us, must return to Him. The different grades of individuals, whether felicitous or wretched, will become differentiated through their encounter with the name Allāh. According to a *ḥadīth*, on the Day of Judgement, after the angels, prophets, and believers have all interceded, only the intercession of the Most Merciful of the merciful (*arḥam al-rāḥimīn*) will remain.¹²² The names Most Merciful of the merciful or All-Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), therefore, are commonly associated in texts of Islamic thought with divine intercession and the ultimate salvation of human beings. Since the All-Merciful is one name that will intercede on behalf of all servants, Ṣadrā tells us, those who meet God's names of majesty in the next life will eventually

¹²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:47-8.

¹²² See Ṣadrā's use of this *ḥadīth* at *ibid.*, 1:71, 157-8. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 396 n. 24.

come face-to-face with God as the All-Merciful, a name which will subsist amongst His servants for all of eternity:

As for the other paths, all of their goals is God firstly. Then the All-Merciful [*al-rahmān*] will take over for Him [*yatawallāhu al-rahman*] at the end, and the property of the All-Merciful will subsist amongst them for eternity, whose subsistence has no end. This is a strange affair! I have not found anyone upon the face of the earth who knows it as it truly should be known.¹²³

For Ṣadrā's part, although he had not come across any of his contemporaries who had known the truth of the ultimate salvation of human beings as it "truly should be known," it is safe to assume that he did not count himself amongst them. Indeed, the rest of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* assumes the soteriological picture laid out in the above two passages.¹²⁴

5.2.2.2 – God's Hands and Feet

We have already seen how Mullā Ṣadrā speaks of the fundamental rootedness of all things in God's mercy. All things come from God and return to Him. Since the Source of all things is mercy, they will all return to their Source. But insofar as creatures are not with their Source, they are in the realm of multiplicity. Mercy, like being, becomes fragmented as it spreads throughout the cosmos and, to use a Platonic term, "shares" itself with the rest of the

¹²³ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:42.

¹²⁴ In yet another passage towards the end of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Ṣadrā elucidates the point he made earlier. Meditating on Q 1:7, which speaks of those with whom God is angry (*al-maghḍūb 'alayhim*), Ṣadrā, most likely under the influence of Ibn 'Arabī (although I have been unable to locate the passage in Ibn 'Arabī's writings), states that there will come a point when even those with whom God is angered will eventually be pardoned because God will transmute [*taḥawwala*] Himself in the form of bliss. Since the return for all is back to God, the God with whom they will abide eternally will be one who is pleased with them by virtue of the preponderance of the ruling property of His contentment: "The last form into which He will transmute Himself for His servants will be the ruling property of contentment [*riḍā*]. So the Real will transmute Himself into the form of bliss.... He will be gracious towards, and forgive on His own behalf, those who angered Him by removing whatever there was in Him of annoyance, distress, and wrath. Then He will apply this to those who are objects of wrath [*al-maghḍūb*]" (ibid., 1:154).

cosmic order. The further a thing is from its Source of mercy, the less mercy it will manifest, just as the further a thing is from its Source of being, the less being it will manifest. In the language of Islamic theology, we can say that the equilibrium of the divine names necessitates that God's names of beauty be complemented by His names of majesty.

Employing the imagery and language of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers, Ṣadrā speaks of the structure of the cosmos in terms of God's "two hands." As the *ḥadīth* tells us, God has two hands and they are both blessed and "right."¹²⁵ But not each hand manifests the same attributes. One hand gives preponderance to God's attributes of mercy and the other to His attributes of wrath.¹²⁶ From this perspective, we can speak of God's "left" and "right" hands, or the divine qualities which manifest leftness and rightness:

Know that the ruling property [*ḥukm*] of the divine wrath is the perfection of the level of the grip of the left hand [*qabḍat al-shimāl*], for although both of His hands are holy, blessed, and right, the ruling property of each of them—leftness [*shimāliyya*] and rightness [*yamīniyya*]¹²⁷—is in opposition to the other from the standpoint of their owners.¹²⁷

Just as two human hands are in opposition to each other, so too are the qualities denoted by God's two hands. Each of God's two hands are nothing other than corollaries of the different types of souls which have come about through the downward flow of the river of being.¹²⁸ Thus, the properties of each hand manifest themselves in accordance with the attributes of the people who fall under their sway: there are some who uphold God's oneness and give Him His rights of lordship, whereas others do not.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ṣadrā refers to this famous tradition at *ibid.*, 1:149.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:149. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 156-61.

¹²⁸ See pp. 213-4 for Ṣadrā's use of this image.

¹²⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:151.

Because God's hands are both "right," they are naturally both good. This idea again accords with a point Ṣadrā made in the *Asfār* and to which he returns in several places in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*: despite the outward appearance of a thing as wrath and punishment, inwardly, it is pure mercy.¹³⁰ This does not mean that both of God's hands are equal. Insofar as His hands are different and there are differences amongst His creatures, those who do not maintain the rights of lordship will be held responsible for their negligence. The general outcome will nevertheless be mercy.¹³¹ With this point in mind, Ṣadrā offers a reading of Q 39:67. The verse states that the entire earth will be in God's grip on the day of resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand. Ṣadrā understands this to mean that all things will be enfolded back into God's mercy, despite the disparity amongst creatures with respect to their place of return.¹³² That is to say, the scroll upon which the entire cosmic drama was written will simply be rolled back up and returned to its original author.

Ṣadrā devotes much more time to God's feet than he does to His hands. This is partly because any talk of God's "feet" in Islamic thought automatically calls to mind two other important Qur'anic symbols, namely His Footstool (*kursī*) and Throne (*'arsh*). The image of God's two feet as sources for the diversity in the cosmos therefore allows Ṣadrā to explain how multiplicity and opposition result from harmony, and how wrath and mercy become fragmented from mercy itself. The Throne is the seat or locus of mercy in accordance with the divine

¹³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:157. Cf. also *ibid.*, 1:159-61, where Ṣadrā follows Qūnawī, *Ijāz*, 475-8 (not 465-78 as noted by Khwājawī at Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:162 n. 1) in his discussion of how chastisement exists either to protect or purify the servant.

¹³¹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:151.

¹³² Cf. *ibid.*

command “Be!” According to Q 20:5, the All-Merciful seats Himself upon the Throne.¹³³ Since the All-Merciful sits on the Throne, each of His two feet dangle from it and are placed upon the Footstool. Basing himself on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*,¹³⁴ Ṣadrā explains this phenomenon as follows:

When God created the Throne, He made it the locus of the establishment of existential mercy and the Unity of the Word of existention, which is the saying “Be!” [Q 2:117] And He created the Footstool, and the Word was divided into two commands—Command and creation—so that He could create a pair of everything.... The two feet were let down onto the Footstool until the Word of the Spirit became divided in the Footstool, for the Footstool is the second in form and shape after the Throne. From the Footstool, two shapes came about in the body of the natural world. So the two feet were let down onto the Footstool, and each foot alighted in a place. One place was called the “Garden” and the other “Hell.”¹³⁵

The Footstool ontologically stands at a level lower than the Throne and also acts as the locus through which the polarity of God’s divine names (symbolized by the two feet) become operative in the cosmos.¹³⁶ Although the two feet existed before they came to rest upon the Footstool, the Footstool is what allows the feet’s properties to become actualized, that is, materialized. It is clear from Ṣadrā’s discussion concerning the path of the soul that the place into which each foot alights is the Garden and the Hell of the soul respectively, since the path

¹³³ According to Qayṣarī, the Throne is the seat upon which the Muḥammadan Reality is seated, and from which mercy is distributed throughout the cosmos. This reading is in keeping with the Qur’anic idea of the All-Merciful establishing Himself upon the Throne, for the Muḥammadan Reality is the locus of manifestation for the name al-rahmān. See Rustom, “Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī,” 57 ff. See also Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 414.

¹³⁴ Cf. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 110-2; idem, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 360.

¹³⁵ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:154-5.

¹³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:149, where Ṣadrā takes his lead from Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers when discussing God’s feet: “In His establishing Himself upon the Throne, He also has two feet which were let down onto the Footstool. The one which designates the foot of firmness [allusion to Q 10:2] gives fixity [*thubūt*] to the people of the Gardens in their Gardens, while the other one, which designates the foot of domination [*jabarūt*], gives fixity to the people of Hell in Hell.” Cf. Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook of Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 85-8.

traversed by the individual will ultimately lead him back to his own reality, namely to Heaven or Hell.

Since the cosmos and all that it contains came about by virtue of the All-Merciful extending His two feet and allowing their properties to take on corporeal form, what will happen when the cosmos will cease to exist? Quite naturally, the cosmos will cease to exist when the All-Merciful draws up His feet, thus having all properties in the cosmos—whether they manifest God’s attributes of wrath or mercy—return back to their Source of mercy. Şadrā goes on to make this point in beautifully poetic language. It can be noted that the same passage will also be found in the relevant section in the *Asfār*. However, the account of the folding of the legs of the All-Merciful figures differently in both texts. For one thing, in the *Asfār*, Şadrā does not provide as detailed an account as he does in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* with respect to how all things are rooted in mercy. No less important is the fact that in the *Asfār*, the passage in question is ascribed to Ibn ‘Arabī, to whom it indeed belongs.¹³⁷ Yet in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, the same text now becomes Şadrā’s. It is perfectly naturalized into his treatment of the two feet of the All-Merciful, and, without explicitly citing Ibn ‘Arabī, he explicates “his” important point. In the end, God’s walking staff will be cast aside, and all things will end in repose and tranquility:

The feet will not be contracted except from the root from which they became manifest, namely the All-Merciful. So they only give mercy, for by virtue of wisdom, the end returns to the beginning, except that between the beginning and end there is a path. If this were not the case, there would be no beginning and end to it. The journey is where one can expect to find [*mazīnna*] fatigue, misfortune, and toil. This is the cause of the emergence of the wretchedness that has become manifest in the cosmos in terms of this world, the next world, and the isthmus [*barzakh*]. At the end of the sojourn, the walking staff [*‘aṣā al-tasāyur*] will be cast aside and repose [*rāḥa*] in the abodes of permanence and perdition will reign.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:462.

¹³⁸ Şadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:155; slightly altered from *Asfār*, 9:357 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 675-6).

Ṣadrā freely borrows material from the *Futūḥāt* again, this time in slightly paraphrased fashion.¹³⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī/Ṣadrā anticipate a possible objection to the question of how residence in Hell can entail repose and comfort for its dwellers. They acknowledge that, although from one perspective it is correct to say that Hell is not a place of comfort, such a one who does so has not given the matter “complete consideration” (*al-naẓar al-tāmm*).¹⁴⁰ Then the example of two types of wayfarers is given. One of these wayfarers lives an opulent and easy life. Such a person is like the one who arrives to the Garden. The other type of wayfarer travels by foot and has paltry provisions along the way. When he reaches his home, he is tired and miserable for a while. Then, when his fatigue wears off, he finds repose. The latter wayfarer is like the person in Hell. He is chastised for a while, and then, by virtue of God’s all-embracing mercy, is given repose.¹⁴¹ These people will be ranked in Hell according to the level of punishment owed to them. Once the punishment expires, that is, once they are purged of the dross of their sins (just as the wayfarer suffers fatigue until he is restored to full health), they will be placed in the Garden.¹⁴²

According to several Qur’anic verses, a party of individuals will reside in Hell forever.¹⁴³ But, as a number of prominent Muslim thinkers have observed, an eternal state of suffering in Hell seems problematic for several reasons. Firstly, it would seem senseless for a human being to suffer eternally for actions which are purely finite in their nature. Secondly, since God is not being wronged or offended by the servants’ wrong actions, and punishment is a form of cleansing for them, surely there must come a point when they will become purified, at which

¹³⁹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:155; paraphrasing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:462; also cited by Ṣadrā at *Aṣfār*, 9:357-8 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 676).

¹⁴⁰ Idem, *Tafsīr*, 1:155. At *Futūḥāt* 3:462, Ibn ‘Arabī simply has “reflection” (*naẓar*).

¹⁴¹ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:155.

¹⁴² See *ibid.*

¹⁴³ See, for example, Q 2:39, 13:5, 43:74, and 58:17.

time suffering in Hell would be superfluous. After all, if God is all-merciful, then an eternal state of suffering for any human being would seem to contradict this principle.¹⁴⁴ But the most important reason the idea of an eternal state of suffering in Hell was problematic for these Muslim thinkers is because it contradicts scripture. As Ibn ‘Arabī argues,¹⁴⁵ although the Qur’ān speaks of people abiding in the Fire forever (*khālidīna fīhā abadan*), it does not state that they will be punished in it forever.¹⁴⁶ Another important scriptural reference which the notion of eternal suffering in Hell would seem to contradict—and one upon which, as we have seen, Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā base their argument—is the fact God says in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī* that His mercy outstrips His wrath. Thus, the most faithful reading of scripture would be to maintain that although there will be people in Hell forever, they will not be punished therein eternally.

