

CHAPTER 21

ŞADR AL-DĪN AL-SHĪRĀZĪ'S (D. 1635) *DIVINE WITNESSES*

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THE name of Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, better known as Mullā Şadrā, is one of the few names of thinkers of eleventh-/seventeenth-century Iran to have reached a broader audience. He is known for his metaphysical positions, in particular to have championed what is considered to be an ontological turn (even if this has to be qualified), and also for his ideas regarding epistemology and acquisition of knowledge, and eschatology. How to approach Şadrā's oeuvre remains, however, a delicate question. I chose here one of his smaller comprehensive books as entry point to his thought, the *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* (*The Divine Witnesses*), a text explicitly designed as a summary of the questions explained at length in Şadrā's longer books. The conciseness and comprehensiveness of the *Shawāhid* make it a key text to access Şadrā's method and ideas, as we will see shortly, after a brief account of aspects of Şadrā's life and intellectual milieu that will help situate the philosopher and his thought.

21.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Şadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī is a thinker who lived in Iran in the Safavid period, during the reigns of Shāh ʿAbbās I (995/1587–1038/1629) and Shāh Ṣafī (1038/1629–1052/1642). This historical situation is not insignificant for Şadrā's philosophical pursuit: the Safavids' support of a renewal of Twelver Shīʿī activity, including philosophical speculation, and their patronage of Twelver centers in Iran is well known, as are the discussions at the time on the relation between clergy and state and the nature of clerical authority, and the nascent *uṣūlī-akhbārī* debate in Shīʿī jurisprudence (Newman 2008; Abisaab 2004). Şadrā's family was linked to the court, as were his teachers. But his own situation vis-à-vis the Safavid court and Safavid elite in general is more problematic, as is shown by his failing to find a patron until late in his life.

Recent scholarship has provided ample details on Ṣadrā's career (Khamenehi 2000; Kh^wajavi 1366/1988; Rizvi 2002 and 2007, and the references mentioned there), from Shiraz where he was born around 979/1571, to Qazwin and later Isfahan, the successive capitals of the Safavid empire, where he studied philosophical and religious sciences with eminent scholars of his time. The two most influential of his masters are Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī, known as Shaykh Bahā'ī (d. 1030/1620–21), and Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631). With the first, Ṣadrā studied religious sciences, such as *fiqh*, Qur'ānic exegesis, and *ḥadīth*. But it is with Mīr Dāmād, with whom he studied speculative sciences, that Ṣadrā seems to have built a particularly strong connection, as attested by their correspondence and by the quotations and allusions made by Ṣadrā in his works.

After an unsuccessful return to Shiraz (dated around 1014/1605; see Rizvi 2002, 184), Ṣadrā retired to Kahak, near Qom (earliest date attested: 1024/1615). He then lived an itinerant life between Qom, Isfahan, and Shiraz, until around 1040/1630. He finally settled in Shiraz, apparently at the request of Imām Qulī Khān, the governor of Fars (killed by the order of Shāh Ṣafī in 1042/1633), to teach at the Madrasa-ye Khān (on the governor, see Savory 1998 and Newman 2008; note the proximity between the date of this return to Shiraz and the end of the reign of Shāh 'Abbās I, who died in January 1038/1629). The dating of these events in Ṣadrā's life is uncertain, and mainly based on evidence from his works. The same uncertainty surrounds the date of his death: Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī is said to have died on his way to his seventh (actual number or symbolic value?) pilgrimage to Mecca, but the date of this event is not quite clear. According to the traditional accounts in biographical dictionaries, this happened in 1050/1640–41, but it seems that another date, given by one of Ṣadrā's grandsons, who said that his grandfather died in 1045/1635–36 in Basra and was buried in Najaf, is more reliable (Khamenehi 2000, 414; Rizvi 2007, 28–30).

21.2. INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Ṣadrā's writings show a great variety of influences that provide a first approach to the intellectual context of his work. Avicenna (d. 428/1037) and the Avicennan tradition, especially Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1274) understanding of it, as well as the writings of Avicenna's student Bahmanyār (d. 458/1067), are among the most influential sources used by Ṣadrā. But they are not the only ones: Akbarī writings and Ishrāqī texts are other important elements in Ṣadrā's intellectual universe, as well as the philosophical tradition exemplified in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century by such authors as Dawānī (d. 908/1502) and the Dashtakīs (on whom see Pourjavady 2011 and Pourjavady's chapter in this volume). Ṣadrā's writings also reflect the return to the ancients characteristic of his time. Seventeenth-century Iran witnessed an important activity of copying and studying the texts of the ancients, and a return to the writings produced at the beginning of *falsafa*, the *Theologia Aristotelis* in particular (see the number of manuscripts of this text produced in this period, the many quotations found, and, in the generation next to Ṣadrā's, the commentary on the *Theologia* made by Sa'īd Qummi). A list of books

pertaining to Şadrā's private collection recently discovered confirms what his writings show about his sources (Barakat 1377/1998; commented translation Rizvi 2007, 117–35).

But all these sources and influences do not by themselves generate Şadrā's thought, especially since Şadrā insists that his most personal findings are due to personal experience, as we will see when discussing his method.

21.3. THE DIVINE WITNESSES (AL-SHAWĀHID AL-RUBŪBIYYA)

21.3.1. Place in Şadrā's Works

Şadrā is a prolific author, and his thought is expressed in a large number of writings, mainly in Arabic. The most important perhaps is *al-Ḥikma al-muta'aliyya fī-l-asfār al-'aqliyya* (*The Transcendent Wisdom in the Intellectual Journeys*; *Asfār*, 1:13), often referred to simply as the *Asfār* (*The Journeys*). The impressive size of this summa is due mainly to the fact that, in this book, Şadrā enters into the meanders of previous debates, and quotes the texts of his predecessors at length, explicitly or not. But the *Asfār* is not the only major work in Şadrā's oeuvre: his exegesis of portions of the Qur'ān and his uncompleted commentary on the *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* are also important sources to approach his thought. Other works include treatises on a particular topic, some very short.

