AN ASPECT OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MULLA ṢADRA

MUḤAMMAD ʿABDUL ḤAQ

INTRODUCTION

Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī, well known in Persia as Akhund Mulla Ṣadra, is the greatest philosopher of the Islamic world in the later period of Islamic history. Though unknown outside Persia until today, he is considered to have been the last great exponent of Islamic Philosophy. His intellectual vision as enshrined in his nearly fifty works—all in Arabic with one exception in Persian—tends to dispel the misconception that Islamic Philosophy ceased with Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) as a result of the vehement criticism of al-Ghazālī in the 12th century. In fact, the intellectual activity of Mulla Ṣadra, who flourished in the 17th century (979-1050/1571-1640), marks the culmination of Islamic Philosophy. His importance lies in the fact that he is a unique synthesizer of metaphysics, revelation and gnosis ('irfān), solving and reconciling various knotty problems that seemed insoluble and irreconcilable previously.

Metaphysics, according to Mulla Ṣadra, is the knowledge of the ultimate realities of things which brings about intellectual prefection in man by making him conscious of the absolute and the relative, of real and unreal, and of the alpha and the omega of all things. But this knowledge must be sought with the light of revealed tradition, intellectual intution besides discursive method. He, therefore, begins his masterpiece 'al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah' with the Qurʾānic verse, "He gives wisdom to whomsoever He will, and whoso is given wisdom has been given much good;"1 he then quotes the Prophetic tradition, "Oh, God show us things as they are, "i.e. not in their accidentality and contingency that appear to our sense perception but show us in their metaphysical context and ontological reality.2 Mulla Ṣadra is quite conscious that we cannot have an a priori knowledge of metaphysical truth whatever may be the degree of our understanding and perspicacity and, therefore, to try to attain metaphysical certainty on the basis of mere ratiocination would amount to puerile optimism. Metaphysics must be anchored in revealed truth and tradition, otherwise it would be left at the mercy of what is arbitrary and willful in
man. As our eyes cannot see in darkness without an external light, so our intellect and reason cannot function in a right direction without the light of revelation and intellectual intuition. Mere discursive method is a poor guide because its scope is very limited. Among the principles constituting the fabric of his metaphysical vision, the concept of Being, symbolism, creation, human soul and eschatology are important ones.

THEORY OF BEING OR ONTOLOGY

The whole metaphysics of Mulla Ṣadra is based on the theory of Being or Ontology. To be or to exist is no small matter. The question, 'why there is something instead of nothing?' seems to be an indecipherable mystery. It seems a miracle that the world is or things are, so to speak, saved from nothingness. The fact that no science can bring into being out of nothingness a single speck of dust is a burning proof that Being is something metaphysical, something mysterious transcending human reason and understanding. According to Mulla Ṣadra, Being is an a priori truth, clearest and most evident of all; an enveloping totality in which everything is plunged and, therefore, nothing can stand outside Being. It is an absolute reality and has an incommensurable infinite nature and as such is not susceptible of any definition because it is irreducible to anything or any categories of reason and logic. To define something means to qualify it and absolute ceases to be absolute if qualified and defined. Mulla Ṣadra asserts that to undertake to define Being is to commit blunder for it will amount to a vain effort to exhaust the inexhaustible or to limit the illimitable. Being is, thus, undefinable for it cannot be defined "outside of" itself because this "outside of" does not exist.

Being is one reality and manifests itself in all levels of existence; in other words, Being is one but it has various gradations from strong to weak and from perfect to imperfect. As for example, Being of a man of a tree, of a stone, are one reality but differ in degrees of perfection and strength. Being of a man is stronger and more perfect than that of a stone. Being, thus, is the most evident truth and the problem of Being evokes the problem of a mâhiyyah (i.e. what is it)? To ask the question: 'what is it?' presupposes that there is something which causes one to ask this question. Being is, therefore, prior to every thing and the reality of every thing.

All objects in the world—man, tree, stone, etc—since they exist, participate in one Being but empirically they are distinguished and 'separated from one another on account of possessing certain specific and distinctive features and peculiarities known as mâhiyyah (what is it) or quiddity. To be more precise, Being is what unites and encompasses various objects
under one reality for its reality is infinite. On the other hand, *mâhiyyah* is what separates, limits and determines these various objects because it is identified with the limitations of Being. Mulla Šadra, therefore, maintains that the name of Being is unknown or Being has no name while quiddity is known by innumerable names. As for example, we say Being of a man, Being of a cat, etc. which proves that these various names represent quiddities while Being in every case is one and the same. Thus all objects are separated and opposed to one another at the level of quiddity which is their outward limit but they belong to one reality through their Being whose dimension is inward and limitless. In other words, quiddity is related to, and compatible with, multiplicity while Being represents unity and is identical with it. In fine, there is a transcendent unity of Being (waḥdat al-wujūd) hidden under the veil of multiplicity.

According to Mulla Šadra, Being is principal which implies that it is an objective reality and is the source of all power and action. On the other hand, quiddity is an accident of Being because it cannot exist itself apart from Being. It appears with Being, in Being, and from Being without having any reality independent of Being. Thus the status of quiddity is no more than that which is concomitant to Being and contingent upon it but in the objective world Being and quiddity occur simultaneously and are inseparable and indistinguishable from each other. Herein lies the whole mystery that Being is the reality of everything which otherwise would not exist and is, thus, indwelling everywhere, but we are in danger of grasping only the husk and the shell of contingency, while Being eludes our sense perception and mental comprehension. Likewise, God, who is the Pure and Absolute Being, of which the Being of creation is a mere manifestation and reflection, is present and immanent at the centre of every cosmic manifestation while remaining invisible, incomprehensible, irreducible and immutable. As mentioned above, Being is undefinable and it is therefore, God who is undefinable.