¹⁴⁴ Another argument for the noneternality of Hell is that since human beings did not will to come into existence, placing some of them in Hell eternally would violate God’s responsibility towards His creatures. See the penetrating remarks in Martin Lings, *A Return to the Spirit: Questions and Answers* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005), 77: “God knows that the worst sinners in Hell are totally innocent of one thing, namely their own existence, for which He alone is responsible.”

¹⁴⁵ See Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:77.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn ‘Arabī says that in the expression *khālidīna fīhā*, the feminine pronoun *hā’* always goes back to the word Fire (*nār*) and not to chastisement (*‘adhāb*), which is masculine at any rate. In other words, Ibn ‘Arabī argues, there will indeed be people who abide in Hell forever, but they will not abide in their state of punishment forever. See Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 113; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:77. Cf. Abrahamov, “The Creation and Duration of Paradise and Hell in Islamic Theology,” 94. Cf. the discussion on *khālidīna fīhā abadan* in James Robson, “Is the Moslem Hell Eternal?,” *Muslim World* 28 (1938): 386-93 (pp. 386-8 in particular). See also the unnuanced approach to the question in *Encyclopedia of the Qur’ān*, s.v. “Hell and Hellfire” (by Rosalind Gwynne). It is interesting to note that, according to Lory, *Les commentaries ésotériques du Coran d’après ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī*, 129-32, Kāshānī also upholds the position of the non-eternality of Hell, although he is not as explicit as Ibn ‘Arabī in this regard.

We have already considered how the argument for the change of state in Hell is put forth by Ṣadrā on the grounds that the divine decree demands that Hell and Heaven both be filled.¹⁴⁷ By virtue of the all-pervasiveness of mercy and its essentiality, human beings will eventually be enveloped in mercy, despite the fact that the structure of the cosmos in terms of the distribution of the divine names demands that some people be in Hell and others in Heaven.

5.2.4 – A Contradiction in the *‘Arshiyya*?

With the above points from the *Asfār* and *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* in mind, it is significant that in his *‘Arshiyya*, Mullā Ṣadrā takes the exact opposite view on the question of the pleasurable nature of Hell: “[I]t would appear that Hell is not an abode of comfort. Rather, it is only a place of pain, suffering, and endless torment.”¹⁴⁸ We are certain that the *‘Arshiyya* was written after the *Asfār*, since it mentions this book on a number of occasions and reproduces much of its material. In the *‘Arshiyya*, Ṣadrā also makes mention of his *Ta’līqāt Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*,¹⁴⁹ which in turn mentions the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.¹⁵⁰ As we have seen in chapters one and three of this study, Ṣadrā sometimes inserts the titles of later writings into his earlier works, thereby making it almost impossible to date some of his compositions. But if we were to assume that the *‘Arshiyya* was in fact written after the *Ta’līqāt* and the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, we appear to have a contradiction with respect to Ṣadrā’s position in the *Asfār* concerning the pleasurable nature of Hell, a view which he confirms and upon whose details he elaborates in the *Tafsīr*

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Q 7:18, 11:119, and 32:13.

¹⁴⁸ Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 240.

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 135.

¹⁵⁰ This point was communicated to me by Hossein Ziai—whose edition of Ṣadrā’s *Ta’līqāt* is forthcoming—in an email correspondence (February 11th, 2008).

Sūrat al-fātiḥa. How, then, are we to reconcile this passage in the *‘Arshiyya* with Ṣadrā’s statements in the *Asfār* and the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*?

The operation does not seem difficult when we consider the circumstances under which Ṣadrā wrote the *‘Arshiyya*. The *‘Arshiyya*, unlike the *Asfār* and *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, is a much less technical book, and hence more accessible to nonspecialists. As has been noted by Michel Chodkiewicz, prudence at times forced Ṣadrā to conceal his borrowings from Ibn ‘Arabī.¹⁵¹ This is undoubtedly because Sufism, especially the more theoretical type, was not always viewed favourably by the Safavid *‘ulamā’*.¹⁵² Indeed, one of the reasons Ṣadrā was exiled is because of his Sufi sympathies. Thus, Ṣadrā’s distancing himself from his true position concerning the nature of Hell in the *‘Arshiyya* was a cautionary move so as to forestall condemnation by the *‘ulamā’*. This point is confirmed by Morris, who notes that “Sadra’s suppression here in the *‘Arshiyya* of all but the faintest allusion to his agreement with Ibn Arabi is in keeping with one level of intention of his work.”¹⁵³ This “level of intention,” Morris tells us, was dictated by Ṣadrā’s awareness of his social and political context, which necessitated that he conceal his more extreme interpretations from *‘ulamā’* hostile to anything against what they considered the norm.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ See Chodkiewicz, “The *Futūḥāt Makkīyya* and its Commentators: Some Unresolved Enigmas,” trans. Peter Kingsley in *The Heritage of Sufism*, 2:221.

¹⁵² See Cooper, “Some Observations on the Religious Intellectual Milieu of Safawid Persia”; Pourjavady, “Opposition to Sufism in Twelver Shiism.” But by the same token, Ṣadrā did not view the exoteric scholars of his day too favourably. See, in particular, the introduction to his *Sih aṣl*. See also Corbin, “Introduction,” 23-4.

¹⁵³ Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 237 n. 283.

¹⁵⁴ See Morris, “Introduction,” in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 43. Indeed, as Rizvi, notes, one of Ṣadrā’s positions which was later condemned by the famous author of the *Biḥār al-anwār*, Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1699), was his belief in the non-eternality of Hell. See Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 33. At the same time, as

5.2.5 – The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*'s Soteriology in Context II

5.2.5.1 – Chastisement's Sweetness

Returning to the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, it should be clear that, in this text, Ṣadrā treats the question of the nature of eternal residency in Hell in a much more explicit manner than he does in the *Asfār*. Reproduced below is Ṣadrā's final citation from the *Futūḥāt*. This passage, more than any other, demonstrates his stance on the question of eternal suffering and serves as an effective summary of his arguments in the *Asfār* and the earlier parts of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. At the same time, it goes beyond what Ṣadrā had stated earlier, demonstrating the logical outcome of his own ontology when expressed in the language of scripture. Ibn 'Arabī/Ṣadrā tell us that the last batch of people in Hell who are there by virtue of God's solicitude (*ināya*) will be trapped in Hell and surrounded by its flames. Like the nonbelievers mentioned in Q 60:13 who despair over "the people of the graves" (*aṣḥāb al-qubūr*) (i.e., in their thinking that death is the end of all things and that the people of the graves will not be brought back to life), the people enclosed by Hell's fires will also despair. It is at that moment that God's mercy will overcome them and provide for them a constitution which will allow them to experience joy in the Fire. Their chastisement (*adhāb*) will therefore become sweetness (*adhb*):

They will find the chastisement [*adhāb*] sweet [*yasta'dhibūna*], so pains will cease and the chastisement [*adhāb*] will become sweetness [*adhb*]...¹⁵⁵ God willing, the inhabitant of every abode will taste sweetness. So understand! Do you not see the truth of what we have said? Because of the deficiency and nonexistence of fullness that is in it, the Fire will not cease to be painful until the Compeller places His foot in

Corbin points out, Majlisī's attitude towards Sufism (as well as Mullā Ṣadrā and Mīr Dāmād) remains ambiguous. See Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 4:20-1, as well as Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 96-100.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Chittick, "Ibn al-'Arabī's Hermeneutics of Mercy," 166; Ibn 'Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, translated by Ralph Austin (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980), 109-10. After this point, Ṣadrā makes it clear that he is reporting a text from Ibn 'Arabī, but does not note that what had preceded this and what is to follow is also from the latter's pen.

it, as has been related in the tradition.¹⁵⁶ This is one of the two aforementioned feet on the Footstool. The other [foot] is the one whose resting place will be the Garden: *Give glad tidings to those who believe, that they have a foot of firmness with their Lord* [Q 10:2]. The name “Lord” will be with them, and the name “Compeller” will be with the others because the Fire is the abode of majesty, domination, and awe, whereas the Garden is the abode of beauty, intimacy, and the subtle divine alighting place [*manzil al-ilāhī al-laṭīf*].¹⁵⁷ The two of them are face to face with the two grips mentioned in the Sacred tradition: “One for the people of the Fire, and I don’t care; the other for the people of the Garden, and I don’t care.” He does not care because the end for both is to the all-embracing mercy.¹⁵⁸

5.2.5.2 – From Philosophic Language to Scriptural Discourse

We have by this point seen a number of instances in both the *Asfār* and the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* in which Mullā Ṣadrā freely borrows material from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*. In all cases in which Ṣadrā cites Ibn ‘Arabī in the *Asfār*, he does so explicitly. At the same time, both Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* are cited explicitly in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*.¹⁵⁹ It would seem that

¹⁵⁶ For the *ḥadīth* which speaks of God (as al-jabbār) extinguishing the flames of Hell by placing His foot in Hell, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 361; Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 86.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī has *tanazzul al-ilāhī al-laṭīf*. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 361 and Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 86.

¹⁵⁸ Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:156; reworked from Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:463; also cited in Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 9:358-9 (cf. idem, *Spiritual Psychology*, 677). Cf. Chittick, “Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Hermeneutics of Mercy,” 166; idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 174; Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 86.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr*, 1:71-2; citing Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:86-7: “In *The Meccan Openings*, Shaykh al-‘Arabī says: ‘Know that God intercedes with respect to His names. His name ‘the Most Merciful of the merciful’ intercedes for His names ‘the Compeller’ and ‘Terrible in Chastisement’ in order that He may withdraw His chastisement from these parties. Thus, the one who did no good whatsoever [for this tradition, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 197] will exit the Fire. God has called attention to this station: *The day We muster the godfearing* [*muttaqīn*] *to the All-Merciful in droves* [Q 19:85]. The ‘god-fearing’ person merely sits with that divine name on account of which fear [*khawf*] falls into the hearts of servants. His intimate is called ‘fearful of Him’ [*muttaqī minhu*]. God will lift him from this name to that name which gives him safety from that which he was fearful. For this reason, the Prophet said concerning the intercession, ‘the Most Merciful of the merciful remains.’ This relationship relates to intercession to the Real from the Real with respect to His names.’ In his treatise entitled *The Flashes*, Shaykh al-‘Irāqī relates that Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī heard the verse, *The day We muster the godfearing to*

when Ibn ‘Arabī is acknowledged as a direct source for one of Ṣadrā’s statements, it is because the latter is trying to demonstrate how a problematic theological question had been dealt with by his most illustrious predecessor—someone for whom he had unqualified admiration. This is a rare exception, given how critical Ṣadrā is of almost all of his predecessors, from Avicenna¹⁶⁰ to his own teacher Mīr Dāmād.¹⁶¹

the All-Merciful in droves. So he let out a cry and said, ‘How will He muster to Him those who are with him?’ The other one [i.e., Ibn ‘Arabī] came and said, ‘From the name ‘the Compeller’ to the name ‘The All-Merciful,’ and from the name ‘the Overbearing’ to [the name] ‘the Compassionate.’” For this passage in ‘Irāqī, see his *Divine Flashes*, 95. For Ibn ‘Arabī’s reply, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 37; idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 23. See also Ibn ‘Arabī, *Bezels*, 108-9.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 211, 386-98, 470 n. 44; Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, 8:135-6 (translated in Chittick, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxvi).

¹⁶¹ Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 11-3 makes it clear that Mīr Dāmād and Ṣadrā had great affection for one another. At the same time, Mīr Dāmād’s position concerning the existence/essence debate was that essence was real and principial and existence unreal and accidental. There is no doubt therefore that Ṣadrā’s conversion to the position of the fundamentality of being was a direct consequence of his reaction to his teacher’s ideas. In the case of Ibn ‘Arabī, Ṣadrā seems to side with him almost unequivocally on every issue (cf. p. 212 for Ṣadrā’s slight disagreement with Ibn ‘Arabī, as well as Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-ḥaṣhr*, 112-4 [Arabic text]). One can aver that this is because the position of the fundamentality of being, although worked out by Ṣadrā in its philosophical form against the backdrop of his highly original dynamic metaphysics (and thus outside of the framework of traditional Aristotelian substance metaphysics), is nothing other than what would later be called *waḥdat al-wujūd*. With this point in mind, we nevertheless differ with Jambet (*L’acte d’être*, 173), who translates the expression *waḥdat al-wujūd* as “l’unité foncière d’acte d’exister” (“the fundamental unity of the act of existing”; cf. the English translation of the phrase in Jambet *The Act of Being*, 182), since the expression does not necessarily imply *wujūd*’s movement. Rather, it simply refers to the fact that all things in being are “one.” See Chittick, “Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd*,” in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī*, ed. Amin Banani, Richard Hovannisian, and Georges Sabagh, 89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For an argument on why *waḥdat al-wujūd* should be rendered as the “oneness of being” instead of the “unity of existence,” see Chittick, “The Central Point,” 27-8 n. 5. For Ṣadrā, the notion of *wujūd*’s dynamism and hence its “act” is a natural corollary to his doctrine of *wujūd*’s gradational nature. For a pertinent discussion of the important precursors to Ṣadrā’s ontology in the thought of members of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Dagli, “From Mysticism to Philosophy (and Back): An Ontological History of the School of the Oneness of Being” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006). Cf. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*, 45-6.