All these works are not of one and the same type. In his commentary on Sūrat Yā Sīn (*Tafsīr*, 5:202), Şadrā draws a distinction between what he considers to be works written according to the intellectual method, where demonstrations are central (he mentions the *Asfār* as an example of this type of writing), and his exegesis (*tafsīr*), where hints and reminders are given (*ishārāt wa-tanbihāt*, the very words used by Avicenna in the title of one of his books). In the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (*Keys to the Invisible*), a text devoted to exegetical method, Şadrā reiterates this distinction and lists titles of what he considers his “intellectual books,” in contrast with the *Mafātīḥ* itself: the *Asfār al-arba'a*, the *Kitāb al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, and the *Kitāb al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* (*Mafātīḥ*, 106). This does not, however, impair the unity of Şadrā's work: it is one thought that reveals itself in various modes. This corresponds to Şadrā's conception of the intrinsic unity of knowledge, as expressed in the *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, where the intellect is described as an inner prophet, and the Prophet as an outer intellect (*Sharḥ Uṣūl*, 1:363).

The *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* is thus an example of the intellectual or philosophical type of writing. This book differs from others in that it is short in comparison to a work like the *Asfār* (Şadrā presents his work as a summary, “without lengthy refutation of opposite positions”; see *Shawāhid*, 5 and 61/81),¹ and it presents a complete cycle of Şadrā's

¹ The first number in references to this work corresponds to the pagination in the edition by J. Ashtiyānī, the second number to the pagination in the edition by M. Muḥaqqiq Dāmād. When the two paginations coincide, only one number is given.

understanding of reality, in comparison with treatises centered on one topic, such as the *Risāla fī ḥudūth al-‘ālam* or the *Mashā‘ir*.

The position of the *Shawāhid* compared with the *Asfār* is clear: the *Shawāhid* is meant as a summary that refers to the *Asfār*, sometimes only vaguely alluded to by expressions such as “in our summa” (*fī kitābinā al-kabīr*; *Shawāhid*, 22/30), for a more detailed treatment of the questions discussed. The *Shawāhid* refers also to other texts by Ṣadrā, such as the *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ḥadīd*, or the *Mabda’ wa-l-ma‘ād*. Parts of the text are parallel to passages found in the same *Mabda’* and in the *Masā’il al-quḍsiyya*. The *Shawāhid* itself is referred to in several texts, including the *Risāla fī ḥudūth al-‘ālam*, a text for which one of the earliest known manuscripts, copied in Qazwin, is dated 1034/1625 (MS Princeton University, Islamic MSS., New Series 2003).

21.3.2. Ṣadrā’s Method as Shown in *The Divine Witnesses*: A Reading of the Prologue

From the very beginning of the text of the *Shawāhid*, in the prologue, the reader is made aware of the peculiar character of Ṣadrā’s method in doing philosophy. The vocabulary used to describe the process through which knowledge is acquired is mostly that of light and enlightenment. Ṣadrā speaks of secrets obtained through connection to a higher realm, and not to be divulged to the unworthy, and everything points to some kind of mystically or spiritually connoted undertaking. The experiential and intuitive character of true knowledge, if not its illuminative nature, is imaginatively expressed in another text as follows (the passage is about the real understanding of *tawḥīd*): “Whoever wants to attain this lofty goal by means of such demonstrations built in the corners of his heart [a term used to refer to the rational soul], on the basis of such unfounded premises and of such weak principles, is like a spider that would strive to capture the *anqā’* [a fabulous bird, similar to the phoenix] with a web that it weaves in the corners of a room” (*Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, in *Tafsīr*, 1:48–49).

What Ṣadrā wishes to stress by this is the need for a deeper experiential basis to ground any sound understanding of what is real. In order to “know things as they are,” which is the ultimate point of human perfection (*Asfār*, 1:20), direct experience is needed, but not the kind of direct experience having to do with the material world and our senses: what is needed is rather inner vision, or spiritual tasting. We will see shortly that for Ṣadrā, who follows here a line of thought developed in the Islamic tradition from the twelfth century on, with such key figures as Suhrawardī and Ibn ‘Arabī, to know things as they are is to understand that, despite the apparent multiplicity, all that is ultimately participates in one reality, and to recognize in every thing a manifestation of the One. In order to reach this unified vision of what is, and to perceive the underlying structure that unifies the multiplicity of the phenomenal world, demonstrations and rational arguments based solely on our experience of this world do not suffice. Another basis is needed to go beyond mere mental constructions, perhaps intellectually attractive, but having little to do with what really is.

This is not to say that demonstrations and rational arguments are to be rejected as proper means of acquiring knowledge. The emphasis placed in the prologue of the *Shawāhid* on the experiential character of true knowledge, or of the knowledge of fundamental metaphysical principles, should not lead the reader to misunderstand Şadrā's mode of thinking as being wholly intuitive or mystical: a reader with such a misconception would be surprised at the demonstrative tone of Şadrā's writings. Pure inspirations are not Şadrā's goal: they only provide the starting point for the building of a comprehensive system based on demonstrative arguments. This equally important aspect of Şadrā's method, visible throughout the text of the *Shawāhid*, is also perceptible in the prologue: toward the end, when describing the contents of the book, Şadrā introduces a different vocabulary and speaks of demonstration, of the reflexive or cogitative faculty that, like a diver, brings out the pearls produced from the gems granted from above in the soul's shell, from "the bottom of wisdom's sea to the shore of demonstrative exposition." These pearls, pierced by the verifying activity of the rational faculty, are the material for the *Shawāhid* (*Shawāhid*, 5/5–6).

The claim made by Şadrā is thus not that reason is not a proper way to attain knowledge: it is rather that the first principles of any real philosophical understanding of reality can only be reached by a kind of experience beyond reasoning, and, further, that intellect has to be enlightened to reach certain levels of knowledge, or in other words, that some things are not accessible with unenlightened human reason. Without intuitive knowledge, one can only build a system devoid of meaning because not rooted in reality. But intuitive knowledge alone, expressed in the language of experience with no attempt at demonstration, deprives itself of a precious safeguard; further, even if what is expressed in such a language is true, there remains a risk of misunderstanding and of dismissal.