Mulla Šadra, therefore, asserts that Being is the most evident thing as an objective reality but its nature is hidden and mysterious and therefore, is not susceptible of being reduced to the subjective limitation of any thinker. That is why the reality of Being is not graspable by our mind but only quiddities are graspable and knowable. In fine, Being and metaphysics are identical because Being, though of something physical, invariably tends to be metaphysical and, therefore, its nature is elusive and invisible and incomprehensible. As metaphysical dimension is inward and mysterious, dimension of Being also is mysterious and inward limitlessness.
Since quiddity is what is identified with the limitation and determination of Being, God—who is Absolute, Infinite and above all determination—has no quiddity or quiddity is inconceivable for Him; only the created Beings are composed of Being and quiddity. It should be noted that the origin of quiddity is traceable in the phenomenon of creation because creation means manifestation which, of necessity, contains in itself the principle of limitation, determination and exhaustion. Thus quiddity appears as a level of limitation and relativity, as an accident of the Being of the manifested order because manifestation is other than Principle, effect is other than Cause. In other words, Beings of created order are tinged with accident and mingled with contingency.

As mentioned above, according to Mulla Ṣadrā, Being and unity are identical with, and are inseparable from each other. Being is one reality and all-pervasive and, therefore, has no equal or opposite.9 Since we know things by seeing their opposites, we cannot see our Being because it has no opposite or equal. Opposition and contrast appear only at the level of quiddity, while at the level of Being unity reigns supreme. When we are incapable of seeing our Being, which is contingent and relative, how can we be able to see God, who is Absolute Being and, in fact, it is God who has no opposite or rival; He alone is Incomparable.

In the opinion of Mulla Ṣadrā, God alone is the Absolute Being of which the Being of creation is a mere manifestation and reflection10, as if God had lent a particle of His Being to creation.11 Hence creation in a certain way has something of Divine but the latter has nothing of the former. For Absolute is other than relative and Principle invariably remains unaffected by its manifestation.

To sum up, at the level of quiddity we are in touch with the physical world and multiplicity of sensible phenomena, while through our Being we are connected with the realm of ontological unity and metaphysical infinity. But in reality, we find that we are conscious only at the physical level, while we are unconscious metaphysically; we see only multiplicity but we do not see the underlying unity; we see only quiddity but we fail to detect our Being or ontological reality. The deep-rooted cause for this is that we are fallen human Beings, fallen from our perfect state through the fall of Adam and Eve. Before fall, Adam and Eve were perfect model of human Beings and were, therefore, in angelic and paradisal state. They were not conscious of their opposition and used to see unity everywhere because they were ontologically conscious and alive...... They were not conscious of their outward physical naked-ness, for they were conscious inwardly and alive metaphysically. In like manner, they knew nothing about death, time and space etc, because they were ontolo-
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Gically perfect and were in tune with eternity. But after fall, they discovered their opposition, because they lost their ontological consciousness and unity; they discovered their nakedness and shame because they ceased to be metaphysically conscious and in turn, became conscious physically and outwardly. They encountered a tremendous change unforeseeable by reference to any previous experience. Their life faced death, their intellect turned into darkness, their equilibrium into disequilibrium. Suddenly everything became external, opaque, unintelligible, hostile and antagonistic. Natural forces became dominant over them. They felt temperature which was the sign of fire, heaviness of the body, which was the sign of earth and so on.

Having lost the sense of unity, they became involved in duality and in deceptive and superfluous current of multiplicity.

Thus the process of fall may be described as a movement, as a transition from metaphysical to physical, from Being to contingency, from inward to outward, from unity to multiplicity, from equilibrium to disequilibrium, from paradisal state to the earthly state of exile. In fine, fall meant to lose the link with God.

As mentioned above, Being and unity are identical and as such it is incompatible with multiplicity; it is metaphysical in its quintessential nature, as such is incompatible with what is physical. Hence arises all existential unbalance. Being is ontological plenitude and metaphysical essence and is, therefore, inconsistent with what is accident and contingency. The nature of Being is all pervasive, infinite, immutable, nonspatial and timeless, and is, therefore, repugnant to time and space. For time implies movement, change, transition, and attrition, as space means absence and distance—factors which are the characteristics of contingency and are, therefore, opposed to Being. Thus earthly life is an anomaly, an unbalance and an asymmetry. Man lives in this world not by his Being but by accidents and contingency. Hence all troubles, abnormalities, trials and calamities. Being alone is plenitude, equilibrium, symmetry, normalcy and harmony. In like manner, our ego is foreign and alien to our Being. After fall, Adam and Eve became conscious of their separate ‘self’ and thus, they discovered ‘I’ and ‘you’ — a self — discovery in which the origin of ego-forming tendency is traceable. Thus separate self-discovery means forgetfulness of Being and unity and to forget one’s Being means to forget Absolute Being and, therefore, ego is the crystallization of the forgetfulness of God. Thus ego and Being are irreconcilable. On the other hand, this separation or loss of the sense of unity gave rise to dualism — man and woman, life and death etc, — in multiple forms.
and varied combinations, which has become an ineluctable aspect of man's earthly fallen life. Thus fall means to lose the sense of Being and unity and as a penalty we have been condemned to contingency and multiplicity. Again, fall means to lose metaphysical consciousness and as a penalty we have been made conscious only physically and outwardly. In like manner we have become the victim of time, space, decay and death.