Interestingly, a number of Ibn ‘Arabī’s statements from the *Futūḥāt* explicitly cited by Ṣadrā in the *Asfār* appear, as we have seen above, as Ṣadrā’s own words in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. This would lend support to our argument that the latter text, by virtue of having been written several years after the *Asfār*, gave Ṣadrā the perfect chance to present a much more coherent soteriological argument than he could in the *Asfār*. Thus, when in the *Tafsīr Surat al-fātiḥa* Ṣadrā reworks Ibn ‘Arabī’s statements into his writings and does not acknowledge his source or seems to do so in a somewhat vague manner,¹⁶² it might be because he is trying to be as direct as possible in making his point, a point which doubtless came from the pen of Ibn ‘Arabī,¹⁶³ but which Ṣadrā was then able to integrate into his perspective as his “own” point.¹⁶⁴ Hence, despite the fact that Ṣadrā lifts these passages from Ibn ‘Arabī almost verbatim, we have every reason to assume that the soteriology articulated in these passages is his soteriology as well.

Why Ṣadrā would resort to a scriptural mode of expression concerning the final return of all creatures as opposed to his more philosophical arguments found in the *Asfār* is in keeping with the overall goal of his work on the Qur’ān, namely to clothe within the garb of scriptural symbols the philosophical truths which he had verified for himself. At the heart of this personal experience undergone by Ṣadrā was his profound encounter with being. Since mercy is to

See also pp. 36-7 n. 22 for a discussion of Ṣadrā’s relationship to *waḥdat al-wujūd*. See also Peter Groff, *Islamic Philosophy A-Z* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 147-8.

¹⁶² Cf. n. 151 above.

¹⁶³ It can be noted here that few if any readers familiar with Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings would not notice Ṣadrā’s borrowings from the former. Cf. Chodkiewicz, “The *Futūḥāt Makkiyya* and its Commentators,” 221, where he notes that even when Ṣadrā had to conceal his borrowings from Ibn ‘Arabī for reasons of prudence, they “are easily identifiable nonetheless.”

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Morris, “Introduction,” in Ṣadrā, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 35-6.

religious language what being is to philosophical language,¹⁶⁵ when tackling the problem of soteriology, which for Ṣadrā is naturally discussed within the universe of the Islamic revelation, it was all the more fitting that he would choose to express himself most clearly within the context and terminological “confines” of his commentary upon the Qur’ān’s most widely known and recited *sūra*.

5.3 – Conclusion

In the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrates his reliance upon the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī to address two important questions: (1) what is the nature of idol worship?, and (2) what is the ultimate fate of all human beings? In tackling the first problem, Ṣadrā articulates a version of the position—well-known to Islamic thought by his time—concerning the “God created in beliefs.” Ṣadrā relates this idea to his theoretical scriptural hermeneutics: since the Qur’ān and being are two sides of the same coin from one perspective, those who remain on the surface of being, who have a particular idolized conception of the nature of reality, will likewise remain on the surface of the Qur’ān. It is only when man penetrates being, that is, shatters his intellectual constructs concerning the nature of reality (and, hence, God), that he may penetrate the ocean of the Qur’ān. Such a profound view of things is reserved for the Perfect Man, who, by virtue of not falling into the trap of “metaphysical idolatry,” sees the cosmos for what it truly is: a theatre for the manifestation of God. The Perfect Man, therefore, is able to read the Qur’ān as it should be read.

Understanding the nature of being is the same thing as understanding the nature of God’s mercy. Since all things issue from God and are nothing but modes of God’s being, they can also

¹⁶⁵ See n. 62 above for the identification of God’s Essence with *raḥma*, and *raḥma*’s identification with *wujūd*.

be said to issue from mercy and be nothing but modes of God's mercy. Likewise, since all modes of being must return to their Source of being, so too must all modes of mercy return to their Source of mercy. Hence, the end for all creatures is mercy. This point, which Ṣadrā articulates most clearly in his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, is, again, indebted to Ibn 'Arabī. But Ṣadrā attempts to address another important question which appears to be demanded by the content of the Fātiḥa itself, namely the fact that there are differences in grades of individuals. As Q 1:7 asserts, there is the path of those who have received God's mercy, and the path of those with whom God is angry and those who have gone astray. In attempting to address the problem of how one can maintain felicity for all human beings while also taking into account the obvious disparity in types of human beings, Ṣadrā articulates a picture of the afterlife in which the form of salvation received by human beings is shaped by the differing paths which they had chosen during their time on earth. The result is a highly individualized presentation of the nature of human beings' return to their source of mercy. Thus, although in the end God's mercy will triumph for all human beings, the form in which they receive His mercy will depend upon the diverse paths which they had taken during their lives on earth.

Conclusion

For all of our knowledge of Mullā Ṣadrā's life and philosophical teachings, a number of aspects of his thought remain terra incognita. His work on the Qur'ān, we argued, is a good place to start. Not only were Ṣadrā's compositions on the Qur'ān and its sciences voluminous, but he made sure that his writings on scripture would give a more concrete form to the abstract ideas contained in his philosophical books. For Ṣadrā, the Qur'ān and being are, from one perspective, two sides of the same coin. This fundamental insight allows his work on the Qur'ān to demonstrate the manner in which his philosophical teachings can be modulated into religious language.

This explains why, in his function as a scriptural exegete, Ṣadrā does not simply read the Qur'ān as a philosopher. Just as he ably articulates his experience of being in his philosophical writings, so too does he convey his experience of the Qur'ān in his works on scripture. This phenomenon is illustrated very well in the *Maḥātib al-ghayb*, Ṣadrā's most important theoretical work on scripture. The *Maḥātib* is unique in that Ṣadrā viewed it as occupying a special place amongst his writings on the Qur'ān. It articulates the basic esoteric perspective which informs all of his writings on the Qur'ān by demonstrating the intimate link shared between the book of being and the becoming of the human soul.

If the *Maḥātib* is Ṣadrā's most important work on the Qur'ān in terms of theory, the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, which is his last complete *tafsīr*, is his most important work on the Qur'ān in terms of practice. As a commentator upon the Fātiḥa, a *sūra* which occupies central importance in Muslim daily life, Ṣadrā is impelled by it verses to reflect upon and provide solutions to some of the core issues which lie at the heart of human existence itself: what is the nature of gratitude,

mercy, compassion, praise for God, belief, and unbelief? To aid his meditations on the Fātiḥa, Ṣadrā incorporates into his unique philosophical perspective the teachings of a number of his illustrious predecessors who tackled similar issues. At the same time, while the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* presents us with a handy exposition of Ṣadrā's key doctrines, a number of positions taken in his earlier books undergo modifications in the context of his commentary on the Fātiḥa's verses.

The practical nature of the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* is best displayed by the manner in which Ṣadrā is able to recast his complex ontology into the language of theology and scripture. The cosmology of praise attendant upon Ṣadrā's ontology as laid out in the context of his commentary upon the Fātiḥa's verses allows his theoretical discussions from the *Maḥāṭib* to come to life. Here we see how God's self-praise results in the emergence of the cosmos, and how the cosmos, as the "stuff" of God's self-praise, is nothing other than a seamless expression of modes or instantiations of praise. Since being is graded and multi-level, the more one manifests of praise, the more he manifests of being.

The Perfect Man, as the pinnacle of existence, is, therefore, the most perfect form of praise in the cosmos since he has ascended the scale of being and reached the highest possible point on the ladder of praise. The station of praise in which the Perfect Man stands allows him to understand the nature of existence in its entirety. And, since the Qur'ān and being can be said to have the same reality, the Perfect Man can likewise understand the nature of the Qur'ān in its entirety.

Drawing on Ibn 'Arabī, Ṣadrā also reminds us that knowing the nature of existence is tantamount to knowing God's mercy, since mercy and being are the same reality. Understanding God's mercy demands a vision of the cosmic order in which all things proceed from mercy and

return to mercy. At the same time, Şadrā avers, the route that each soul takes as it descends the scale of being/mercy is entirely unique to it, just as the route each soul takes in ascending the scale of being/mercy is entirely unique to it. This leads Şadrā to make his most important observation in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* (which, incidentally, is not to be found in any of his other works): each human being must follow the path that is particular to him, which means that each human being will, in the end, receive a mercy from God that is particular to him. This, of course, does not negate God’s wrath. Some people, in returning to the abode of mercy, must come through the door of wrath. But, despite the fact that human beings will return to God in very different states—some in beautiful robes of honour and others in tattered garments of humiliation—in the end, it is God’s mercy that shall have the final say.

It is hoped that this study was able to demonstrate the extraordinary range of Mullā Şadrā’s sources and synthetic abilities as a late Islamic philosopher concerned with scripture. It is also hoped that we have been able to raise questions concerning the function of scripture in Şadrā’s thought in general, and his most important *tafsīr* in particular. Studying the way in which one of Islam’s major philosophers expresses his philosophical teachings through the symbolic language of scripture can be instructive in another manner as well: we witness here a fine example of a wider trend in later Islamic thought in which philosophy learns to speak the language of scripture and religious dogma.

Appendix I

A Tentative Chronology of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Works

Below is a tentative chronology of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic works.¹ The first table considers their order of composition with respect to themselves, and the second with respect to his other, datable writings. In order to avoid confusion, I have only employed Gregorian dates.

Tentative Chronology of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Works

Year	Title	Notes
Ca. 1613	<i>T. Q 27:88</i>	Incomplete; Likely a very early work
Ca. 1613	<i>T. Ā. Kursī</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1621	<i>T. Ā. Nūr</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1621	<i>T. S. Ṭāriq</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1621	<i>T. S. Yāsīn</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1621-32	<i>T. S. Ḥadīd</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1621-32	<i>T. S. Wāqī'a</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i> ; After <i>T. S. Yāsīn</i>
1621-32	<i>T. S. Alā</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1628-32	<i>T. S. Jumu'a</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i> ?; After <i>T. S. Yāsīn</i> and <i>Ḥadīd</i>
1628-32	<i>T. S. Zilzāl</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1628-32	<i>T. S. Sajda</i>	After all of the above; Before <i>Mafātīḥ</i>
1631	<i>Asrār</i>	Possibly after <i>Mafātīḥ</i>
1632	<i>Mafātīḥ</i>	
1632-34	<i>Mutashāb.</i>	Most likely after <i>Mafātīḥ</i>
1632-34	<i>T. S. Fātiḥa</i>	After <i>Mafātīḥ</i>
1632-34	<i>T. S. Baqara</i>	After <i>T. S. Fātiḥa</i>

¹ The dates given in this tentative chronology are based on the following (in their order of usefulness): Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, 51-135; references within Ṣadrā's writings; Bīdārfar, "Taqdīm," 110-1; Chittick, "Translators' Introduction," xix-xx; email correspondences with Hossein Ziai (February 11th 2008) and Sajjad Rizvi (February 12th 2008).

*Tentative Chronology of Ṣadrā's Qur'anic Works (denoted by an asterisk)
vis-à-vis his Datable Writings*

Year	Title	Notes
1606	<i>Mabda'</i>	
* Ca. 1613	<i>T. Q 27:88</i>	Incomplete; Likely a very early work
* Ca. 1613	<i>T. Ā. Kursī</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1614	<i>Wāridāt</i>	1621?
1618	<i>Kasr</i>	
1606-20	<i>Sh. al-Hidāya</i>	Completed around 1606, reworked in 1620
* 1621	<i>T. Ā. Nūr</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
* 1621	<i>T. S. Ṭariq</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1621?	<i>Iksīr</i>	Possibly before <i>T. S. Yāsīn</i>
* 1621	<i>T. S. Yāsīn</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
* 1621-32	<i>T. S. Ḥadīd</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
* 1621-32	<i>T. S. Wāqī'a</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i> ; After <i>T. S. Yāsīn</i>
* 1621-32	<i>T. S. A'lā</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
1623	<i>Risālat al-ḥashr</i>	
1624	<i>Masā'il</i>	Incomplete
1624-25	<i>Ḥudūth</i>	
* 1628-32	<i>T. S. Jumū'a</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i> ?; After <i>T. S. Yāsīn</i> and <i>Ḥadīd</i>
1628	<i>Asfār</i>	Commenced in 1606
1628	<i>Mashā'ir</i>	Likely after <i>Asfār</i>
1628-31	<i>Shawāhid</i>	
* 1628-32	<i>T. S. Zilzāl</i>	Before <i>T. S. Sajda</i>
* 1628-32	<i>T. S. Sajda</i>	After all of the above; Before <i>Mafūtiḥ</i>
* 1631	<i>Asrār</i>	Possibly after <i>Mafūtiḥ</i>
* 1632	<i>Mafūtiḥ</i>	
* 1632-34	<i>Mutashāb.</i>	Most likely after <i>Mafūtiḥ</i>
* 1632-34	<i>T. S. Fātiḥa</i>	After <i>Mafūtiḥ</i>
* 1632-34	<i>T. S. Baqara</i>	After <i>T. S. Fātiḥa</i>
1634	<i>Sh. al-Kāfi</i>	Incomplete
1628- 34	<i>Ta'līq. Ilāhiyyāt al-shifā'</i>	After <i>Shawāhid</i>
1632- 34	<i>Ta'līq sh. Ḥikmat al-ishrāq</i>	After <i>T. S. Fātiḥa</i>
1632- 34	<i>Arshiyya</i>	After <i>Ta'līq sh. Ḥikmat al-ishrāq</i>

Appendix II

Texts from the *Futūḥāt* Reworked into the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*

Presented below are the key texts Mullā Ṣadrā assimilated into his *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* from Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*. I have juxtaposed the relevant sections with one another in order to demonstrate the carry-over of ideas from one text to the other. The *Futūḥāt* passage in text I is taken from Ibn ‘Arabī, “Towards God’s Signs,” trans. William Chittick in Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, 1:182. A part of the *Futūḥāt* passage in text IV is reproduced from Chittick, “Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Hermeneutics of Mercy,” 166. In both cases, I have modified these translations in order to maintain terminological/conceptual consistency amongst the texts presented.