This is what happens with a number of key judgments made in the Akbarī tradition, and misunderstood by "those who want to understand their goals and the meaning of what they affirm through the reading of their writings alone" (*Asfār*, 2:319). Experience of the deeper metaphysical structure of what is allows one to recognize behind the often problematic, if not apparently untenable, Akbarī ideas a similar understanding of reality, and to give it a proper rendering (Şadrā speaks of correction and emendation), according to the canons of proper demonstrative reasoning and not open to refutation, as Akbarī texts often are when taken in their first meaning (this being a consequence of the Akbarīs' total immersion in spiritual exercises, and their preoccupation with what in their eyes is more important, says Şadrā; on this, see *Asfār*, 6:183 and 284).

The experiential basis of metaphysics gives it greater certainty: it allows the overcoming of doubts and blind imitation of the opinions of masters (*Shawāhid*, 4). This opens in turn the possibility of making progress in the understanding of the world around us and beyond, or in the exposition of this understanding: things can be discovered since knowledge is not a repetition but a personal experience. Şadrā himself claims to have made such discoveries or, in his words, to have been singled out to be granted knowledge of certain things that none of the ancients and no modern had found before him (*Shawāhid*, 4; 39–40/53–54). What is presented by Şadrā as his personal achievement

is actually often the demonstrative proof of what had been only alluded to before him (another sign of his will to combine both paths toward knowledge).

Şadrâ advocates thus a balance between demonstrative rational method and spiritual experience. He is cautious, however, not to mix the two, and defines a clear separation in his mode of exposition. In the *Asfâr*, this is clearly stated as follows: “The Sufis [he speaks here about Akbarî thinkers] have the habit to be content with [or: to limit themselves to] taste and inspiration alone in the judgments they make. As for ourselves, we do not entirely rely on what has no demonstration, and we do not mention it in our philosophical writings” (*Asfâr*, 9:234). In the *Shawâhid*, Şadrâ recognizes the persuasive power of inspired discourse: this, he says, is no less likely to lead the true seeker to certain knowledge than the arguments of those who use demonstrations (*Shawâhid*, 221/263). But this is not, however, his own way of exposition: his discourse is in the language of demonstration. When things come to what can only be grasped through inner vision, there is no point or use in writing them down: the best one can do is to allude to these, to give some hints for the reader to recognize, but they remain outside the scope of his book (see *Shawâhid*, 40/54, on God’s knowledge).

What has been said here about Şadrâ’s method in doing philosophy has a clear *ishrâqî* tone and is reminiscent of what Suhrawardî says in the prologue and final admonition of his *Ḥikmat al-ishrâq*. A few extracts from this work will suffice to show the clear link between the two. The necessity to combine rational activity and spiritual path can be found in the following text: “This book of ours is for the one who seeks mystical speculation and discursive philosophy” (§6; trans. Walbridge and Ziai, slightly modified); and again, at the end of the *Ḥikma*: “Give [this book] only to one who has mastered the method of the Peripatetics [that is philosophy in the Avicennan way], and is at the same time a lover of God’s light” (§279). What is said about progress in knowledge, and the claim to have been granted new findings, can also be traced back to the same source: “He who studies [this book] will learn that what escaped the ancients and moderns God has entrusted to my tongue,” says Suhrawardî in his final admonition (§280). And in the introduction, one reads: “Knowledge is not restricted to some people, so that after them the door of the Kingdom is shut and the world is denied the (possibility) of obtaining more: no, the Giver of knowledge . . . is not stingy with the Unseen (Quran 81:23)” (§2). Yet another aspect of Şadrâ’s writings, namely to present his views as a return to what the ancients said, by contrast to the errors of the more recent thinkers, gives again a clear *ishrâqî* flavor to his texts.

For Şadrâ, his own undertaking follows the footsteps of *ishrâq*, is in line with the Akbarî tradition, with which he shares many principles and fundamental views, and is also an accomplishment of the philosophical tradition, represented by Avicenna. Even if it is profoundly different in its metaphysical presuppositions from Şadrâ’s own thinking, Avicennan philosophy remains the framework of Şadrâ’s thought. The very name “higher philosophy” (or, in a translation with a more spiritual flavor, “transcendental wisdom”) used by Şadrâ to characterize his method or his way of philosophizing (see especially the very title of his summa, *al-Ḥikma al-muta‘aliyya fî-l-asfâr al-‘aqliyya*), is an expression used by Avicenna in his *Ishārāt* (*Ishārāt*, *namaṭ* 10, faṣl. 9, 210). In Ṭūsî’s

commentary, through which Şadrā reads the *Ishārāt*, this is explained in the following terms: “These questions fall under higher philosophy, because Peripatetic philosophy is pure discursive philosophy but these questions . . . only come to completion by way of discursive inquiry and reasoning, *side by side with* revelation and spiritual experience; [this kind of philosophy] is thus higher in comparison to the first” (Ṭūsī, *Hall mushkilāt al-Ishārāt*, 3:401). This higher philosophy is exactly what Şadrā aims to do. The words “hints” and “reminders” (*ishārāt* and *tanbīhāt*) placed at the end of the prologue of the *Shawāhid* (*Shawāhid*, 5), even if they are often used, are not there by chance, and cannot but recall the name of Avicenna in the reader’s mind.