Thus on account of fall truth has become inverted. What is unreal, false, ephemeral poses as real, true and perpetual — an illusion given rise to by fall. This illusion accounts for the false plenitude and deceptive richness of the world to which the Qur'ān refers repeatedly as it says, "The life of this world is but comfort of illusion".15

As mentioned above, Being and metaphysics are identical with each other and what is true of Being is equally true of metaphysics. As Being of a particle of dust is infinitely more real than limits of things; likewise metaphysical reality is infinitely more real than limits of physical things. Explaining this point, Mulla Ṣadra writes that behind every sensible form, there is a super-sensible reality and every phenomenon is supported by a numenon. In the same way that Being is the reality of every thing which otherwise would not exist, the physical world is supported and sustained by the metaphysical source.16 While elaborating this point Mulla Ṣadra argues that behind a written text an idea lies hidden, on the background of a body soul is hidden; likewise behind the physical world there is a metaphysical world.17 Without idea, literal text is nothing but a few scratches of pen; without soul, body is a mere lump of dust; similarly without metaphysical source the world cannot exist. While the husk of literal text is visible, idea is invisible; body is visible, soul invisible; likewise the world is visible but its metaphysical root is invisible. While again, written text and body are destructible, idea and soul are indestructible; in the same manner the world is destructible, while metaphysical world is immutable and eternal. Again we find that written text and the body with all its organs represent multiplicity while idea and soul represent unity; likewise the world is multiplicity and division but the metaphysical world represents unity. Thus the world of metaphysics may be called the world of Being and unity. In fine, we find that what is, kernel, indivisible and metaphysical are more real than what is visible and physical; the former invariably represents unity, while the latter multiplicity. Thus Being, unity and metaphysics are identical with one another.

In the same manner, the unity of human soul symbolises the ontological and metaphysical unity and in the ultimate analysis the Divine unity. We find that the external five sense organs are projected to the
objective world, 'Alam al-shahādah, and the internal four faculties — thought, imagination, memory and intellection — are connected with the metaphysical world "Alam -al-Ghaib". The former is determined by time and space, the latter is timeless and non-spatial. The first group has no independence of its own for eyes have no power to shut if the soul wants to see something; but the second group has some independence such as imagination may accept Satanic suggestion and confuse intellect.18.

The first group represents multiplicity, as eyes cannot serve the purpose of ears or vice versa; and the second group represents unity such as thought brings a form to imagination, which, in turn, transfers it to memory and memory in turn supplies it to the power of intellection. All are like one power. But in the ultimate analysis the soul is the real doer in all these nine faculties and all multiplicity becomes annihilated in its unity19.

Similarly all objects in heaven and earth are the agents of God. They are doing their duty invariably without any fault. The sun is doing its job, the rain is performing its own job; neither the sun nor the rain can serve the purpose of the other. Through them God's power penetrates every where, because every object obeys His laws. As God says in the Qur'ān, "Have you seen that which you cultivate? Is it you who foster it, or are we the Fosterer? Have you observed the water which you drink? Is it you who shed it from the rain cloud, are we the shedder?20

Just as the external sense organs depend on soul, likewise the whole universe depends on its metaphysical principle. Thus at every level of manifestation, it is God who is active in reality and is the supreme Cause for all and as such all apparent causes are secondary and preparatory causes determined by time and space. To Mulla Šadra, therefore, father is not the real cause of his son.

Symbolism

According to Mulla Šadra man is a little world called microcosm, while the universe is a great world called macrocosm.21 What is true of the great world is equally true of the little world. Thus the fall of man presupposes the fall of the world from its metaphysical source. The process of creation or manifestation having been started from intellect, ends in prime matter or hyle. Prime matter is nothing but the extreme limit or dead end of the process of manifestation. Thus matter or material world is a Being most remote from the Absolute Being — a fact which accounts for the fallen state of matter or material world.

Now the problem of fall evokes the problem of ransom. Prime matter or hyle, by way of compensation, has been given potentiality and
possibility to accept any form. The fallen world, by way of ransom, has been decorated by innumerable varieties of species and objects, as if God had painted the cosmos with the ink of hyle. And man, in his fallen state, has been endowed with an intellect-bound soul. Though intellect has been darkened and individualized by fall, nonetheless it is a cleft, a divine spark, in human opacity. Since fall means to lose the link with the Divine, these species and objects, in their fallen state, are deemed to become the sign and symbol of that which is in Itself Incommunicable and Ineffable. Thus every object symbolizes its metaphysical source in one way or another. Because the lesser can symbolize the greater and not vice versa. That is why the world is called ‘Ālam-al-Shahādah, the world of witness, that the physical objects of this world bear witness to their perfect metaphysical source, called ‘Ālam al-Ghaib. The material symbols are deemed to intensify the metaphysical consciousness because man, though fallen, possesses intellect which can decipher symbols and grasp its total import. As God says in the Qur’ān, “we shall show them Our portents (signs) on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that it is the Truth.”

Thus only intellect can realize that the creation is the terrestrial effect of an Ineffable celestial cause. It will grasp that the world is like a fabric woven of movement, current of forms, disappearance, decay and death—a fact that indicates to the existence of a perfect and immutable world. Intellect is, therefore, capable of reviving an acute consciousness of the Absolute, who reveals His perfection, plenitude, beauty and power through the imperfection of this world. In like manner, through natural blemishes and limitations, intellect will make man conscious that he is other than what he is now, that his real abode is somewhere else, that he is like an exile in a house divided against itself.

Islamic philosophy, thus, sees man a priori intellect. For according to Mulla Ṣadrā, the entelechy of human body is soul and the entelechy of soul is intellect and the entelechy of intellect is the encounter with God. In other words, behind the physical man, there lies soul-bound man, on the back-ground of soul-bound man, there lies intellect-bound man and at the transpersonal depth of intellect-bound man, there lies the seat of God. That is why Mulla Ṣadrā identifies our first father Adam with the intellect and mother Eve with the seducing soul. As the soul emanated from intellect, so Eve was drawn from the side of Adam. Though made of clay, they were our intellectual prototype, that their matter underwent an ontological transmutation through the Divine creative fiat. It proves that even matter can have access to Divine kingdom, if it becomes ontologically perfect. Herein lies the superiority of man over all other
species that man can transcend his physical state and become metaphysical by realizing his Being and ontological plenitude. With this material body, Adam and Eve were like angels, universal man, timeless and non-spatial because they were alive and conscious metaphysically. But after fall, they became exclusively physical man, poor and helpless. Their body became vulnerable to diseases and their mind to Satanic suggestions.27

This drama is being enacted in the life of every individual man, that the descent of individual soul in the womb of mother and its becoming identified with the sperm, implies the virtual fall of that soul.28 But the soul is an intellect-bound soul which will enable man to restore the broken link with the metaphysical source. The Qur'ān describes with burning eloquence the symbolic significance of the world of phenomena and urges man, who is endowed with intellect, to reflect on signs and symbols of that which is in itself Ineffable and Indescribable. The world may, therefore, be called a great book, while the Qur'ān a little book containing everything in a nutshell. The multiplicity of words and phrases of the holy book represents the multiplicity of objects of this world.29 That is why every verse of the Qur'ān is called Ayah which means verse as well as sign, that every verse of the Qur'ān is a sign of God, as every phenomenon bears witness to Him.