I

Futūḥāt, 3:449

It is reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* [of Muslim] that the Messenger of God said, “God is beautiful and He loves Beauty.” It is He who made the world and brought it into existence upon His own form [*ṣūra*]. So the whole world is beautiful in the extreme; there is no ugliness in it.... That is why the knowers become enraptured by it and the verifiers realize love for it. And that is why we have said concerning it in some of our explanations of it that it is God’s mirror. So the knowers see nothing in it but God’s form.... For He is the one revealed in theophany in every face, the object of gaze in every eye, the object of worship in every act of worship, and the Final Goal in both the unseen and the seen.... So the whole cosmos prays to Him, prostrates itself before Him, and glorifies His praise.

Tafsīr, 1:153-4

In a narration it has been related that God is beautiful and He loves beauty. He is the artisan of the cosmos and brings it into existence in His form [*shākila*], as He says, [*Say:*] “everyone acts according to their form” [Q 17:84].... So the entire cosmos is of the utmost beauty because it is a mirror for the Real. This is why the knowers become enraptured by it and the verifiers realize love for it. For He is the object of gaze in every eye, the beloved in every form of love, the object of worship in every act of worship, and the Final Goal in both the unseen and the seen. The entire cosmos prays to Him, praises Him, and glorifies Him.

II

Futūḥūt, 3:462

When God made the Throne the locus for the oneness of the Word, which is the [name] the All-Merciful and none other than it, and [when] He created the Footstool, he divided the Word into two commands in order to create two pairs from everything so that one of the two pairs would be qualified by highness and the other by lowness (one being active and the other passive)... The two feet were let down onto the Footstool when the Word of the All-Merciful became divided in the Footstool, for from the Footstool itself the division of the Word became manifest. This is because amongst the forms of bodies which become manifest in the primary substance the Footstool is second after the all-encompassing Throne, while they are both forms in the universal natural body. So the two feet were let down onto the Footstool, and each foot alighted in a place which was not the place in which the other alighted. This was the end of their alighting. One place was called the “Garden” and the other “Hell.” There is no place to which the two feet can travel beyond these two places. These two feet will not be contracted except from the root from which they became manifest, namely the All-Merciful. So they only give mercy, for by virtue of God’s decision [*ḥukm*], the end [*nihāya*] returns to the beginning [*bidāya*], except that between the beginning and end there is a path If it were not for this path, there would be no beginning and goal [*ghāya*]. A journey is what occurs between the beginning and the goal, and is where one can expect to find fatigue and misfortune. This is the cause of the emergence of the wretchedness that has become manifest in the cosmos in terms of this world, the next world, and the isthmus. At the end of the sojourn, the walking staff will be cast aside and repose in the abodes of permanence and perdition will reign.

Tafsīr, 1:154-5

When God created the Throne, He made it the locus of the establishment of existential mercy and the Unity of the Word of existentionation, which is the saying *Be!* [Q 2:117] And He created the Footstool, and the Word was divided into two commands—Command and creation—so that He could create a pair from everything.... The two feet were let down onto the Footstool until the Word of the Spirit became divided in the Footstool, for the Footstool is the second in form and shape after the Throne. From the Footstool, two shapes came about in the body of the natural world. So the two feet were let down onto the Footstool, and each foot alighted in a place. One place was called the “Garden” and the other “Hell.” There is no place to which the two feet can travel beyond these two places. And they will not be contracted except from the root from which they became manifest, namely the All-Merciful. So they only give mercy, for by virtue of wisdom [*ḥikma*], the end [*nihāya*] returns to the beginning [*bidāya*], except that between the beginning and end there is a path. If this were not the case, there would be no beginning and end to it. The journey is where one can expect to find fatigue, misfortune, and toil. This is the cause of the emergence of the wretchedness that has become manifest in the cosmos in terms of this world, the next world, and the isthmus. At the end of the sojourn, the walking staff will be cast aside and repose in the abodes of permanence and perdition will reign.

III

Futūhāt, 3:462

If you were to say that the matter is not such that repose is to be found should one dwell in a place called “the Fire,” we would say [the following]: you are correct, but reflection [*naẓar*] has escaped you! This is because travelers are of two types: one traveler’s journey is as if he did not move anywhere because of the state of comfort he was in by virtue of his being served—all of his needs being provided for him on a platter which is supported by the necks of men—and protected from change in climate. In arriving to his home he is like the people of the Garden in the Garden. [The other] traveler treads on the path with his feet, has paltry provisions, and diminished supplies. When he arrives home, fatigue and hardship remain with him for a while, until they depart him. Then he finds repose. This is like the one who is punished and wretched in the Fire (which is his home), and then the mercy which encompasses all things becomes widespread. Between these two types of travelers there is a traveler who does not have the comforts of the person of the Garden, nor the discomforts [*shazaf*] of the person of the Fire. So he is between repose and fatigue. [He belongs to] a party which will be taken out of the Fire through the intercession of the interceders and the removal of the Most Merciful of the merciful. And this party will be in ranks. This is why amongst them there will be those who are ahead and those who lag behind, in accordance with the fatigue that remains with them. In the Fire, the fatigue will be removed bit-by-bit [*shay’an ba’d shay’an*]. When [the one in the fire’s] time is up, he will be taken to the place of repose, which is the Garden.

Tafsīr, 1:155

To the one who says that the matter is not such that one will find repose should he dwell in a place called “the Fire,” it could be said to him: you are correct, but complete reflection [*al-naẓar al-tāmm*] has escaped you! This is because travelers are of two types: one is in a state of comfort on his journey because of his being beloved, served—all of his needs being provided for him on a platter which is supported by the necks of men—and protected from change in climate. His likeness in arriving to home is like the people of the Garden in the Garden. [The other] traveler treads on the path with his feet, has paltry provisions, and diminished supplies. When he arrives home, fatigue and hardship remain with him for a while, until they depart him. Then he finds repose. This is like the one who is punished and wretched in the Fire (which is his home), and then the mercy which encompasses all things becomes widespread. Between these two types of travelers there is a traveler who does not have the comforts of the person of the Garden, nor the chastisement [*adhāb*] of the person of the Fire. So he is between repose and fatigue. [He belongs to] a party which will be taken out of the Fire through the intercession of the interceders and the removal of the Most Merciful of the merciful. And this party will be in ranks in accordance with the fatigue that remains with them. In the Fire, the fatigue will be removed bit-by-bit [*shay’an fa-shay’an*]. When their time is up, they will be taken to the place of repose, which is the Garden.

IV

Futūḥāt, 3:463

Those remaining will be the ones whom the Most Merciful of the merciful will cause to come out. They are the ones who did no good whatsoever, neither by way of having faith nor by way of displaying excellent character traits. It is just that they were preceded by solicitude [*ināya*], [which demands] that they should be amongst the people of this abode.... Then the doors will be locked, and the Fire will surround [them] and there will be despair over getting out. At that time, mercy will spread amongst the Fire’s inhabitants, because they had despaired getting out of it. They had feared leaving [i.e., despaired leaving] the Fire when they saw that the Most Merciful of the merciful was taking people out, whereas God had given them a constitution which is agreeable to one who inhabits this abode.... So when they despair, they will rejoice—their bliss will be the measure [of their despair], this being the first bliss that they will find and their [first] state in the Fire, as we have mentioned.... Thus they will find the chastisement [*adhāb*] sweet [*yasta’dhibūna*], so pains will cease, though the chastisement [*adhāb*] remains. This is why it is called sweetness [*adhb*]—the final issue is that those who abide within it find it sweet.... So understand! The inhabitant of every abode will be felicitous, God willing! Have you not looked at the truth of what we have said, namely that the Fire will continue to be painful because of what is in it by way of the deficiency and nonexistence of fullness, until the Compeller places His foot in it? This is one of the two aforementioned feet on the Footstool. The other foot is the one whose resting places will be the Garden: *Give glad tidings to those who believe, that they have a foot of firmness with their Lord* [Q 10:2]. The name “Lord” will be with them, and the name “Compeller” will be with the others because the Fire is the abode of majesty, domination, and awe, whereas the Garden is the abode of beauty, intimacy, and the subtle divine descent [*tanazzul al-ilāhī al-laṭīf*]. The foot of firmness is one of the two feet on the Footstool, and both feet are God’s “grips” [*qabḍatān*]. One is for the Fire, and He does not care. The other is for the Garden, and He does not care. Because their end is to mercy—that is why He does not care.

Tafsīr, 1:156

The last of those who remain are those who did no good whatsoever, neither by way of having faith nor by way of displaying excellent character traits. It is just that they were preceded by solicitude [*ināya*], [which demands] that they should be amongst the people of this abode.... Then the doors will be locked, and the Fire will surround [them] and there will be despair over getting out. At that time, mercy will spread amongst the Fire’s inhabitants, because they had despaired getting out of it, *just as the nonbelievers despair over the people of the graves* [Q 60:13]. He had given them a constitution which is agreeable to one who inhabits this abode. So when they despair, they will rejoice—their bliss will be the measure [of their despair], this being the first bliss that they will find and their [first] state in the Fire, as we have mentioned.... Thus they will find the chastisement [*adhāb*] sweet [*yasta’dhibūna*], so pains will cease and the chastisement [*adhāb*] will become sweetness [*adhb*].... God willing, the inhabitant of every abode will taste sweetness. So understand! Do you not see the truth of what we have said? Because of the deficiency and nonexistence of fullness that is in it, the Fire will not cease to be painful until the Compeller places His foot in it, as has been related in the tradition. This is one of the two aforementioned feet on the Footstool. The other [foot] is the one whose resting place will be the Garden: *Give glad tidings to those who believe, that they have a foot of firmness with their Lord* [Q 10:2]. The name “Lord” will be with them, and the name “Compeller” will be with the others because the Fire is the abode of majesty, domination, and awe, whereas the Garden is the abode of beauty, intimacy, and the subtle divine alighting place [*manzil al-ilāhī al-laṭīf*]. The two of them are face to face with the two grips mentioned in the Sacred tradition: “One for the people of the Fire, and I don’t care; the other for the people of the Garden, and I don’t care.” He does not care because the end for both is to the all-embracing mercy.

Appendix III

Key Texts from the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*

I have reproduced here, with my own descriptive headings, the most important passages to be found in Ṣadrā's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*, many of which have been translated in their entirety (either in the text or footnotes) throughout the course of this study. I have sought to present these translated texts (a) in the order in which they unfold within the *tafsīr*, and (b) in isolation from the detailed historical and theoretical issues considered in the previous chapters, thereby allowing Ṣadrā's key teachings in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* to stand on their own.

Introductory Remarks

Tafsīr, 1:1

Now is the time to penetrate the loci of witnessing [*mashāhid*] of the Qur'ān's signs, after laying out the keys to the doors of paradise, making clear the lamps of the lights of guidance and gnosis, and firmly planting the foundations of wisdom and faith.

The Mother of the Qur'ān

Tafsīr, 1:1

It is called the Mother of the Qur'ān [*umm al-qur'ān*] because of its containing [*iḥtiwā'*] all of the meanings which are in the Qur'ān.

The Nature of the Qur'ān

Tafsīr, 1:2

Each of its *sūras* is an ocean full of jewels of meaning and exposition. Rather, [they are] celestial spheres filled with the stars of the realities and essences. Every one of its verses is a shell within which are hidden precious pearls, all of which are valuable for man's soul.

The Special Nature of the *Fātiḥa*
***Tafsīr*, 1:2**

The light of guidance and the life of faith proceed from His lights [*lum'ān*], especially this *sūra* which, despite its concision, contains all of the verses of the Qur'ān and the sum total of the secrets of the Origin, Return, and the states of creatures on the final day before the All-Merciful. So listen with the ear of your heart to the recitation of God's verses, and let the lights of the miracle of the Messenger of God penetrate your insides.

On the *isti'ādha* Formula
***Tafsīr*, 1:7**

The better and more illustrious one is, and the higher and more perfect his rank, his devil is stronger, more seductive, more astray, and has subtler ruses, more intricate and hidden ways, is further off the course of the straight path, more averse to the right-guiding practices, and more blind to seeing the Real. Since the status of reciting the revelation and listening to its verses is the most illustrious status, the command has been instituted to seek refuge in God from the devil, who is distant and banished from oneness. This is why he is qualified by the exaggerative form of being accursed [in the *isti'ādha* formula].