21.4. ŞADRĀ’S THOUGHT AS SHOWN IN *THE DIVINE WITNESSES*

Şadrā’s goal in his writings is to provide a comprehensive explanation of the nature and origins of reality, which, in the tradition where his thought is situated, translates itself in terms of an account of the relationship between a First Principle and everything other than itself (or in a general and somewhat nontechnical language, between God and the world), and of man’s place and role in the universe. This is also the case in the *Shawāhid*. The text is comprised of five parts, called “scenes” or “loci of witnessing” (*mashhad*); these are further divided into “evidences” or “witnesses” (*shāhid*). The logic of the text can be described as follows. The first *mashhad*, on general concepts and principles, is by far the longest of the *Shawāhid*. It provides the basic principles of Şadrā’s metaphysics and draws important distinctions such as that between mental being, or being in the mind, and concrete being. The second and third *mashhad* describe the cycle of being, from its origin from the One to its return to the One. These chapters discuss the nature of the First Principle, within itself and in its relationship with creation, and include a discussion on the emanation of what is other than the First, ending in the generation of the physical world, culminating in the coming to be of the human soul. The fourth *mashhad* deals with corporeal resurrection, a topic treated separately, due to its importance for Şadrā. The text ends with a last *mashhad* on prophecy and guardianship.

21.5. BEING

The *Shawāhid* begins with a statement of a number of principles defining key metaphysical positions underlying the author’s understanding of reality. One of the foundations of Şadrā’s metaphysical understanding, that everything that is participates in one reality, the very act of being, is clearly stated at the beginning of the text: “Being,” says Şadrā, “deserves more than anything to have a reality because it is through it that what is other

than being has a reality . . . : being is that by which everything that is real gets its reality” (*Shawāhid*, 6/9). In this proposition, Ṣadrā claims, against those who consider being as a concept that is nothing over and above, and adds nothing to, the reality of what is, that being as act is the very reality of everything that is. But what is being, and what does it mean to be a reality? We have to turn to the *Asfār* to get a clear answer: “What we mean by reality,” says Ṣadrā, “is nothing else than that which is the source of an external effect” (*Asfār*, 2:319).

Now, if everything that is is essentially an act of being, the main question is to determine what differentiates the acts of being one from another, or whether and how to acknowledge multiplicity. Ṣadrā’s answer is simple: differentiation is primarily due to the degree of being, that is, the greater or lesser level of perfection in being represented by each portion of reality. For each act of being, to be this particular level of perfection of being thus constitutes what it is. The differentiation in degree between beings makes of each of them one particular thing, different from the others. Reality outside of our minds (what is called “concrete reality,” *ḥaqīqa ‘ayniyya*), is thus for Ṣadrā constituted of singular acts of being (*wujūdāt*), which are as many ipseities (Ṣadrā speaks of individual ipseities or individual he-nesses, *huwīyāt shakhṣiyya*), with different properties, even though, at the same time, there is a fundamental and deeper unity of every thing that is.

This affirmation of a multiplicity of acts of being distinct by their degree of participation to (or perfection in) the very reality they share is the result, or the expression, of a metaphysical principle known as *tashkīk*, modulation of being. This principle is defined as follows: a reality is said to be modulated when the priority and posteriority, or perfection and deficiency, of its various degrees is in their very reality, and is not due to some external element (see *Asfār*, 1:36–37). Surprisingly little is said about *tashkīk* in the *Shawāhid*: the idea is certainly present (cf. the section on the distinction between beings, *Shawāhid*, 10/15), but the word *tashkīk* is used only twice (*Shawāhid*, 75/97 and 135/165). There is no mention either of the predicamental aspect of the notion of *tashkīk*, and no account of the fact that it is first a property of terms, one of the kinds of predication, used for terms that are said of different things (or of things that share a same name) with one and the same meaning, but with a difference in the way each *deserves* this attribution (Treiger 2011; Bonmariage 2007, 54–66; see Avicenna, *Shifā’*, *Maqūlāt*, 10–11 and *Shirāzī*, *Asfār*, 1:35–37). All the reader gets is a reference to the *Asfār* for a more thorough treatment of the question (*Shawāhid*, 135/165).

Avicenna used being as an example only for the two first kinds of differentiation in the way a term with the same meaning can be attributed to different things, anteriority and posteriority, primacy or dignity and its opposite. For the last kind of differentiation, that having to do with intensity and lack thereof, he prefers “to be white” as an example, snow being more intensely white than ivory, because for him “this only fits notions that are susceptible of more and less” (Avicenna, *Shifā’*, *Māqūlāt*, 10). For Ṣadrā, on the contrary, one can be more or less; there are different ways (*naḥw*) of being, some more intense than others: “Acts of being (*al-wujūdāt*) vary in perfection and deficiency in [their] being-existent” (*Asfār*, 6:92).

In his understanding of what makes the primary distinction between realities, Şadrā shows again a predilection for elements of *ishrāqī* thought: what is said here calls to mind what Suhrawardī maintains about perfection and deficiency as differentiating the pure Lights of his metaphysical system (see *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, §§125 and 136).

Thus for Şadrā, “Acts of being differ [in rank]: the most eminent is the Real, and the lowest ones, first matter, movement, time, and their likes” (*Shawāhid*, 251/298). Except for the most perfect level of being that is limited by nothing, since it is pure being and embraces in its simplicity all perfections, everything that is is limited by what it is not. This limitation is what defines things, and it is as such the origin of their quiddity. Quiddities are thus ways for our minds to express the limits and privation of beings that are not absolutely perfect. In the discussion of what is the object of creation (*jaʿl*), Şadrā's answer is again clear: “The being of things (*wujūd al-ashyāʾ*) is the very fact that the things are, not the fact that something else is in them or for them” (*Shawāhid*, 10/15). By saying this, Şadrā maintains that things are not quiddities to which being is given, nor essences that exist just by the fact that they are posited, but that what things are (or what is posited in reality by the First Principle) is rather a particular act of being, and nothing else, quiddities arising from the lack of perfection of things, making them “this” or “that.”

Existence, the very act of being, is what is in the outside world, and quiddities can only be said to be accidentally, as shadows of the particular acts of beings that actually are (*Shawāhid*, 9–11/13–15). Even if in the analysis of things made by our minds, quiddities can be said to be prior and be qualified by the *concept* of being, what really is outside our minds are particular acts of being.