According to the Qur'ān, God is not ashamed of taking a gnat as a symbol. Herein lies the Absoluteness of God, that the limitations ingrained in a symbol cannot debase Him who is symbolized. On the contrary, it proves that the Absolute as an Unthinkable Aseity, as an Ineffable cause, as an unfathomable Mystery, can insinuate Himself at every level of manifestation without losing His transcendence and immutability. This is the secret of symbolism and immanence.

Thus all objects in this world, its flora and fauna, through their inexhaustible varieties, become an essential vehicle of truth and serve clues to their metaphysical source. In this sense, the world is like a great museum and we are bound to go on a unique journey through that museum where every object, in one way or another, reminds us of our earthly exile and, thus, revives in us a nostalgia, a presentiment for the Absolute. On the other hand, these mute, deaf and dumb phenomena, through being dedicated to the service of man, and through being used, known studied, appreciated and contemplated by man, try to justify their Being and, thus, restore the broken link with Divine kingdom through the knowledge of man.

For man alone can address them and, therefore, he alone can be their spokesman.30 Thus the world is like a tree whose fruit is the human soul, which,
in turn, is like a tree whose fruit is intellect, which in turn, is like a tree whose fruit is the encounter with God.31

But viewed superficially as isolated phenomena, these symbols are snares, separative illusion and current of forms, whose deceptive richness and false plenitude, do not allow us to get into touch with their metaphysical reality. Projected to multiplicity our sense perception and grasp of the mind remain confined to images, reflexes and impressions of their sensible forms only. Their false glittering reinforces the illusion of their being real and, in turn, this illusion becomes an ineluctable aspect of them which tends to debase and humanise them. But all are fleeting, ephemeral and transitory in nature in face of their metaphysical reality.

According to Mulla Ṣadra, perfection invariably comes before imperfection, Absolute before relative, life before death and union before separation.32 From this point of view our fall — as we are fallen little worlds in a fallen great world — means separation from metaphysical source and separation prefigures reunion. We observe that seasons form a great circle in their succession and they invariably come back to their point of departure. The same drama is being repeated by the sun every day. This fact implies that everything springs from God and returns unto God. This is one of the recurring themes of the Qurʾān, as it says, “We are Allah's and Lo! unto Him we are returning.”33 In the view of Mulla Ṣadra, creation is a unique journey from God unto God; while according to the sufis, creation is a message from God unto God. Thus, matter is not the alpha of our creation but in reality God is the alpha and He alone is the omega of all; “He is the First and He is the last.”34

To sum up, creation means separation or alienation of the relative Being from the Absolute Being. In other words, separation of quasi-truth from the Absolute Truth. Separation, therefore, implies other than God and as such it must end in fall and the problem of fall, in turn, evokes the problem of redemption, reintegration and return.35 So our salvation, its texture and actualization are prefigured in our Being which is quasi-Divine, that the relative Being will ultimately be absorbed by the total or Absolute Being. It is obvious that fall is a necessary manifestation of evil and as a penalty, fallen man and the world have become the victim of time. Time is nothing but the embodiment of all contingency, movement, instability and disappearance and while corroding all things leads to their final dissolution and death. But in the opinion of Mulla Ṣadra, death and dissolution is an indispensable necessity in order to bring to an end the state of fall, the trials and calamities, the illusion of time and the riddle of space.36 Thus the world is a matrix of trials and calamities, a mire of accidents and quiddities, a cosmic womb of time.
and space, and death is a cruel birth to eternity, an exit to metaphysical
world again and an opening towards the ontological plenitude.

Mulla Ṣadra, therefore, maintains that there are two births, one
coming from the womb of mother into this world and the other coming
from the womb of this world into the eternal world. As the womb
of mother is very insignificant in face of this world, likewise this world is
very little in face of the metaphysical world. As the time spent in the
womb of mother is very short, so the time of this world is like an illusory
drop of eternity. After death man will realize that all the time of this
world and the whole space are an instant and a single point respectively.

The Qur'ān speaks with burning eloquence of the final disso-
lution (Qiyāmah) of the world on a cosmic scale which will amount to
the cracking of the shell of contingency, that the world will be torn asunder
by an unimaginable explosion — unimaginable because surpassing all
human experience and standard of measurement. This can be applicable
to every man, microcosm, in which death will appear as an end of
a particular world, it is, as it were, a world closes down. That is why
the Prophet of Islam said, “Whoever dies, his dissolution (Qiyāmah)
has occurred.” The sudden experience of death, unforeseeable by refer-
ence to any analogous phenomenon, will crush a man’s world of experience
as he cannot possibly recollect his past to bear witness to anything of the
kind.

Thus dissolution is a grand reabsorption of the external by the
internal, of the physical by the metaphysical, of the world of phenomenon
by the world of numenon (‘Ālam al Ghaib), of the finite by the infinite in
the direction to the centre. This absorption may be interpreted as an
ontological transmutation which will take possession of everything in an
unforeseeable rhythm by consuming the coagulated and petrified cara-
pace of all accidents and relativity. Even prime matter will return to pure
Being by means of this transmutation. Projected into the absolute metaph-
ysical context, man would be conscious of his real identity, he would re-
recognize himself ontologically and take account of the fact that life had
been but a moment but a play. According to the Qur'ān, he will know
everything with the knowledge of certainty and see with the eye of certainty.