God's Words
***Tafsīr*, 9-10**

His Speech [*qawl*] and Word [*kalima*] are not of the genus of sounds and letters, just as His Essence and attributes are not of the genus of bodies and modalities. Nor are they of the genus of substances and accidents. Rather, His Speech [*qawl wa-kalām*] and Command [*amr*]*—*as has been stated in the *Mafātīḥ**—*is pure intellectual disembodied being. So His Words are holy existents [and] spiritual matters which are the intermediaries between God and the creatures, and through which is realized His knowledge, power, and the penetration of His will and desire amongst the existent things.

The Perfect Words
***Tafsīr*, 10-1**

The proof that, by the “Words of God,” the absolute, intellectual divine existences are what is intended, is that the Words are described as “Perfect.”... So God, glorified and exalted is His Word, is above completion and is the End of ends, since through Him is the completion

of every thing, the life of every living one, the light of everything that is illumined, and the medicine and cure of every sickness and ailment.

There is a fine point here: the origination of bodies—their substances, dark and other accidents, natures, and natural effects—is only gradational [*tadriījī*], [proceeding] bit by bit. [This is] similar to motion, which is the gradual exiting from potentiality into actuality. As for innovated things, their existentiating and exiting [potentiality and going] into actuality only obtains in one instant: *And Our Command is nothing but one, like the blink of an eye* [Q 56:5]. When the Command is like this, its origination from God resembles the origination of letters [comprising a word] which only come to exist in one instant, that is, at that very indivisible moment. Because of this likeness, their completion is their very beginning. That which comes about through the carrying out of His determination is called the “Word,” and is described as “Perfect.”

How Evil Comes About

Tafsīr, 1:16

The first of existent things to issue from Him is the world of His Command and decree, in which there is fundamentally no evil (as has been mentioned), except, by God, what becomes hidden under the radiance of the First Light. This is the murkiness which necessitates contingent quiddities, which arise from the diminution of their existential ipseities from the divine Ipseity.

The Different Approaches to the Qurʾān

Tafsīr, 1:28

Know, O one concerned with understanding the meanings of the book!—God guide you to the right way—that here there are investigations into written expressions [*lafẓ*]. Some of these are related to the imprints of the letters and their written appearances, and forms of words and their sonal qualities, for [all of] which God put in place a people—such as scribes, reciters, and memorizers—and rendered the utmost of their endeavours to be knowledge of the proper recitation and beautiful writing of these expressions. Some of these are related to knowing the states of [their] structure, derivation, the states of inflection, and the building of words. And some of these are related to knowing the primary senses of the individual and composite terms. All of these [forms of investigation] fall short of the furthest goal and the loftiest station [*al-maqṣad al-aqṣā wa-l-manzil al-asnā*]. A party of each of these [investigators] has reached the boundary of the end and risen therein to the utmost expanse [of these investigations into written expressions]. God has set them up to acquire these partial sciences [*al-ʿulūm al-juzʿiyya*]—which are relied upon for

understanding the realities of the Qur'ān—so that their rank may be the rank of servants and instruments for that which, in reality, is the result and end, and which leads to the perfection of the human species.

Know that speech consists of expressions and allusions, just as the existence of man is composed of an unseen and visible dimension [*ghayb wa-shahāda*]. Expressions are for the people of observance [*ri'āya*], and allusions are for the people of solicitude [*ināya*]. Expressions are like the enshrouded dead person whereas allusions are like the subtle, recognizing, knowing [faculty] which is man's reality. Expressions come from the World of the Visible [*ālam al-shahāda*], whereas allusions come from the World of the Unseen [*ālam al-ghayb*]. Expressions are the shadows of the unseen, just as man's individuation [*tashakhkhuṣ*] is the shadow of his reality.

As for the people of outward expressions and writing [*ahl al-ibāra wa-l-kitāba*], they have wasted their lives away in acquiring words and foundations, and their intellects have drowned in perceiving exposition and meanings. As for the people of the Qur'ān and the Word [*ahl al-qur'ān wa-l-kalām*—and they are the people of God [*ahl allāh*] who have been singled out for the divine love, lordly attraction, and prophetic proximity—God has facilitated the way for them, and accepted from them few works for the journey. That is because of the purity of their intentions and their hearts.

The Religion of the Folk of God

Tafsīr, 1:30

Every party has a position [*madhhab*] and an opinion [*ra'y*] in accordance with what they think draws them near to God and [increases their] servanthood to Him. Because of the differences in their positions [*mashārib wa-madhāhib*], they pursue it and aspire towards it, *rejoicing in what is with them* [Q 30:32] and mocking what someone else comes with, even if *he is on clear evidence from his Lord* [Q 11:17]. People take positions concerning what they love. But the position of the folk of God is something else: their religion is the *sincere religion* [Q 3:39]. Rather, they have no position other than God, and no religion other than Him: *Is sincere religion not for God?* [Q 3:39].

Those who love out of caprice take diverse positions.

As for me, I have a single position, and dwell in it alone.

In reality, they are *the servants of the All-Merciful* [Q 25:63], while the others are the servants of their positions and opinions, and students of their egos and caprice. This is because servitude and obedience towards the Lord is a branch of knowledge and seeking proximity to Him, since seeking the unknown is impossible. Thus,

whoever is not a knower of God or of His Sovereignty [*malakūt*], how can he love and seek Him and endeavour to become proximate to and intimate with Him?

However, the Real, out of the perfection of His compassion [*raʿfa*] and mercy [*rahma*] towards His servants, the all-encompassing nature [*shumūl*] of His benevolence [*ʿāṭifa*], the unfolding [*inbisāf*] of the light of His being towards the contingent things, and the self-disclosure [*tajallī*] of the [manifest] face of His Essence to the existent things, made for each of them a likeness [*mithāl*] which they could imitate, a refuge [*mathāba*] towards which they could strive, a path which they could traverse, a direction towards which they could aspire, a *qibla* with which they would be satisfied, and a law in accordance with which they could act. He says, *For everyone there is a direction to turn, so vie for the good. Wherever you are, God will bring you all together* [Q 2:148]; *For each of you We have made a law and a way* [Q 5:48]; *Each party rejoicing in what is with them* [Q 30:32].

The Word of God is one of the flashes of His Essence. Just as there are differences of opinion [*ikhṭilāf wa-tafāwut*] in peoples' positions and beliefs concerning God—i.e., between the one who declares God bodily [*mujassim*] and the one who declares Him dissimilar [*munazzih*]; the philosopher [*mutafalsif*] and denier of God's attributes [*mu'atṭil*]; the one who ascribes partners to God [*mushrik*] and the one who declares Him one [*muwahhid*]*—so too are there differences of opinion between them in understanding [the Qurʾān]. This is one of proofs of the Qurʾān's perfection, for it is a deep ocean in whose current most people drown, and from which none are saved except a few.*

How Supplication Produces Effects

Tafsīr, 1:33

According to the verifiers amongst the scholars, it has been affirmed that the effector [*mu'aththir*] of the substances of existents is none other than the Originator—exalted be His name!—or, with His permission, one of His angels brought near. So, in terms of bringing into or out of being, bodily accidents do not produce effects [*ta'thīr*] in substantial things. The best of invocations and supplications merely bring about effects from the side of their meanings and the soul's being connected—when it invokes—to their active principles. Thus, *the world of the wise remembrance* [Q 3:58] is the well-spring of success-giving to matters of concern and the beginning-point of answers to supplications, not the clashing of letters and sounds and the movement of lips with words and expressions.

That the Name is not Accidental

Tafsīr, 1:33

It appears as if the gnostics' customary usage corresponds to the customary usage of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. For the name in His saying, *Glorify the name of your Lord the Most High* [Q 87:1] and *Blessed is the name of your Lord, Possessor of Majesty and Generosity* [Q 55:78], is far from having been intended to be a letter or sound and what is connected to them, for they belong to the accidents of bodies. And what is like this is the most vile of things.... So, according to them, God's name is a meaning sanctified beyond the blemish of temporal origination and renewal [*waṣmat al-ḥudūth wa-l-tajaddud*], [and] is exalted above the deficiency of becoming [*takawwun*] and change [*taghayyur*]. For this reason, seeking assistance and blessings [*isti'āna wa-tabarruk*] fall upon His name.

On the Divine Names

Tafsīr, 1:34-6

According to the great ones amongst the gnostics, the name “God” [*ism allāh*] is an expression of the All-Gathering Divine Level [*martabat al-ulūhiyya al-jāmi'a*] for all of the tasks, standpoints, descriptions, and perfections, within which all of the names and attributes—these being nothing but the flashes of His light and the tasks of His Essence—are ranked. This Level marks the first instance of multiplicity to come about in existence, and is an isthmus between the Presence of Exclusive Oneness [*al-ḥadra al-aḥadiyya*] and the loci of creation and the engendered Command [*al-mazāhir al-amriyya wa-l-khalqiyya*]. In itself, this name brings together every contrary quality and opposing name, as you have already come to know. With each quality, the Essence takes on a [specific] name—the names articulated in speech being the “names of the names”—and the multiplicity in them is in accordance with the multiplicity of the [names'] characteristics and attributes. This multiplicity is nothing but the standpoints [*i'tibārāt*] of His unseen levels and His divine tasks [*shu'ūn ilāhiyya*], which are “the keys to the unseen” [*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*], whose shadows and reflections fall upon the existing things.

All that is in the world of contingency is a form of one of the names of God and a locus of one of the tasks. So God's names are intelligible meanings in the Unseen Being of the Real, meaning that the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is that which the intellect has no way of conceiving, since, were It to “exist” or occur to the intellect in order for the intellect to grasp It, these meanings would be divested from It, and the intellect would [be unable to] qualify It with itself. Thus, given Its unity and simplicity, the Essence of Exclusive Oneness allows for the predication

of these meanings to It without there being an added quality [to It], as has already been discussed.

Like all of the universal concepts, these meanings are, in themselves, neither existent nor nonexistent, neither general nor specific, and neither universal nor particular. They are not like the existential ipseities which are existent in themselves and individuated in their ipseities, since these latter are like rays and connections to the Being of the Real: when they come to one's mind, something bound to God's Essence—which is existent through His being and necessary through His necessity—is thought of. They are unlike the universal meanings because they may become universal in the mind, but particular externally; and they may be existent in the intellect, but nonexistent in reality. Yet they do have properties and effects in actual existence. Rather, the properties of existence are applied to them accidentally, and, from the pre-eternal necessity and oneness, the properties become illuminated through His light and tinged with His colour.

One of the People of God said: “The Real Existent is God exclusively with respect to His Essence and Entity, not with respect to His names. For the names have two denotations: one of them [denotes] It Itself, which is the Essence of the Named. The other is what denotes Him, namely that through which one name is differentiated from another and what is distinguished in the intellect. So that through which every name is the other name itself, and that through which it is other than it, has become clear to you. That through which one name is identical [with the other names] is the Real, and that through which one name is other than [the other names] is the imagined Real.... So glory to the One who has no denotation other than Himself, and whose being is not affirmed except by Himself!”

The Nonexistence of the Entities

***Tafsīr*, 1:36**

So all of the intelligible entities and universal natures are, in reality, nothing but imprints and signs denoting the modes [*anḥā*] of contingent existents which are drops of the ocean of necessary reality, rays of the sun of the Absolute Being, and loci of His names, attributes, beauty, and majesty. As for these very entities and quiddities which in a specific sense are secluded from the existents, they are fundamentally nonexistent, both to the eye and intellect. Rather, they are only names, as He says, *These are merely names that you and your fathers have given to them. God has not revealed an authority concerning them* [Q 53:23].

The Indefinable Essence

Tafsīr, 1:37

God's Essence has no definition, just as there is no proof for It. As for what is understood by the expression "God," does it have a definition or not? The Real is the First because the meaning predicated of Him is a sum total which gathers the meanings of all the attributes of perfection. Thus, every meaning of God's names forms a part of this Name, when the Name is differentiated.

Obtaining a Flash of the Essence

Tafsīr, 1:39

The people of unveiling and witnessing cannot attain a flash of the Essence's light except after the passing away of their identities, and the crumbling of the mountain of their existence.

The Inaccessibility of the Name

Tafsīr, 1:39

The concepts [*maḥmūmāt*] of all the divine names and their existential loci [*maẓāhir*], which are parts of the cosmos—both outwardly and inwardly—despite their multiplicity, [form] a real definition [*ḥadd ḥaqīqī*] in signifying God's name [*ism allāh*]. It follows that all the meanings of the realities of the cosmos are a definition of God's name, just as all the meanings of the divine names define Him, except that it is possible for the human intellect to encompass [*iḥāṭa*] all the definitions of defined things in their particulars, as opposed to the meanings of the particulars of His definition, because the meanings cannot be confined [*ghayr maḥsūra*].