21.6. THE ONE AND THE MANY (OR: GOD AND THE WORLD)

The process through which what is other than the First Principle, the highest perfection of being, comes to be is expressed by Şadrā in a number of ways, not because of a lack of clarity in the thinker's mind, but rather because each approach reveals one aspect of what it is. In some places, this process is expressed in terms of a gradual manifestation of the many perfections of the One, in a model that combines the vocabulary of theophany and that of emanation. But Şadrā also uses the language of creation, agency, and causality. In the texts where he does so, the coming to be of what is other than the First is conceived as the effect of a voluntary act of God.

When speaking in terms of a creative act, Şadrā insists on its voluntary character, and on the role played by God's knowledge and will in the process. In the *Asfār*, he says: “The existence of the world from the Creator (*bāriʿ*) is not by nature with no positive choice (*ikhtiyār*) on His part, as is the case in the existence of clarity coming from the sun in the air: the Creator acts by choice. His however is a loftier and more sublime kind of choice

than what common people imagine” (*Asfār*, 2:216). In the *Shawāhid*, the Creator is also said to be agent by choice: His act is thus not limited to just one direction; it is an act done willingly and consciously (*Shawāhid*, 83/106).

Ṣadrā’s account of the process through which what is other than the First Principle comes to be in terms of manifestation owes a lot to Ibn ‘Arabī and to the Akbarī tradition both in the vocabulary used and in the structuring of the process itself: this is thus expressed in terms of a theophany, a manifestation of the divine Essence, first within itself, then outward. It is a gradual manifestation of the many aspects of being, unfolding from the One that is all perfection. What this means is that the perfections of being, which exist in the One through one single act of being, come to be gradually on their own. Each act of being reveals fewer aspects of perfection as the movement of manifestation expands: the perfections that exist at a higher level through one act of being come to be at a lower level through many different acts. The lower one gets in the level of perfection, the more multiplicity there is. In the lower material realm, the highest degree of multiplicity is reached, as fragmentation is key to Ṣadrā’s concept of materiality.

Ṣadrā adopts the classical distinction of three main realms or spheres of reality: the world of the intellect (the afterworld), the imaginal world (the intermediary, *al-barzakh*), and the sensible world (this material world). “God created being (*khalaqa al-wujūd*) in three realms or three worlds,” says Ṣadrā in the *Shawāhid*: “this lower world (*dunyā*), an intermediary world, and an afterworld. Body and bodily accidents belong to this lower world, and their perception is through external sense; the soul and its accidents belong to the intermediary world, and their perception is through internal sense; the intellect and what is intellected by it belong to the afterworld, which is the World of command, and their perception is through the holy intellect” (*Shawāhid*, 225–26/269). These levels of being correspond to each other and mirror each other, the higher levels being the perfection of lower ones, and the lower levels expressions of the higher ones.

As is the case in Akbarī texts, the self-manifestation of the Real is also expressed through the image of emanation or effusion (*ḥayd*). In this model, the “all-pervasive existence” (also called “the Breath of the Merciful”) is said to be the first to emanate from the First Cause. It carries the existence of all that is after it, and, accordingly, is the root or foundation of the world (*aṣl al-‘ālam*; see *Shawāhid*, 70/91–92). In fact, what is said here comes close to a number of texts where the God-world relationship is expressed in terms of a creative act, for what this act provides is often described, in line with Ṣadrā’s understanding of reality, as the “effusion of the good that is to be (*ifādat al-khayr al-wujūdī*)” (*Shawāhid*, 69/91).

In the *Shawāhid* (and in the *Mashā’ir*), Ṣadrā combines the different models in the account he gives of types of actions: besides action by nature, under constraint, under compulsion, in view of a goal, providential, for the good pleasure and assent of the actor (*bi-l-riḍā*), Ṣadrā adds here another type of action, not present in the *Asfār*, action by manifestation, and states that this is the way God acts in creation (*Shawāhid*, 55/73; *Mashā’ir*, §123; see *Asfār*, 2:224).

But if the act of God is *in fine* a manifestation of His perfections, what is the ontological weight of what is other than God? And how is it *other* than God, if everything

is being and God is the perfection of being? The problem with a metaphysical perspective based on the participation of all that is in one fundamental reality such as Şadrā's, besides avoiding pantheism, is to prevent depriving the world of any substantial reality of its own. In order to avoid pantheism, Şadrā affirms repeatedly that if the First is pure perfection of being and, as such, is everything, the First is none of the things in their particularity: "God says: 'He is with you wherever you are' [Qur'ān 57:4], but this is not a mixture, or a penetration, nor inherence, nor union; He is not with anything in its rank, nor in the degree of being, not in time nor in position" (*Shawāhid*, 48/65). In some texts, Şadrā uses Ibn 'Arabī's division of being in three main degrees, where the intermediary level of the "unfolding existence," or "Breath of the Merciful," is used to further emphasize the distance between the Real and the dependent acts of being (*Shawāhid*, 70/91–92; see Ibn 'Arabī, *Inshā'*, 16–18).

As for the substantial reality of what is other than the Necessary being, this seems to be a main concern for Şadrā. His position is not without difficulty, however. A number of texts raise concerns about the keeping of the principle of *tashkik*. It seems that a major consequence of this principle, namely that there are particular acts of being, and thus real multiplicity in reality, is not always saved, and that Şadrā shifts at some point into a different model. While Şadrā speaks about the real differentiation between acts of being (as in the following passage: "Being as being without anything added is cause and caused, and the act of being that is cause is *by itself other than* the act of being that is caused, and not through some addition" [*Shawāhid*, 73/95]), other texts seem to reflect another understanding of reality.

Thus, as Şadrā points out, strictly speaking, the "Active principle" is agent (*fā'il*) only vis-à-vis the existing quiddity (that is, the existent seen as a whole, in contrast with the act of being and the quiddity considered in themselves). Regarding being itself, the Principle is rather what makes it subsist (a *muqawwim*), and not an agent, because, Şadrā adds, "This being is not separated from itself [that is, the Active principle]" (*Shawāhid*, 79/102).