In Arabic dissolution is called sī‘ah which has three meanings
the present time, a clock and dissolution — a fact which implies that disso-
lution is synonymous or connected with time and motion. The root of the
word means running after something or goal. Thus the world, — micro-
cosm or macrocosm—through the ceaseless movement of time, is running
towards its final dissolution.
Thus death and dissolution means cracking of the shell of contingency and to be reborn in ontological plenitude. Again death and dissolution means the end of the fallen state, cessation of motion and movement, end of the illusion of time and riddle of space, and, in turn, back to eternity, back to the Motionless Mover or to the unconditioned Consciousness. Man then would be conscious of the unreality of all that had appeared separate from God. Quoting Prophetic tradition, Mulla Ṣadra, therefore, concludes that death is a mercy, a gift from Heaven, a liberator from this world and fallen state.

We are like foams ceaselessly appearing on the ocean of Being but eventually foam will become crystallization of pure Being, when its earthly contingency would be consumed by ontological transmutation. Again we are like fishes of Being encased in blocks of ice or ice of contingency and quiddity but as ice becomes water and water disappears into air when it gets dry, likewise the ice of contingency will disappear like a fugitive substance when ontological ray would take possession of everything. Thus one should not mistake this physical, tangible, petrified and sensible world for a perennial reality, for it will fade away into nothingness when metaphysical reality would come crushing in. Thus Being is the reality of every thing which otherwise would not exist and in the final analysis God, the Absolute Being, is the ultimate reality of all things. Since Being and metaphysics are identical, God is the unfathomable source of all metaphysical truth. The Qur'ān mentions in many places that all the keys and ciphers (Maqālīd) and (Maṭāḥîh) to metaphysical truth and knowledge are in the hands of God. God says in the Qur'ān, “And with Him are the keys of the invisible. None but He knoweth them. And He knoweth what is in the land and sea. Not a leaf falleth but He knoweth it, not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, naught of wet or dry but in a clear record”.

Creation

Mulla Ṣadra has developed a very consistent idea about the creation of this great world and the little world, of macrocosm and microcosm. According to him, creation has taken place by two processes, one is called Ibdā‘ and the other is called Takwīn. Ibdā‘ means that the process of emanation starts from God and descends in successive stages such as intellect, soul, nature and ultimately ends in prime matter without having been preceded by anything to receive it. This may be called supra-formal creation. Takwīn means that the material creation starts from prime matter and ascends upwards by successive stages such as natural bodies, plant kingdom, animal world, and ends in human beings—a process
in which matter is present in every stage to receive its form. This process may be called formal creation. In other words, the process of Ibadā' or supra-formal creation may be described as a centrifugal dispersion or the process of flight from God. Because as soon as intellect emanated from God, it, in turn emanates soul, and the process, thus, goes on ending in prime matter or hyle. On the other hand, in this proto-material hyle, occurred the creation of species up to man—a process called Takwh or centri-petal orientation or urge. Thus manifestation of Being is like a circle, one side of which is descending and the other ascending or celestial manifestation descends to the earth and reascends to heaven again.

In the scale of supra-formal creation, from intellect down to prime matter, the manifestation of Being in each successive stage was in diminishing degree, while manifestation of contingency, in turn, was in increasing degree. As a Being becomes further removed from the centre, it becomes weaker and in turn, the more limitations are conferred upon it and more segmented and coagulated it becomes. This fact accounts for the endless multiplicity of the world. Thus hyle is in a state of fall of the process of Ibadā' because it is the extreme limit or dead end of the centrifugal dispersion. Its Being has diminished almost to nothing and its unity is broken and obscure. It has bordered on chaos and darkness. Thus the Being of hyle has become so weak that hyle as such is nowhere to be found or seen. She is always hidden under some form; it is, as it were, she is ashamed of her fallen state and invariably takes refuge in some form or other in order to cover her shame. It seems she has an inordinate love for form.

Now Divine mercy desires to open a new process of creation named Takwīn or formal creation for the salvation of the process of Ibadā' or supra-formal creation. Thus the process of Takwīn may be described as a centripetal orientation. As mentioned above, the problem of fall, evokes the problem of ransom and thus, hyle, by way of ransom, has been allowed to retain one power or quality. This power or quality is nothing but the potentiality or possibility of hyle to accept any form. In other words, hyle is in a state of cosmic enmeshment or possibilities to accept forms of different stages of formal creation. It should be noted that fall means to lose the link with God but from God there is link down to hyle otherwise creation would cease to exist. God is Absolute and Absolute is everywhere Absolute, as the Qurān says “And He it is who is who in the heaven is God, and in the earth God. He is wise, the knower”.

Thus in order to restore the broken link, in order to deliver matter, God has brought into being the process of Takwīn. Hence matter again must have contact with all the stages of supra-formal creation or different
stages of supra-formal creation must come down in order to lift matter upwards stage by stage for the actualization of the return journey of the fallen Beings back to their Ineffable Aseity. It is, therefore, an undeniable truth that there is no gratuitous creation, every thing is pre-planned and aimed at a definite purpose and as such nothing is fortuitous and chance. According to Mulla Ṣadra creation is a unique and irrevocable journey from God unto God.

God created out of hyle this material world. As the Qur'ān says, "And the earth shineth with the light of her Lord." Mulla Ṣadra maintains that as light penetrates into all realms through its innumerable arteries so Being penetrates every where and, therefore, nature is fraught with the light of Being. He argues that some natural body shows some power which is other than physical or which is not perceptible in other natural body. For example, we detect in simple cell or worm a will to live which is not seen in stone. This power or will comes from soul. Thus according to Mulla Ṣadra, nature or natural laws are a power among the various powers of the soul and through it soul performs some metaphysical actions.

It should be noted that the world of nature cannot have a direct contact with that of intellect but through the medium of the world of soul, because the domain of Intellect is immutable whereas the world of nature is fleeting and subject to generation and corruption. The world of soul lies between these two domains. Because the ipseity of soul is immaterial but its action is material and, in turn, perfection of soul is intellect and its function is natural. Similarly, ipseity of nature is soul while its action is corporeal and God is active behind all these.