On Ibn 'Arabī's Reference to "the Real"

Tafsīr, 1:39

What was intended by "the Real" in Ibn 'Arabī's saying "The Real is defined by every essential definition," was that which is meant by [*muḥād*] the word "God" [*allāh*] from the standpoint of its universal meaning and intellectual concept, not from the standpoint of the reality of its meaning, which is the Essence of Exclusive Oneness [*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*] and the Unseen of the unseens [*ghayb al-ghuyūb*], since It has neither essential definition, nor name, nor description, and intellectual perception does not have a way to It.

Idols of Belief ***Tafsīr, 1:40-2***

Know O saint!—May God illumine your heart with faith—that most people do not worship God insofar as He is God. They merely worship the objects of their beliefs in accordance with what they have formed for themselves as objects of worship. In reality, their gods are those imaginary idols which they form [*yataṣawwarūna*] and carve [*yanḥitūna*] with the potency of their intellectual or imaginary beliefs. This is what one of the knowers of the People of the Household—namely Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Bāqir—alluded to [when he said], “Whatever distinction you make using your imagination in coming up with the most precise of meanings is something created like you, and returns to you.”

That is, a believer amongst the veiled ones—those who create the divinity in the forms of the object of their belief and nothing else—only worships a god on account of what he creates within himself and forms [*taṣawwara*] using his imagination. In reality, his god is created for himself and sculpted with the hand of his potent free-disposal. So there is no difference between those idols which are taken as gods [externally] and his god, owing to the fact that they are all created for the self, whether they be external or internal to it.

External idols are also only worshipped because of their worshipper’s belief in their divinity. The mental forms are the objects of their worship essentially, and the external forms are their objects of worship accidentally. Thus, the objects of worship of every idol-worshipper are nothing but the forms of his beliefs and the caprices of his soul, as has been alluded to in His saying, *Have you seen the one who takes his caprice for his god?* [Q 65:23].

Just as worshippers of bodily idols worship what their hands have created, so too do those who have partial beliefs concerning God worship what the hands of their intellects have gathered. His words have proven true against them and their objects of worship: *Woe to you and what you worship apart from God!* [Q 21:67]. Likewise are His words, *You and what you worship apart from God will be rocks for Hell* [Q 21:98]. Because of his deficiency in understanding the meaning [of this verse], Ibn Zab‘arī objected to the Messenger of God, stating that the angels and the Messiah are also worshipped. But he and those who had his rank did not know that the object of worship of the one who worships the angels and the Messiah is itself one of the acts of Satan.

As for the perfect ones amongst the gnostics, they are the ones who worship the Absolute, the Real—who is given the name “God”—without the delimitation of a particular name or a specified quality. The Real who is described by every name discloses Himself to them and they never deny Him in any of the self-disclosures of His names, acts, and traces, unlike the delimited and veiled one who worships God according to a specific wording: *if good befalls him, he reposes in it; if affliction*

befalls him, he turns away on his face [Q 22:11]. That is because of the predominance of the properties of some of the homesteads and the veiling of his vision by some of the loci of self-disclosure over others.

From this veiling, differences amongst people in matters of belief come about. Thus, some of them anathematize others, and some curse others, while every one of them affirms for the Real what the other denies, thinking that what they opine and believe is the highest form of exaltation of God! But they err and display bad etiquette towards God, while they think that they have attained the highest rank in knowledge and etiquette!

So also is the case with many of the people of declaring God's incomparability—because of the predominance of the properties of disengagement upon them, they are veiled like the angels [who are veiled] by the light of declaring God holy, while they are opposed to those who declare God's similarity, who, like animals, are veiled by the darkneses of declaring God bodily.

As for the Perfect Man, he knows the Real in every object of witnessing [*mashāhid*] and religious rite [*mashā'ir*]. He worships Him in every homestead [*mawṭin*] and locus of manifestation, so he is the servant of God [*abd allāh*] who worships Him in all of His names and attributes. On account of this, the most perfect of human individuals—Muḥammad, God bless him and his family—was given this name. Just as the divine name [Allāh] brings together all the names—which are unified because of the Exclusive Unity of All-Gatheredness—so too does its path bring together the paths of all the names, even if each of these paths are specified by a name which sustains its locus, and each locus is worshipped and its straight path particular to it is traversed from that perspective. There is no path that brings together the paths of all of the loci of manifestation except the one upon which the locus of the Gathering Prophetic Seal travels—which, being the path of declaring God's oneness and upon which were all of the Prophets and saints—is travelled by the elect of the Prophet's community, which is the best of communities.

The Precedence of Mercy

***Tafsīr*, 1:42**

It is just as He says, *And do not follow the paths [al-subul], for they will divert you from His path [sabīlihi]* [Q 6:153], that is, the path which is for you contains felicity and salvation, for if this were not the case, then all paths would lead to Him, since God is the end-point of every purpose and the Final Goal [*ghāya*] of every endeavour. However, not everyone who returns to Him will attain felicity and salvation from dispersion and chastisement. For the path to felicity is one: *Say: "This is my path [sabīlī]. Upon insight I call to God myself and those who follow me"* [Q

12:108]. As for the other paths, all of their goals is God firstly. Then the All-Merciful [*al-rahmān*] will take over for Him [*yatawallāhu al-rahman*] at the end, and the property of the All-Merciful will subsist amongst them for eternity, whose subsistence has no end. This is a strange affair! I have not found anyone upon the face of the earth who knows it as it truly should be known.

The Names “God” and “He”

***Tafsīr*, 1:42-3**

Know that the relationship of the name “He” to the name “God” is like the relationship of existence to quiddity in a contingent thing, except that the Necessary has no quiddity other than existence [*anniyya*]. It has already been discussed that the concept of the name “God” is one of the things that has a true essential definition, but that intellects are unable to encompass [*iḥāta*] all of the meanings that enter into its essential definition. For the form of a definition is only known when the forms of the essential definitions of all the existents are known. If this is not the case, then the form of the essential definition cannot be known [*wa-idh laysa fa-laysa*]. As for the name “He,” It has no definition and no allusion can be made to It. So It is the most exalted station and the highest rank. For this reason, the perfect arrived ones have been singled out [*yukhtaṣṣu*] with perpetually being [*mudāwama*] in this noble invocation. A fine point in this is that when the servant invokes God with some of His attributes, he is not drowned in knowledge of God, because when he says “O All-Merciful,” he is invoking His mercy, and his nature inclines to seeking it But when he says “O He!,” while knowing that He is a pure ipseity which is uncontaminated by generality, specificity, multiplicity, plurality, finitude, and definition, this [then] is the invocation which does not denote anything at all except Perfect Existence [*al-aniyya al-tāmma*], which is uncontaminated by a meaning dissimilar to It. At that time, the light of Its invocation will settle in the servant’s heart. This light cannot be defiled by the darkness generated by invoking other than God. This is the perfect light and the complete unveiling.

The Light of the Essence

***Tafsīr*, 1:44**

His Essence, in the intensity of light, is infinity beyond the infinite. So what escapes the servant is infinitely more than what is witnessed. Thus, He is unseen by everything in His perfect, simple reality, even though He is witnessed by the servant.

The End for All is Mercy
Tafsīr, 1:70-2

Know that God's mercy embraces all things with respect to existence and quiddity. So the existence of wrath, in terms of the entity of wrath [*ʿayn al-ghaḍab*], is also from God's mercy. For this reason, His mercy outstrips His wrath, since being is that very mercy which encompasses [*shāmila*] everything, as He says, *And My mercy embraces all things* [Q 7:156]. Amongst the totality of entities and quiddities—all of which the existential mercy [*al-rahma al-wujūdiyya*] reaches—are the entities of wrath and vengeance. Through mercy, God gives existence to the entity of wrath, so its root is good, as is what results from it, such as pain, sickness, tribulation, trial, and the like....

Whoever closely examines the concomitants of wrath [*lawāzim al-ghaḍab*], such as sickness, pain, poverty, ignorance, death, and others, will find all of them to be nonexistent in themselves [*bi-mā hiya*] or nonexistent matters considered to be amongst the evil things. With respect to them being existents, they are all good, pouring forth from the well-spring of the mercy that is all-embracing and the existence that pervades all things. Because of this, the intellect will judge that the attribute of mercy is essential to God and that the attribute of wrath is accidental, which arises out of the causes either because the contingent existents lack perfection in accordance with the ranks of their distance from the Real, the Self-Subsisting, or because of the incapacity of matter to receive existence in the most perfect manner. On account of this, it is unveiled that “the end for all is mercy.” As has been related in the tradition, God says, “The angels have interceded, the prophets have interceded, and the believers have interceded—there remains none but the Most Merciful of the merciful.”

In *The Meccan Openings*, Shaykh al-ʿArabī says: “Know that God intercedes with respect to His names. His name ‘the Most Merciful of the merciful’ intercedes for His names ‘the Compeller’ and ‘Terrible in Chastisement’ in order that He may withdraw His chastisement from these parties. Thus, the one who did no good whatsoever will exit the Fire. God has called attention to this station: *The day We muster the godfearing [muttaqīn] to the All-Merciful in droves* [Q 19:85]. The ‘god-fearing’ person merely sits with that divine name on account of which fear [*khawf*] falls into the hearts of servants. His intimate is called ‘fearful of Him’ [*muttaqī minhu*]. God will lift him from this name to that name which gives him safety from that which he was fearful. For this reason, the Prophet said concerning the intercession, ‘the Most Merciful of the merciful remains.’ This relationship relates to intercession to the Real from the Real with respect to His names.”

In his treatise entitled *The Flashes*, Shaykh al-ʿIrāqī relates that Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī heard the verse, *The day We muster the godfearing to the All-Merciful in droves*. So he let out a cry and said, “How will He

muster to Him those who are with him?” The other one [i.e., Ibn ‘Arabī] came and said, “From the name ‘the Compeller’ to the name ‘The All-Merciful,’ and from the name ‘the Overbearing’ to [the name] ‘the Compassionate’.”

The Cosmology of Praise *Tafsīr, 1:74-5*

As for the customary usage of the unveilers, “praise” is a kind of speech [*naw‘ min al-kalām*]. It has already been said that “speech” [*kalām*] is other than that which is specified by the tongue. This is why God praises Himself by means of that which He is worthy and deserving, just as the Prophet said, “I cannot enumerate Your praises. You are as You have praised Yourself.” Likewise, everything praises and glorifies Him, as He says, *There is nothing except that it glorifies His praises; but you do not understand their glorification* [Q 18:44]. So the reality of praise, according to the verifying gnostics, is the act of making God’s attributes of perfection manifest [*izhār al-ṣifāt al-kamāliyya*]. This could either be through words [*qawl*]—as is well-known amongst the masses—or it could be in act [*bi-l-fī‘l*], which is like God’s praise for Himself and the praise of all things for Him....

God’s praise for Himself—which is the most exalted level of praise—is His existentiation [*ijād*] of every existing thing.... His existentiation of every existent is “praise” in the infinitive sense, similar to the way speaking denotes beauty [of voice] through speech. The existent itself is “praise” in the sense of actualizing the infinitive. In this sense, it is valid to call every existent thing “praise.” And just as every existent is a “praise,” so too is it a praiser [*hāmid*], because of its being composed of an intellectual constituent and a rational substance.... This is why this intellectual denotation has been expressed in the Qur’ān as “speech,” [*nuṭq*]: “*God, the one who causes all things to speak, caused us to speak*” [Q 41:22]. Likewise, every existent, with respect to the totality of its arrangement, is a single praise and a single praiser.

[This is] in accordance with what has been affirmed, namely that the sum total [*al-jamī‘*] is like one large man with one reality, one form, and one intellect. This is the First Intellect, which is the form and reality of the world, and is the complete Muḥammadan reality [*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya al-tamāmiyya*]. So the most exalted and most tremendous level of praise is the level of the Muḥammadan Seal, which subsists through the existence of the Seal [*al-martaba al-khatmiyya al-Muḥammadiyya al-qā’ima bi-wujūd al-khātam*] on account of his arrival at the promised praiseworthy station in His saying, *Perhaps your Lord will raise you to a praiseworthy station* [Q 17:79]. So his hallowed essence is the utmost level of praise through which God praises Himself.

This is why he has been singled out with the banner of praise [*liwā' al-ḥamd*], and was called *ḥammād*, *aḥmad*, and *maḥmūd*....

The Specification of Praise

Tafsīr, 1:76-7

All levels of existents (with respect to spirit, body, intellect, and sense perception) in every tongue (with respect to speech, act, and state) praise God, glorify Him, and magnify Him in this world and the next world in accordance with their primordial disposition [sic: *fiṭra aṣli*] as required by their essential drive [*al-dā'iya al-dhātiyya*]. There is no doubt that every innate act [*fi'l gharīzī*] has an essential end and original calling [*ghāya dhātiyya wa-bā'ith aṣli*]. It has been established that His Essence is the Final Goal of final goals [*ghāyat al-ghāyāt*] and the End for [all] objects of desire. For this reason, it is possible that His saying, *Praise is for God* [*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*] [Q 1:2] is an allusion to the Origin of existence and its End. Likewise, the [first] *lām* in *for God* [*li-llāh*] is [an allusion] to the Final Goal, or to the specification [of praise].