Another text is even more disquieting regarding the ontological status of particular existences: "What we first understood, according to conventional rules and common usage, and by way of an examination made roughly, that there is in existence 'cause' and 'caused,' leads us finally . . . [to acknowledge] that what is called 'cause' is the foundation, while the 'caused' is one of His modes, and that causality and effectuation go back [*in fine*] to the modulation of the cause in itself and its variation in its [different] varieties, not the separation of something separated in itself from the cause" (*Shawāhid*, 50–51/68). The same thing is stated at the end of the preceding paragraph: "Here multiplicity vanishes. . . . He is the reality, and the rest are His modes; He is the essence, and what is other than Him are His names and attributes; He is the foundation [or root, trunk, *aşl*], and what is besides Him are His modulations and His ramifications" (*Shawāhid*, 50/67; see also *Aşfār*, 2:300–301).

How is this compatible with what Şadrā maintains about causality in being, a result of the principle of differentiation of the acts of being by their degree of perfection? One can consider this to be a sign of a tension in Şadrā's metaphysics (Rahman 1975, 40–41),

or even a contradiction. But one can also read into this the expression of the paradoxical character of Ṣadrā's understanding of reality, where a real preoccupation with the substantial reality of what is other than the First Principle has to come to terms with an equally strong concern for ontological *tawḥīd*, that is, to affirm that only God is—even if this is never stated clearly by Ṣadrā himself.

In order to make sense of what Ṣadrā says in these different texts, one has to consider that Ṣadrā both maintains that the First principle is agent par excellence, cause of everything that is, and urges us to go beyond the causal paradigm, since everything that is is, in its very reality, a dependent act of being (a *wujūd ta'alluqī*; see *Shawāhid*, 108/135, 145/178) that is nothing without reference to the First. But this does not prevent these realities from having an ontological weight, *when considered at their own level of reality*. Ṣadrā insists on several occasions on the importance of maintaining the reality of the world and of its causal order, “the order visible in this sensible world and in the worlds above it, with their various individuals, that differ from each other in species, individualization, ipseity, number . . . , each individual having its own effects and its proper states” (*Asfār*, 2:319), and again a little further: “The multiplicity of intellects, souls, forms, bodies is established” (*Asfār*, 2:322). Nowhere is Ṣadrā more explicit than in this passage of the *Asfār* about human action and being: “The act of Zayd is *really* his, not by way of speaking; and yet at the same time, it is *really* the act of God, just as Zayd's existence belongs *really* to Zayd, and not by way of speaking, while being at the same time one of the modes of the Real” (*Asfār*, 6:374). Both perspectives are thus to be held together. Even if realities are totally dependent on the Real, even if they are only by Him, they still are realities. And there is thus real multiplicity: “What we mean by *reality* is nothing else than that which is the source of an external effect”—as we quoted earlier—“and what we mean by *multiplicity*,” adds Ṣadrā, “is nothing but that which implies necessarily numerous statuses and effects” (*Asfār*, 2:319). From the point of view of the Real, one can say that only He is; from the point of view of the particular realities, one can say that they are, and it is only as realities that they manifest one aspect of the perfection of the divine.

Real multiplicity can thus be subsumed in an equally real unity. Everything other than the Necessary by Himself is only real through another that supports its being; considered in itself, or in comparison with the existence of the Necessary being, it is rightly said to disappear. The Necessary One can thus be said to be the only being, since only He can be without any other, while the existence of the rest is due to His act and support, and is thus through Him. Since the act of being that is caused has no other aspect than its very being, since what it is is nothing else than this particular dependent act of being (*Shawāhid*, 145/178; *Asfār*, 1:80), there is nothing left, no residue that would impair the unicity of reality, when, considered in itself, this act of being vanishes in front of the splendor of the Necessary, as the light of the moon disappears when compared to that of the sun (*Tafsīr sūrat Yā Sīn*, in *Tafsīr*, 5:114; see also *Shawāhid*, 50/68, 306/362).

Readers familiar with the texts of Ibn 'Arabī and other authors in his tradition will recognize the Akbarī tone of the paradoxical language of both “yes” and “no,” affirmation

and negation, pervading Şadrā's understanding of reality as expressed in the *Shawāhid*. To "see with both eyes" is a well-known injunction of the Shaykh al-Akbar (see Chittick 1989, 361–81). Şadrā makes images and metaphors used by Ibn 'Arabī his own in this context, like that of the numbers and the one: numbers are nothing but the one itself that is repeated, and yet each number has properties and consequences that do not exist in others. It seems that there would be something other than the reunion of ones to explain these differences, and yet there is nothing there but the one that is multiplied; "you keep thus affirming that which you deny, and denying that which you affirm" (*Shawāhid*, 79/101; see Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 77 and Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, 556–57).

There is, however, a specificity of the Şadrian discourse in comparison with the Akbarī tradition. This lies in Şadrā's particular consideration for the acts of being (*wujūdāt*), more rays of the light of the One than shadows of his clarity, the term "shadow" being used by him more often for quiddities: "All these acts of being that follow each other or make a circle, are like one single act of being in the fact that they are made to subsist by something else, that is the Necessary [being]. He is thus the foundation of (all) acts of being, and what is besides Him are his ramifications; He is the self-subsisting light, and what is besides Him are his rays, while the quiddities are his shadows" (*Shawāhid*, 36/49–50). While the Akbarīs insist on the evanescence of what is other than the Real, Şadrā insists that the particular acts of being are realities in their own right, and that it is only as such that they are manifestations of the One. Beings, realities, are lights in themselves, even if these lights disappear when the Light of the Real rises.

21.7. BEING IN THIS WORLD

The lower material world is characterized by change and restlessness. Nature itself is considered by Şadrā as the immediate cause of this perpetual change and movement: it is in itself something flowing (*amr sayyāl*), in perpetual flow and transformation. This continuous change is a trait of the world viewed as a whole and of each of the worldly beings. Everything that is in the material world progressively comes to its perfection, unlike the beings of the higher realms of existence. In this gradual accomplishment of what it is, each worldly being remains the same individual in its being and ipseity, but an individual whose reality is a continuous (*ittiṣālī*) reality, no part of matter remaining the same in the process (*Shawāhid*, 100/126).