Thus the primary sign of life is to be seen in plant kingdom. It is composed of various natural elements and its constitution is more balanced and proportionate than that of inanimate natural bodies. According to Mulla Ṣadra, the life of plant kingdom is characterized by assimilation of food, growth and procreation and is called vegetative soul the definition of which is the following: "Vegetative soul is the entelechy of a natural body as it possesses the faculties of procreation, growth and assimilation of food". The next higher stage is that of animal whose body is better than that of plant in constitution and balance. Its life is called animal soul the definition of which is the following: Animal soul is the entelechy of a natural body as it possesses the faculties of free movement and sense perception with which it perceives only particulars". It lacks intellect and is quasi-immaterial.

It should be noted that world of soul has come down to the level
of material kingdom, as if there were a blending of the process of Ibda’ with that of Takwin in order to effectuate the successive gradations of the material creation. But plant and animal kingdoms are incapable of restoring the terrestrial communion with the celestial dimension because they lack intellect which has direct access to the Divine Kingdom. Thus a stage has been set for the arrival of the final creation that would restore the broken link. Hence the arrival of man who is endowed with an intellect-bound soul and whose body is the crowning achievement of material creation. The definition of human soul is as follows. “Human soul is the entelechy of a natural body having faculties and potential life, as it perceives universals and particulars, discerns between good and bad and gains theoretical and practical knowledge.” Thus the body of plant having been fixed in a place, and the body of animal with the head lowered symbolizes their inability to have an access to Divine kingdom. While human body with its vertical position and its gait which is free and detached from the ground symbolizes that man alone can have an access to Divine kingdom.60 God, thus, synthesises the total creation in human body and soul. All the possibilities of the manifestation of Being that have been unfolded in the process of Ibda’ and Takwin — intellect, soul, natural elements, vegetative and animal souls — are synthetically found in man. That is why man is called the qualitative abridgement of the whole process of creation. Though man is a little world he reflects the cosmic totality.

It should be noted that in the process of Takwin power and perfection come from higher source or from God in ultimate analysis in order to raise matter up. According to Mulla Ṣadra, the lesser cannot be the cause for the higher61 because cause must be greater than effect, and, therefore, a body cannot be the real cause for another body. On the contrary, greater invariably precedes the lesser. Mulla Ṣadra, therefore, asserts that perfection invariably comes before imperfection, Being before quiddity, life before death, actuality before potentiality and so on.62 On the basis of this argument, evolutionary hypothesis is most absurd and pernicious.

A minus always presupposes an initial plus so every species is fixed in its own place by prototype and seed-process. The human embryo becomes a man because it is meant to be so, no evolution will produce a man from an animal embryo. Accordingly God created, Adam and Eve out of clay as a prototype or norm of human beings and the angelic state in paradise was their perfect state.

There is a persistent tendency in modern man to make a god of evolution. The most pernicious effect of this hypothesis on the mind of people in general that nothing is fixed and final, nothing is created; everything
just grew and is growing. There are many unexplained factors involved in this hypothesis and the most disappointing of all is the failure on the part of the exponents of evolution to determine its causes. Why a thing will evolve? They could not explain; likewise they are unable to explain the origin and nature of life itself. The belief in the progressive unfolding of living forms from simplest microorganism to the wonderful complexity of the human body and to the supreme intelligence of man on the basis of fortuity and mere chance is a sign of the most unimaginable mental deformation imaginable.

After fall and separation, Adam and Eve were finally united together and they regained their lost position, likewise every man is potentially an angel or a disciple of Satan, because he possesses an intellect-bound soul. As mentioned above, entelechy of body is soul and entelechy of soul is intellect. If a man actualizes his intellect by dominating his body and soul, he would be ontologically alive and metaphysically conscious. He, then, would be a whole man or universal man and would gain metaphysical certainty, see everything in its total context, and therefore, his knowledge of everything would be as clear as that of a single point. He would catch hold of space and time and know all his activities from birth to death at once like an instant. Only prophets and sages reach this stage.

Mulla Ṣadra, thus, concludes that the Prophet of Islam is the synthetic fruit of the whole human order in particular and the cream of the creation as a whole. When a man tames the forces of his inner world, he can overcome the forces of the great world, a method called spiritual alchemy. Thus with a balanced and harmonious approach (Ratq, Fatq, samm, Shaqq), the Prophet of Islam dominated heaven; he neutralized opposite with the opposite, subdued equal with the equal as iron can be cut with iron. The Prophet of Islam is therefore, the entelechy of the whole process of creation or the totality of the creation. In other words, he is the synthesis of the creation linking human littleness or nothingness of creation with the Ineffable Divine mystery.

His nocturnal flight towards heaven a timeless non-spatial journey, a unique event in the history of mankind which, perhaps, modern incredulity would hesitate to accept—symbolizes that he personally took the whole material creation or the creation as a whole in order to restore the broken link or to introduce it conclusively to the Divine presence. The Prophet said that he had been given the totality of words (jawāmʾal-kalim) which means the totality of creation. According to 'Aishah, the favourite wife of the Prophet, the Prophet is the Qurʾān in human expression or the Qurʾān in flesh and blood.
According to Mulla Sadra, matter is the dead end of the manifestation of Being or it is the crystallization of the lowest stage of fall. Hence it has been deprived of all the properties of Being such as life, sense perception, imagination, memory, apprehension and intellection. Matter is, thus, in a state of unconsciousness and forgetfulness. Sense perception is the first stage of consciousness and, therefore, intellection and contemplation may lead to universal consciousness. The more one becomes conscious, the more one disengages himself from the state of unconsciousness and forgetfulness. The more perfect a man is, the more perfect is his consciousness and accordingly the highest state of consciousness has been realized by one who is the best of all created Beings, that is the Prophet of Islam. Thus the Prophet of Islam realized the state of universal consciousness and therefore, his appreciation of a beautiful object, enjoyment of good things of life and the realization of the state of supreme contiguity are most perfect of all and must have been unparallelled and incomparable with reference to the experience of any other human being.