The reality of existence (or all its individual parts) is “for” God [*li-llāh*]. Since they are “for” Him, He is also “for” them. As the Prophet says, “Whoever is for God, God is for him.” God’s Essence is the Final Cause of all things and the Final Goal of the perfection of every form of existence, either without an intermediary, as is the case with the Muḥammadan reality, which is the form of the world’s arrangement and its root and origin; or through the medium of His most holy effusion and His hallowed existence, as is the case with the rest of the existents. In this lies the secret of intercession and the banner of praise.

Man is a Macrocosm

Tafsīr, 1:79

In Bayḍāwī’s *tafsīr*, [he says the following]: “It is said that by it [i.e., the word *‘ālamīn* in Q 1:2] He means ‘people,’ for every one of them is a ‘world’ insofar as he contains, in a manner similar to the macrocosm, the substances and accidents through which the Artisan is known, just as He is known through what He created in the macrocosm. This is why gazing upon the two is equal. God says, *And within yourselves—do you not see?* [Q 51:21]”

I say that the existence of every individual person (or most of them), as a locus of gazing, is composed in a manner similar to the macrocosm, whether it be most or all of it. Most people do not go beyond the confines of animality to the station of the intellect. So man’s comprising some of the things in a manner similar [to the macrocosm] is not peculiar to him.

By “the worlds” [‘*ālamīn*], He could mean the “scholars” [‘*ulamā’ min al-insān*]. With respect to the usage common [‘*urf*] amongst the lexicographers, this is clear. With respect to what is customary usage [‘*muta‘āraf*] amongst people, it is because every knower (with a *kasra*) [‘*ālim*] is a world (with a *fatha*) [‘*ālam*]. With respect to the point of view that man contains something of all that is in the macrocosm [‘*al-‘ālam al-kabīr*], it is because his perfect configuration [‘*nash’atuhu al-kāmila*] is the locus of all the divine names and attributes, and is the gathering place of all of the existential realities, as is known to those who assiduously pursue the signs in the horizons and within the selves [cf. Q 41:53]. So man is a prototype for all of what is in the cosmos. From this perspective, he is a small world [‘*ālam ṣaghīr*], which is why he is called the “microcosm” [‘*al-‘ālam al-ṣaghīr*], for it is as if he is a book that has condensed and abridged the entire cosmos [‘*kitāb mukhtaṣar muntakhab min jamī‘ al-‘ālam*], *leaving out neither that which is great nor small except that it takes account of it* [Q 18:49], just as the Qur’ān, despite its concision, contains all of the heavenly books.

The Path ***Tafsīr*, 1:111**

Know that the path [‘*sirāṭ*] is not a path except through one’s traversing it. An allusion has been made to the fact that every creature is heading towards the direction of the Real, towards the Causer of causes [‘*musabbib al-asbāb*] in an innate manner of turning [‘*tawajjuh gharīzī*] and a motion of natural disposition [‘*ḥaraka jibilliyya*]. In this motion of natural disposition, diversion and fleeing from what God has fixed for each of them cannot be conceived of with respect to them. God takes them by their forelock, as He says, “*There is not a creature except that He takes it by its forelock. Verily my Lord is upon a straight path*” [Q 11:56].

Substantial Motion ***Tafsīr*, 1:112-3**

As for essential motion [‘*ḥaraka dhātiyya*], it is substantial motion [‘*ḥaraka jawhariyya*]. As with all types of motion, it has an agent, receptacle, traversed distance, beginning, and end, except that motion in substance differs from the others in one manner: the distance traversed in this motion is the moving body [‘*mutaḥarrik*] itself, both in reality and existence. The agent of this essential human motion is God, and its receptacle, that is, its object, is the human soul with respect to the potency of the receptivity of its soul [‘*quwwatihā al-isti‘dādiyya al-nafsāniyya*] and its passive hylic intellect.

Why Peoples' Natures Differ
Tafsīr, 1:118-21

It is because of their disparities in purity and murkiness, power and weakness, and nobility and lowliness; it is also in accordance with the bodily causes and worldly states—such as the material preparednesses and the continuous chain of accidents ending in the high matters—which occur to them. And [it is because] of the preeternal decree....

In sum, the disparity in creation in terms of perfection and imperfection and felicity and wretchedness is either by way of substantial essential matters, or by way of accidental matters acquired by means of religious devotions and actions. So the difference is in accordance with the essential matters by way of the pure divine solicitude, which calls for beauty of order and excellence of arrangement [in the cosmos].

The Path is the Soul
Tafsīr, 1:122

Know that were you to traverse the path and were God to firmly place your feet upon it such that He causes you to arrive to Paradise, [it would be] the form of guidance which you created for your soul in the abode of this world by virtue of God's guiding you by way of actions related to the heart and body. In this abode, it is not witnessed as a sensory form. On the day of resurrection, and according to the view of the people of insight who have been overcome by witnessing the constitution of the afterlife, it is spread out for you as a sensory bridge [*jīsr maḥsūs*] extended over the surface of Hell, its start being in [this] place, and its end being at the door of Paradise. Whoever witnesses it will know that it is of his design and building, and that it is an extended bridge in this world over the surface of his Hell in the fire of his nature within which is the shadow of his reality.

God's Writing
Tafsīr, 1:135

All of the cosmos is His writing. Indeed, the writing of authors derives from His writing which He caused to be written through the medium of the hearts of His servants. So there is nothing astonishing about an author. Rather, there is astonishment over the one who subjected him.

God's Hands and Feet

Tafsīr, 1:149-50

God—hallowed is His Essence and exalted are His attributes above being composed of parts and limbs—has two holy hands, both of which are right [*yamīn allāh*]. These exalted acts are face to face with the two contrary attributes, such as the attributes of mercy and wrath, and good-pleasure and anger. Each of the contrary attributes has a grip [*qabḍa*], as is indicated in His saying, *The entire earth will be in His grip on the day of resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand* [Q 39:67]. It has been related in a tradition that the Messenger of God said, “God will fold the heavens on the day of resurrection. Then He will take them by His right hand and will say, ‘I am the King. Where are the haughty ones? Where are the proud ones?’ Then he will fold the earth in His right hand.” And in a [different] narration, [the Prophet said], “He will take them by His other hand, and then will say, ‘Where are the haughty ones? Where are the proud ones?’”

In His establishing Himself upon the Throne, He also has two feet which were let down onto the Footstool. The one which designates the foot of firmness gives fixity [*thubūt*] to the people of the Gardens in their Gardens, while the other one, which designates the foot of domination [*jabarūt*], gives fixity to the people of Hell in Hell. These matters are amongst the divine levels and their concomitants amongst the general matters, which are accidental to contingent existents because of the inability of their rank in perceiving the divine levels.

Know that the ruling property [*ḥukm*] of the divine wrath is the perfection of the level of the grip of the left hand [*qabḍat al-shimāl*], for although both of His hands are holy, blessed, and right, the ruling property of each of them—leftness [*shimāliyya*] and rightness [*yamīniyya*—is in opposition to the other from the standpoint of their owners. For this reason, He says, *The entire earth will be in His grip on the day of resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand*. He will render the earth “gripped” and the heavens “folded.” So understand! The hand to which all of the felicitous belong contains mercy and Gardens, while the other contains chastisement and Fires.

The Triumph of Mercy

Tafsīr, 1:151-2

The general mercy will necessitate the all-encompassing bestowal upon everything. There is no doubt that the affair will take place in this way. So the Word will prove true and blessings will be general. Wrath's ruling property will become manifest, and then mercy will overcome [it]. Nothing of the contingents will be without mercy, each of them

[receiving it] in accordance with their states and the rank of their way stations.

Just as His mercy encompasses and embraces all things, so too does His wrath, except that the side of mercy is preponderant because of its being essential, while wrath is accidental because of the inability of contingents in their contingency to receive the complete light. There is an allusion to this in the saying of the Commander of the Faithful [i.e., ‘Alī, the first Imam]: “Glory to the one whose mercy embraces His friends in the intensity of His vengeance, and His vengeance is intensified towards His enemies in the embrace of His mercy.”

None Worships Anyone but Him *Tafsīr, 1:153*

In a narration it has been related that God is beautiful and He loves beauty. He is the artisan of the cosmos and brings it into existence in His form [*shākila*], as He says, [*Say:*] “*everyone acts according to their form*” [Q 17:84].... So the entire cosmos is of the utmost beauty because it is a mirror for the Real. This is why the knowers become enraptured by it and the verifiers realize love for it. For He is the object of gaze in every eye, the beloved in every form of love, the object of worship in every act of worship, and the Final Goal in both the unseen and the seen. The entire cosmos prays to Him, praises Him, and glorifies Him.

The Transmutations of God *Tafsīr, 1:154*

The last form into which He will transmute Himself for His servants will be the ruling property of contentment [*riḍā*]. So the Real will transmute Himself into the form of bliss.... He will be gracious towards, and forgive on His own behalf, those who angered Him by removing whatever there was in Him of annoyance, distress, and wrath. Then He will apply this to those who are objects of wrath [*al-maghḍūb*]. Whoever understands this will be safe from His wrath, but will not “feel safe from God’s deception” [cf. Q 7:99], and whoever does not understand will come to know, and will understand that the end is to Him.

The End of the Sojourn *Tafsīr, 1:154-5*

When God created the Throne, He made it the locus of the establishment of existential mercy and the Unity of the Word of existention, which is the saying “*Be!*” [Q 2:117] And He created the Footstool, and the Word was divided into two commands—Command and creation—so that He

could create a pair of everything.... The two feet were let down onto the Footstool until the Word of the Spirit became divided in the Footstool, for the Footstool is the second in form and shape after the Throne. From the Footstool, two shapes came about in the body of the natural world. So the two feet were let down onto the Footstool, and each foot alighted in a place. One place was called the “Garden” and the other “Hell.” There is no place to which the two feet can travel beyond these two places. And they will not be contracted except from the root from which they became manifest, namely the All-Merciful. So they only give mercy, for by virtue of wisdom [*hikma*], the end [*nihāya*] returns to the beginning [*bidāya*], except that between the beginning and end there is a path. If this were not the case, there would be no beginning and end to it. The journey is where one can expect to find [*māzinna*] fatigue, misfortune, and toil. This is the cause of the emergence of the wretchedness that has become manifest in the cosmos in terms of this world, the next world, and the isthmus. At the end of the sojourn, the walking staff [*‘aṣā al-tasāyur*] will be cast aside and repose [*rāḥa*] in the abodes of permanence and perdition will reign.

The Likeness of Two Travelers *Tafsīr, 1:155*

To the one who says that the matter is not such that one will find repose should he dwell in a place called “the Fire,” it could be said to him: you are correct, but complete reflection [*al-naẓar al-tāmm*] has escaped you! This is because travelers are of two types: one is in a state of comfort on his journey because of his being beloved, served—all of his needs being provided for him on a platter which is supported by the necks of men—and protected from change in climate. His likeness in arriving to his home is like the people of the Garden in the Garden. [The other] traveler treads on the path with his feet, has paltry provisions, and diminished supplies. When he arrives home, fatigue and hardship remain with him for a while, until they depart him. Then he finds repose. This is like the one who is punished and wretched in the Fire (which is his home), and then the mercy which encompasses all things becomes widespread. Between these two types of travelers there is a traveler who does not have the comforts of the person of the Garden, nor the chastisement [*‘adhāb*] of the person of the Fire. So he is between repose and fatigue. [He belongs to] a party which will be taken out of the Fire through *the intercession of the interceders* [Q 74:48] and the removal of the Most Merciful of the merciful. And this party will be in ranks in accordance with the fatigue that remains with them. In the Fire, the fatigue will be removed bit-by-bit [*shay’an fa-shay’an*]. When their time is up, they will be taken to the place of repose [*maḥall al-rāḥa*], which is the Garden.

Chastisement's Sweetness

Tafsīr, 1:156

The last of those who remain are those who did no good whatsoever, neither by way of having faith nor by way of displaying excellent character traits. It is just that they were preceded by solicitude [*ināya*], [which demands] that they should be amongst the people of this abode.... Then the doors will be locked, and the Fire will surround [them] and there will be despair over getting out. At that time, mercy will spread amongst the Fire's inhabitants because they had despaired getting out of it, *just as the nonbelievers despair over the people of the graves* [Q 60:13]. He had given them a constitution which is agreeable to one who inhabits this abode. So when they despair, they will rejoice—their bliss will be the measure [of their despair], this being the first bliss that they will find and their [first] state in the Fire, as we have mentioned.... Thus they will find the chastisement [*adhāb*] sweet [*yasta'dhibūna*], so pains will cease and the chastisement [*adhāb*] will become sweetness [*adhb*].... God willing, the inhabitant of every abode will taste sweetness. So understand! Do you not see the truth of what we have said? Because of the deficiency and nonexistence of fullness that is in it, the Fire will not cease to be painful until the Compeller places His foot in it, as has been related in the tradition. This is one of the two aforementioned feet on the Footstool. The other [foot] is the one whose resting place will be the Garden: *Give glad tidings to those who believe, that they have a foot of firmness with their Lord* [Q 10:2]. The name “Lord” will be with them, and the name “Compeller” will be with the others because the Fire is the abode of majesty, domination, and awe, whereas the Garden is the abode of beauty, intimacy, and the subtle divine alighting place [*manzil al-ilāhī al-laṭīf*]. The two of them are face to face with the two grips mentioned in the Sacred tradition: “One for the people of the Fire, and I don't care; the other for the people of the Garden, and I don't care.” He does not care because the end for both is to the all-embracing mercy.