The world as a whole is also in a process of realization: it is said to have a "gradual mode of being" (*wujūd tadrijī*), meaning it has to gradually get to the highest perfection of its existence. The ultimate goal of the constant movement toward perfection of this world is to bring being from the lowest levels of perfection back to a mode of being that is immaterial, or at least at a level that is the first step toward a higher immaterial realm of being. What is other than the First is thus "first intelligence, then soul, then nature, then matter, and then reverts the other way around, as if turning on itself: first formed body, then plant, then animal endowed with soul, then human being endowed

with intellect. Being thus starts with intelligence and ends with he who is intelligent” (*Shawāhid*, 180/220).

Ṣadrā explains how the divine providence does not come to an end: since the chain of simple beings is itself finite and reaches its end with first matter, providence continues with other types of being (*Shawāhid*, 180/220). It thus “decrees the coming to be of composed (beings) that are capable of permanence as species, and originates souls capable of permanence as individual in the afterworld” (*Shawāhid*, 180/220; note the difference in verb used: *ansha’a* for composed beings, *abda’a* for souls destined to become immaterial). What does this mean? We said earlier that what is other than the Real is divided into three main realms, and that these realms, or worlds, correspond to each other. Each reality exists in each realm, but not necessarily with the same properties. One reality thus exists in different planes of reality. In the lower material world, the realities existing at higher levels of reality are present, but due to the deficiency of this world, several individuals correspond here to one species existing in the higher levels of being. Ṣadrā thus supports the existence of some kind of Platonic Ideas (*muthul aqlātūniyya*), which would correspond, if one understands well what is said here, to the realities existing in God’s knowledge. In a passage where Ṣadrā quotes extensively from the *Uthūlūjiyā* (The *Theology of Aristotle*), he explains how his own version is more akin to what is found in that text, and differs from that of Suhrawardī (*Shawāhid*, 154–78/189–216; on Platonic Ideas in the Arabic tradition, see Arnzen 2010).

Starting from the lower world, the movement of perfection is thus the following: there is a progressive accomplishment of one reality, and the many exemplars of this reality in the lower world remain at higher levels of reality, in the hereafter, as species; that is, they return to the single reality they correspond to in the higher planes of reality, or in yet other words, realities of this world can reach a higher level of reality outside of matter, but they cannot do so individually, only as a species. This is for Ṣadrā a sign of the divine providence: their deficiency makes them unable to endure as individuals; thus the divine grace grants them endurance as species (*Shawāhid*, 183/224). But this is not the case for all the beings in this material world: it is so for all except human beings (and perhaps some superior animals, but this remains an unanswered question for Ṣadrā). This is what is alluded to at the end of the passage quoted above: there are souls “capable of permanence as individuals in the afterworld” (*Shawāhid*, 180/220).

21.8. MAN

Humankind is for Ṣadrā the ultimate point of the existence of the world, and everything in this world is oriented toward its achievement. The gradual perfection of this world seen as a whole aims at the return to an intellectual, that is, not material, level of

existence, and this is accomplished when a first level of intellection comes to be. More precisely, it is the level of passive intellect that is defined as the last of the corporeal, and the first of the nonmaterial notions (*Shawāhid*, 223/266). This level of perfection, which can be reached only by human beings of all the worldly creatures, is the first step into a higher realm, now outside the material world.

But as the world itself, human beings are in a constant movement toward perfection. They reach the fullness of their humanity step by step and, in this gradual accomplishment of what they are, go through various planes of existence. For Ṣadrā, it is untenable to say that, from the beginning of the existence of a human being, when an individual human soul comes to be for a portion of matter so disposed as to be able to receive such a soul, this would already be a rational and immaterial soul, but whose rational activity would be idle. For him, the human soul is that soul which has the *disposition* to become immaterial, but it is not so from the start (see *Shawāhid*, 186–87/227). Immateriality, that is, the ability to do without matter in one's being and action, comes to be through a gradual perfection in the level of being of the human reality: it is first a material entity that slowly proceeds from materiality to immateriality in a continuous process where individuality is kept. Human soul comes thus to be as a bodily reality—is bodily in its origin—but subsists as a spirit, that is, as immaterial (*Shawāhid*, 221/264). The process through which this happens is a continuing liberation from the constraints and limits of matter. Man is really a man, or in other words, lives fully his humanity, only when he reaches a level of perception that is beyond sensation and estimation: before that, he is “a worm that creeps in the soil,” or, less dramatically, an animal just like other animals (see *Shawāhid*, 337–38 and 361–62/395–96 and 422).

“[When] he rises to the world of humanity,” says Ṣadrā after defining the lower levels through which the human individual passes in his development, “he perceives things that do not fall under sensation, imagination, or estimation. He is cautious not only regarding the immediate, but also the future. He perceives things that are absent from sensation, imagination, and estimation, and seeks the Hereafter and eternal life. From this point, he deserves really to be called ‘human’” (*Shawāhid*, 338/396).

Already in this world, human beings live at various levels of reality, from the physical world to the immaterial higher realms of being. They have, while in this world, the possibility to perform actions and to perceive beyond the limits of materiality. And this is even more so when they reach the higher levels of being after leaving the material world with death.

We saw that for Ṣadrā there are several realms in existence, each with its own properties. Human beings have this peculiarity, that unlike the other beings of this world, they are able to exist in these different planes of reality while keeping their individuality. They thus return (meaning, subsist in the afterlife) as individuals, and not, like other realities of this world, as species.

Another peculiarity of human beings is that they do not have a definite place to return to, nor to stay in (*laysa lahu*, or *lahā* when speaking of human soul, *maqām ma'lūm*). This famous Ṣadrian saying, that echoes the Qur'ānic verse “There is not among us any

except that he has a known position" (Qurʾān 37:164), does not seem to be stated as such in the *Shawāhid* (unlike, for instance, the *Asfār*; see 8:343), but the idea of the versatility of human nature is unambiguously present.