We are incapable of enjoying and appreciating at the same time every aspect of a precious thing or a beloved Being and as such one worldly pleasure implies the privation of hundred other pleasures, and one happiness excludes hundred other possible happiness. But God is simultaneously the inexhaustible source of all possible happiness, pleasure and beauty. As God says in the Qur'an, "And there is not a thing but with us are the stores thereof", All that we long, all that we lack, all that we need and all that we desire, are to be found infinitely in Allah.

Eschatology

As mentioned above, creation is a unique journey from God unto God. The ultimate end (Ma'ād) of creation will be what it was at the origin and, therefore, ultimate end means return to the origin, because extremes meet. As intellect was created first as a seed of creation, so return of creation unto God will be through intellect. As God says in the Qur'an, "As He brought you into being, so return ye (unto Him)." Only intellect being the first creation, has direct access to Divine Kingdom because of its supreme contiguity to the centre and is, therefore, able like a ladder, to link the cosmic nothingness to metacosmic reality. As mentioned above, entelechy of body is soul, entelechy of soul is intellect and entelechy of intellect is the union with God. Thus according to Mulla Sadra, the intellective aspect of every soul has two functions: The practical (ʿamali) and theoretical (nazarī). The practical intellect has four stages: practising the law of a revealed religion, cleaning the soul from all impuri-
ties, illuminating the soul with knowledge and virtues and finally annihilating it in God.70

The theoretical intellect also traverses four stages: The potential or material intellect, which has potential intellectual existence as prime matter has potential sensitive existence, is, only capable of accepting various forms and is, therefore, called ‘aql al-hayūlānī. The second stage is called Habitual intellect (‘aql bil-malakah) with which the soul begins to grasp simple, a priori truths of life. The third stage is called Actual or dynamic intellect (‘aql bil-fi’il) with which the soul can transcend material level of existence and acquire intellectual vision and intuition. The fourth and the final stage is called Acquired intellect (‘aql-al-mustafād). At this stage, the highest one attainable by man, the soul becomes wholly intellect and gets in tune with the Active intellect, (‘aql-al-fa‘āl) through which it achieves visions of the intelligible world and gains access to the divine kingdom.71

Thus our soul will be sent (Makṣur) or resurrected to intellect and intellect would be sent to God.72 Every man or every soul must realize its intellect, otherwise return unto God would not be possible. Before fall, the soul was in perfect condition, that the soul was fully charged with intellect and was, therefore, not at all separated from it, as Eve was not separated ontologically from Adam before fall. Thus at the end the soul will have to be in perfect condition, it must realize its intellect, otherwise return or reaching the destination would be inconceivable. Moreover to realize intellect means to realize Being or ontological plenitude because intellect is the first and the strongest manifestation of Being.

The greatest obstacle for soul to realize its intellect is sin. Every sin is a fall because it retraces the original fall. In other words, every sin is disequilibrium and is, therefore, committed against one’s Being which is equilibrium. And what is against Being is, in reality, against Absolute Being. Thus every sin is committed against God. Sin, thus, would be an insurmountable barrier for soul to reach its original abode. It is an obvious fact that the totality of realization is gained at the end of the journey when a traveller arrives at the destination otherwise he faces untold suffering and misery on the way.73

Thus if somebody fails to realize his intellect, he would not be able to reach divine kingdom and the separation or distance from the centre would transform itself into an inextinguishable fire. In the hereafter everything will become ontologically perfect, so fire will be hundred times more powerful than this earthly contingent fire. In the same manner, pleasure
and happiness will be hundred times more perfect and enjoyable, because there everything will be in a state of ontological pleniude and metaphysical perfection. All other species and objects will return to God through their intelligible forms, and prototype. Thus the ultimate end of all things is the Ineffable Aseity or Ipseity of God who is the end of all ends. God is the alpha so He alone is the omega, He is the First, so He alone is the last.

CONCLUSION

Modern man may despise a philosopher like Mulla Ṣadra for being stupidly credulous in presuming revealed tradition and gnostic intuition as an infallible truth but it is an undeniable fact that modern man also has become stupidly incredulous by slashing at the wisdom of countless years. Modern mentality is very prone to live on husk and accidents of phenomena and, thus, to ignore their ontological reality. To Mulla Ṣadra, Being of a grain of dust is infinitely more real than limits of things. Being is the reality of every thing which otherwise would not exist and is, therefore, immanent everywhere; it is sacred and Divine because it is the manifestation of Absolute Being and, thus, at the level of every manifestation, it is God who is present, who is the decisive factor and who intervenes in every phenomenon. This acute consciousness of the Absolute is the underlying and dominating theme of his metaphysics. On account of our fallen nature, we are metaphysically unconscious and ontologically absent, indifferent and forgetful and, hence, there is an indispensable necessity for revealed truth and gnostic intuition.

To Mulla Ṣadra, as to şūfis, creation as whole is a play of Divine unveiling (Tajallī) and therefore, Absolute is the measure of everything. Creation, thus, has something of Divine and, therefore, its true measurement and worth cannot be abandoned to what is arbitrary and flippant in man. Having been cut off from traditional background the renaissance has inaugurated the era of intellectual worldliness which has resulted in the excessive intellectual superficiality of this, so called, modern scientific age. Once cut off from revealed truth and light, there is a persistent tendency in modern man to become the arbitrary measure of everything—a pernicious trend which brought the world to such a pass. One evil leads to another and consequently, therefore, it is machine which has usurped the rank of man and, thus, tends to become his measure. Cut off from Divine, human is but a fabric woven of images, tendencies, outward and inward experiences with which modern man identifies himself.
Descartes is the pioneer of this modern scientific positivism. His famous theory of Being: "I think, therefore, I am" is false and absurd from the stand point of Mulla Ṣadrā's ontology. Descartes has reduced Being to mere thought process which implies that stones or trees do not exist because they do not think. But to Mulla Ṣadrā, even a speck of dust has Being which is infinitely more real than limits of things. According to a contemporary great metaphysician, Cartesianism is the most intelligent way to become unintelligent and is the classic example of a faith which has become the dupe of the gropings of reasoning.75