The Fātiḥa and the Perfect Man

Tafsīr, 1:163-4

By my life, it is like the form of the All-Gatheredness of the world, which is created upon the form of the All-Merciful [and] denotes, in its appearance, structure, and its comprising the loci of the attributes of beauty—such as the angels and their lights—and the attributes of majesty—such as bodies and their faculties—the existence of the one *to whom belong the creation and the Command* [7:54].

The relationship of the *Sūrat al-fātiḥa* to the entire Qur'ān is like the relationship of man—who is the small world—to the world, which is

the great man. And just as the Perfect Man is a succinct book [*kitāb wajīz*] and an abridged transcription [*nuskha muntakhab*] within whom is found all that is in the All-Gathering great book [*al-kitāb al-kabīr al-jāmi'*] ... so too is the Opener of the book [*fātiḥat al-kitāb*], within which, despite its brevity and concision, is found the sum total [*majāmi'*] of the aims of the Qur'ān and their secrets and lights. This All-Gatheredness [*jāmi'iyya*] is not for the other Qur'anic *sūras*, just as none of the forms of the world's parts have what man has with respect to [his bringing together] the form of the Divine Gatheredness [*al-ṣūra al-jam'iyya al-ilāhiyya*]. As it is said:

God does not find it objectionable
that He should gather the cosmos in one individual.

As has been indicated, the gnostic who verifies the truth within himself [*al-ʿarīf al-muḥaqqiq*] understands from this one *sūra* all of the sciences and universal forms of knowledge spread throughout the verses and *sūras* of the Qur'ān. So whoever does not understand this *sūra* so as to derive from it the support of the secrets of the divine sciences and lordly forms of knowledge, such as the states of the Origin and the Return and the science of the soul and what is below and above it—which is the key to all the rest of the sciences—is not a lordly knower and is not guided in his interpretation [*tafsīr*].

If this *sūra* did not, as we said, contain the secrets of the Origin and the Return and the science of man's wayfaring to his Lord, the reports about its superiority would not have been related. Indeed, it is equal to the entire Qur'ān, since, in reality, a thing does not have rank and excellence except on account of its containing divine matters and their states, as has already been stated.

The Return of All things to God *Tafsīr, 1:166*

His saying *Master of the Day of Judgement* [Q 1:4] is an allusion to the reality of the Return and the return of everything to Him, because He is the Final Goal of final goals [*ghāyat al-ghāyāt*].

The Path is the Qur'ān *Tafsīr, 1:166-7*

It [i.e., the word *ṣirāṭ* in Q 1:6] is an allusion to the Majestic Qur'ān, which is the noblest of heavenly books which [themselves] are the spiritual Tablets [*al-alwāḥ al-naḥsiyya*] that have been revealed to the previous prophets. [The reason the Qur'ān has been

revealed to the Prophet is] because his intellectual, spiritual substance (this being the substance of prophecy) is, from one perspective, a divine Word, and, from [another] perspective, a *clarifying book* [Q 5:15] in which there are verses of wisdom and gnosis In himself, the Prophet is “the Path of God, the Exalted, the Praiseworthy” [cf. Q 14:1], since the servant’s arrival to God is not possible except after arriving at knowledge of the Prophet’s essence. Likewise [is the case with] the one who represents him, as the detached Qur’ānic letters indicate: “Alī is the path of truth to which we cling [*alī širāṭ ḥaqq numsikuhu*]”

A Tradition on the Distinction of the Fātiḥa *Tafsīr, 1:168*

The Prophet said, “By the one in whose hand is my soul, God did not reveal its like in the Torah, Gospels, Psalms, or [anywhere else in] the Qur’ān. It is the mother of the book and the doubled seven [allusion to Q 15:87]. It is divided between God and His servant, and for His servant is what he asks.”

A Merit of the Fātiḥa *Tafsīr, 1:170*

One of the merits of this *sūra* is that it brings together [*jāmi‘a*] all that man needs with respect to knowledge of the Origin, the middle, and the Return.

The Path is the Soul Revisited *Tafsīr, 1:175*

With respect to its containing the science of the Return, which is the science of the states of the human soul that is perfect in knowledge and action, [and] free from the disease of ignorance and the deficiency of sin, His saying, *the Path of those whom You have favoured ...* [Q 1:7] is an allusion to the science of the soul. And it is “the Path of God, the Exalted, the Praiseworthy” [cf. Q 14:1], and God’s gate.... Through the acting and knowing perfect soul that is guided by God’s Light, people are driven to God, and, from this gate, all created things enter the path of return to the Creator, for being is in the form of a circle whose second part [i.e., the arc of descent] joins with the first part [i.e., the arc of ascent].

Appendix IV

Glossary of Technical Terms in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*

Provided here is a glossary of the technical Arabic terms employed by Mullā Ṣadrā in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa*. Each entry contains a transliteration and translation(s) of the technical term in question, followed by a listing of the page numbers in which it is to be found in the text. Where pertinent, I have provided cross-references to (a) Ṣadrā's other works in which the respective term figures, and (b) relevant primary and secondary literature. I have, for the most part, followed William Chittick's translations in cases where Arabic terms employed in the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-fātiḥa* also appear in Ṣadrā's *Iksīr al-ʿarīfīn (The Elixir of the Gnostics)*.

ʿālam al-ghayb → *World of the Unseen; World of the Mystery*

Tafsīr, 1:28. Cf. *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 221

ʿālam al-shahāda → *World of the Visible*

Tafsīr, 1:28. Cf. *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 175

fitra asliyya → *primordial disposition*

Tafsīr, 1:3, 19, 118. Cf. *Tafsīr*, 1:119 (“primordial dispositions”)

ghayb al-ghuyūb → *Unseen of the unseens*, i.e., God's Essence of Exclusive Oneness

Tafsīr, 1:39. Cf. *Asfār*, 2:345-47; *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 103-4 n. 35

harf → *letter*

Tafsīr, 1:28

hudūth → *temporal origination*

Tafsīr, 1:84. Cf. Mohaghegh and Izutsu, “Iṣtilahāt wa-ta‘bīrāt,” in Sabziwārī, *Sharḥ*, 608

hukm → *ruling property*, i.e., of each divine name

Tafsīr, 1:150. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 39-41

‘ibāra → *expression*

Tafsīr, 1:28

ibdā‘ → *spontaneous origination*

Tafsīr, 1:84. Cf. *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 221

idrāk → *perception*

Tafsīr, 1:89. Cf. Chittick, “On the Teleology of Perception,” *Transcendent Philosophy* 1 (2000): 1-18

ishāra → *allusion*

Tafsīr, 1:28

ikhtiṣās → *specification*, i.e., each thing’s specificity with respect to being

Tafsīr, 1:20, 76, 84-7, 89, 100, 103, 129, 131, 145, 148 (*takḥṣīs*), 155

al-‘ināya al-ilāhiyya → *divine solicitude*

Tafsīr, 1:120-1, 131. Cf. *Asfār*, 7:55 ff.; Mohaghegh and Izutsu, “Iṣtilahāt wa-ta‘bīrāt,” 628

inbisāt → *unfolding, self-unfolding* (of being)

Tafsīr, 1:30. Cf. *Mashā'ir*, 59

al-insān al-ma'nawī → *the true man*

Tafsīr, 1:102, 108 (“the true *ma'nawī* man”)

i'tibārāt → *standpoints, expressions*

Tafsīr, 1:34. Cf. Mohaghegh and Izutsu, “Iṣtilahāt wa-ta'bīrāt,” 594

isti'dād → *preparedness*

Tafsīr, 1:19, 86, 117. Cf. Mohaghegh and Izutsu, “Iṣtilahāt wa-ta'bīrāt,” 593

jabarūt → *Invincibility*, i.e., the world beyond the Sovereignty and equivalent to the world of the First Intellect.

Tafsīr, 1:17. Cf. *Asfār*, 6:294; *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 92-3 n. 36; *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 175; *Mabda'*, 125

→ *domination*

Tafsīr, 1:150

jabbār → *Compeller*

Tafsīr, 1:71

jam' → *All-Gathering*

Tafsīr, 1:164. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 110 n. 43

jam'iyya → *All-Gatheredness*

Tafsīr, 1:163-4. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 110 n. 43; *Se rendre immortel*, 105; Jambet, *The Act of Being*, 413, 492 n. 43

jāmiʿ → *comprehensive, gathering*

Tafsīr, 1:43, 164. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 110 n. 43

jāmiʿa → *gatherer; [that which] brings together*

Tafsīr, 1:170

jāmiʿiyya → *Gatheredness*

Tafsīr, 1:164. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 110 n. 43

kalimāt tammāt → *Perfect Words*

Tafsīr, 1:9 ff. Cf. *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 148, 208; Rustom, “Qur’anic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy,” 97 ff.

khazānat al-ghayb → *treasury of the unseen*

Tafsīr, 1:119

khitāb → *addressing*

Tafsīr, 1:88 ff.

lafz → *word*

Tafsīr, 1:28

al-lawh al-nafsī → *spiritual tablet*

Tafsīr, 1:102

maʿwā → *abode*

Tafsīr, 1:85

madhhab → *position* (intellectual)

Tafsīr, 1:30

malakūt → *Sovereignty*, i.e., the spiritual realm; it is below the Invincibility and is equivalent to the world of universal imagination/images, that is, the Platonic Forms

Tafsīr, 1:17, 30; 69, 84. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 96 n. 18; *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 153

marhūn → *appointed*

Tafsīr, 1:86-7

martaba ulūhiyya jāmi'a → *All-Gathering Level Divine*, i.e., the level of the name Allāh; it is a isthmus between the Presence of Exclusive Oneness and the loci of the Command

Tafsīr, 1:34

mawātin → *homesteads*, i.e., loci of manifestation or the next world (*mawṭin*)

Tafsīr, 1:41 (loci); 85, 113 (next world)

mukhtaṣar → *condensed*

Tafsīr, 1:79, 163

muntakhab → *abridged*

Tafsīr, 1:79

mu'avyana → *entified, determined*

Tafsīr, 1:86. Cf. Dagli, "Translator's Introduction," in Ibn 'Arabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*, xvi-ix

nash'a → configuration; constitution

Tafsīr, 1:84, 113. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 98 n. 31; *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 250 n. 302; Rustom, "Psychology, Eschatology, and Imagination," 16 n. 19

→ *of the next life*

Tafsīr, 1:113

nuskha → transcription

Tafsīr, 1:163. Cf. Qūnawī, *Ijāz*, 98, 106

al-qalam al-a'lā → supreme pen

Tafsīr, 1:102. Cf. Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 166, 188-90; Rustom, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī," 60

ṣahīfa → scroll

Tafsīr, 1:174

surādiq → canopies

Tafsīr, 1:11. Cf. *Asrār*, 76

shāmila → encompasses/encompassing; similar to ihātā

Tafsīr, 1:39, 42-3, 70

shumūl → pervasiveness, pervading, encompassing

Tafsīr, 1:30

shu'ūn → tasks, i.e., the divine properties and traces found throughout creation in so far as the things in the cosmos are the **names of the names** (*asmā' al-asmā'*); but when the **tasks** are at the level of the names, they are the **divine tasks** (*shu'ūn ilāhiyya*) and **unseen levels** (*marātib al-ghaybiyya*), thus corresponding to the **keys to the unseen** (*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*).

Tafsīr, 1:34. Cf. *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, 104 n. 37; Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light*, 120 and index s.v. “task”; Rustom, “Qur’anic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy,” 160-4.

al-tabī‘a al-aslī → *primordial nature*

Tafsīr, 1:121-2

al-tabī‘a al-ukhrā → *other nature*, i.e., the second constitution

Tafsīr, 1:121-2. Cf. *Asfār*, 9:342 ff.

al-tibā‘ al-aslī → *primordial imprint*

Tafsīr, 1:113

tadarruj → *gradation*

Tafsīr, 1:84

tahawwul → *transmutation*

Tafsīr, 1:154. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 100-1

takwīn → *engendering*; synonymous with **hudūth** and **tadarruj**

Tafsīr, 1:84. Cf. *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 211

takawwun → *self-engendering*

Tafsīr, 1:113

tashakhkhus → *individuation*

Tafsīr, 1:28. Cf. *Le livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, 91-101; Mohaghegh and Izutsu, “Iṣtilāḥāt wa-ta‘bīrāt,” 602

wajāza → *succinctness*

Tafsīr, 1:79

wajīz → *succinct*

Tafsīr, 1:163

wus^c → *embracing*; similar to **ih̄tiwā'**

Tafsīr, 1:70 ff.

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