According Eticne Gilson, God of Descartes was a Christian God but as a philosopher he was trying to seek, by reason alone, and without any light of faith, the first causes whereby all thing can be explained. The Cartesian method is never to go from things to ideas, on the contrary, from ideas to things.76 But the method of Mulla Ṣadrā is just the reverse. The theme of his symbolism is to travel from particular to the universal, from multiplicity to unity, from accident to Being and from symbols to their Ineffable cause. Descartes has reduced the whole world to mind and motion and has given the impression, "Give me mind and motion, I will construct the universe."77

The ineluctable impact of this Cartesian method is that the modern man tends to live on husks and accidents, on the surface levels of phenomena, while he ignores their ontological and metaphysical reality. Modern man is, thus, quite at home with what is physical, tangible and sensible and particularly what is quantitative. This age, therefore, may be called on age of quantity rather than quality. That is why modern scientific method judges things from their face value and asks only, "What they are", instead of asking. "Why they are What they are".

To modern man Being or existence is a very commonplace thing like earth beneath his feet and therefore, feels perfectly at home in this world. But to Mulla Ṣadrā to have Being and to enjoy the good things of life while forgetting the Absolute, is to cast aspersion on God. Modern man tends to remain forgetful of and indifferent to his transcendental origin as well as to his ultimate becoming. But neither can we capture the present moment, nor can we bring back our past, nor can we determine our future, we are drawn through life by an irresistible force.

To Mulla Ṣadrā our Being is quasi Divine and as such our Being is real for it belongs to the Absolute Being while our limitations and shortcomings are accidental and ephemeral. Similarly our intellect is also quasi Divine because it is the direct effect of the Absolute cause and an effect
retains an aspect of its cause. Mulla Ṣadra, therefore, could not humanize intellect as modern outlook has done by relegating it to the rank of mathematical precision and mental acuteness of a logician. According to Mulla Ṣadra, intellect is very exalted and sublime, by which one can emerge to the infinite, can be conscious of the Absolute and of the origin and of the ultimate becoming.

Thus cut off from Divine link modern man has become exclusively man and as a result he tends to humanize everything and ends only by dehumanizing himself and the world at large. The whole Islamic thought is saturated with an acute consciousness of the Absolute and of the quasi-divine character of the creation because it is the manifestation of the Absolute Being. In Islamic thought, therefore, there is no provision for humanism, naturalism and materialism. Nothing is exclusively human and temporal or secular; on the contrary every-thing is quasi-divine through its Being.

Thus value and worth of everything ought to be determined by the Divine standard and ought to be fitted into Divine context. The moderns are held spell-bound by science. Why the world exists science does not know and no science can account for the existence of molecules which show signs of life. No science can account for the miracle of consciousness.

Thus Islamic thought proclaims, in the face of the dehumanized world, what our true standard is, what our real identity and dignity are; its role is to make man conscious of his reality and, thus, of his transcendent origin and ultimate becoming.

Notes:

3. Ibid., p. 25.
6. Ibid. 68-69.
9. Ibid., p. 343
10. Ibid. p. 86-87
11. Mullā Ṣadra, al-Rasāil, Siryān al Wajūd, pp. 146-147
12. Mullā Ṣadrā, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, Rasā'il, p. 322
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid. p. 301
16. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, p. 296
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. pp. 293-294
19. Ibid. p. 298
21. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, 286-687
22. Ibid. p. 299-300
23. M. Pickthall, The Glorious Koran, Fusilat, 53
24. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn p. 288
26. Mullā Ṣadrā Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, 322
27. Ibid., p. 310
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid, p. 294
30. Ibid, 308
31. Ibid, 332
32. Risālah fi al-Ḥashr, 355
33. M. Pickthall, The Glorious Koran, The Cow, 156
34. M. Pickthall, The Glorious Koran, Iron, 3
35. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, al-Wāridāt al-Qalbiyyah, 260
36. Mullā Ṣadrā, 'Arshiyah, pp. 268-270 Rasā'il pp. 59-60
37. Ibid. 262-62. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn. p. 287
38. Mullā Ṣadrā, 'Arshiyah, p. 263
39. Ibid. p. 262
40. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Iṣrīr-al-'Arīfīn, p. 286
41. Mullā Ṣadrā 'Arshiyah, 267-270
42. Mullā Ṣadrā 'Arshiyah. p. 229. Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, 283
47. M. Pickthall, The Glorious Korān. Cattle 59
48. S.J. Sajjadi Muṣṭalāḥat Mullā Ṣadrā, p. 2
49. Ibid, p. 65
50. Jawād Musliḥ, Falsafah, i-‘Ālī, 1:38
51. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, al-Wāridāt al-Qalbiyyah, p. 250
53. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, al-Wāridāt al Qalbiyyah, p. 260
54. Ibid, 250
55. M. Pickthall, The Glorious Korān, Zuhuruf, 84
56. M. Pickthall, The Glorious Korān. The Troops, 69
57. Mullā Ṣadrā al-shawhāhid al Rububiyyah. p. 86-87
58. Ibid. 150.
59. Ibid, p. 196
60. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, P. 309
61. Mullā Ṣadrā, Sharah al-Hidāyah, P. 356
62. Mullā Ṣadrā, Rasā'il, Risālah fi al-Ḥashr, P. 355
63. Mullā Ṣadrā Rasā'il, Iṣrīr al-‘Arīfīn, p. 301-302
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64. *Ibid, al-Wāridat al-Qalbiyyah*, 274
67. M. Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, al-Hijr. 21
68. Mullā Şadrā, *Rasā'il al-wāridat al-Qalbiyyah*, 248
69. M. Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran*, al-A'raf v. 29
70. Mullā Şadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rububiyyah*. p. 207
71. *Ibid*.
73. *Ibid, Ikṣīr al-'Ārfin*, 322
74. Mullā Şadrā, *Rasā'il, al-Risālah fi al-Hashr*, 342