This has several important implications, two of which will be mentioned here. First, there is a possibility to go beyond or stay behind human perfection. The gradual coming to be of the perfection of a reality that is not itself circumscribed in one well-defined limit allows for the possibility of thinking that one can go beyond humanity, and become one of the angels, or stay behind humanity, and remain at the level of animals, albeit superior ones. The ultimate goal of human beings is to go from the stage of animal to that of angel, which is the highest perfection that can be reached, and when at the level of the angels, to go from the lower angelic rank to that of the angels that are nearest to God (*Shawāhid*, 340/398). But this is the final perfection of a small number of human beings, as very few have the proper disposition and conditions to reach it: the vast majority of humanity stays behind. Their knowledge and being remain at the level of imagination and estimation, like superior animals (*Shawāhid*, 203/243–44). In the afterlife, the result of one's accomplishment in this world will become visible and affect the way the afterlife is lived. In one passage of the *Asfār*, Ṣadrā insists on the difference between those who are destined to reach the higher levels of human perfection and other men in an impressive way: "It should be known that men as human beings do not have as first or even second perfection to become sages who know God, His kingdom, His signs, and the Last Day. This is not in the natural disposition of most people, but only in the nature of a favored group, who are in reality another species of people, different from the others. For we have alluded to the fact that human beings, according to this first state of being, are one unique species, but according to the state of being of the second nature . . . , they are many species, each with its own perfection and bliss" (*Asfār*, 7:81).

This brings us to the second consequence of the versatility of human perfection. For Ṣadrā, in the afterlife, the human species is no longer unique, as it is in the lower world, but the remarkable variety of accomplishments of human beings results, in the afterlife, in a multiplicity of different species (*Shawāhid*, 223/266, 287/341). In the *Shawāhid*, this idea is presented as a fact, stated without much explanation. Ṣadrā explains how this is possible in the *Asfār*: "Natural human being [that is, human being as a natural being, a being of the world of nature]," says Ṣadrā, "is one unique species, and similarly, human souls, from the point of view of their attached existence [that is, their existence as linked to the material body], are one unique species But this soul, even if it is the form and perfection of this natural species, is also in itself a substance able to receive forms of various species according to a different [kind] of being, other than the natural" (*Asfār*, 9:19; see also *Sharḥ Uṣūl*, 3:380). In the *Wisdom of the Throne*, souls are said to be "a form of perfection for sensible matter" and at the same time "spiritual matter with the capacity of receiving and being united" with other forms, according to their actions and habits (*Arshiyya*, 241; trans. Morris 1981, 145–46). It is these forms that will appear in the hereafter.

21.9. AFTERLIFE

The question of afterlife is treated in the *Shawāhid* chiefly in relation with human destiny. Of special interest for Şadrā is the problem of bodily resurrection, to which a separate chapter is devoted (*mashhad* 4). Şadrā starts by enumerating a number of principles that ground his understanding of corporeal afterlife (a similar, but not identical, list is found in *Asfār*, 9:185; *Mabda'*, 382; *Tafsīr Sūrat Yā Sīn*, 371). The main positions maintained there have to do with the notions of matter and corporeity, and the understanding of the imaginative faculty as nonmaterial. Matter is not for Şadrā a primary factor of individualization: this is guaranteed by the soul that informs this matter and makes it its own. Şadrā proposes a definition of corporeity (the quality or state of having or being a body) that is not related to matter understood as that reality made of elements which underlies the existence of the beings of this lower world. Şadrā thus dissociates the corporeal from the material and claims that the soul's real body is not the body seen as a "natural composite," the "heavy body" (*Shawāhid*, 88/112), but rather the instrument of its action: it is this latter kind of body that will remain with the soul in the afterlife (*Shawāhid*, 91/115–16).

The principle that states that the individual remains as an identical individual being throughout the incessant process of regeneration of the parts of its body in its growth and decay in this world holds for the passage in the afterlife: the body remains what it is, even if its nature changes, following the continuity of the identity of the soul. It is this approach of the soul's body that emerges from the following passage: "The members of an individual person (*shakhs*), like his body (*badan*) as a whole, are in constant transformation, dissolution and flow through (the action) of its innate heat . . . , and [despite this], the individual is identical to himself body and soul, from the beginning to the end of his life. This is due to the fact that the identity of his body is kept by his soul. . . . The fact that the body is this body, a body for this soul, is by this soul, even if the composition of the body is changed. And the same holds for the fact that the members are these members, like this hand or this finger, since all of them keep their identity following the identity of the soul" (*Shawāhid*, 262/312). What dies is the elemental body, the flesh (*Shawāhid*, 288/342), but this does not deprive the soul of a body to use in the afterlife.

Şadrā insists on several occasions that the afterlife body is different in many ways from the material body. Thus, for instance, the afterlife body emerges from the soul and reflects its true nature: the souls in the afterlife "create their body, as something they necessitate and that follows them" (*Shawāhid*, 268/318). This corporeal afterlife takes place in another dimension of existence, an intermediary plane of reality defined as being between the physical world and the world of intellects. Human beings who have not reached the highest level of perfection, and are thus unable to be elevated at death to the world of perfectly separated entities, exist neither in the physical world nor in the world of perfect separation: "They exist in a world that is intermediary between material corporeity and intellectual detachment" (*Shawāhid*, 267/317). It is in this plane of reality

that the soul will build a garden (or hell) for itself. Ṣadrā details the different elements of the afterlife in its Islamic version, such as the passage on the path, or the blowing of the horn, to show that all these are real events, if understood in their own level of reality.

Ṣadrā's understanding of the afterlife is the result of a slow elaboration starting from the idea of an imaginal afterlife sketched by Avicenna in several of his works. Avicenna hinted at the possibility of a sensible, even though not material, afterlife lived by the unperfected yet enduring human souls, since human souls are immaterial by essence for Avicenna. Despite the difficulty of his position, especially because for him the imaginative faculty, like the other internal senses, is a material faculty, Avicenna aimed at establishing a form of imaginal afterlife, where pain and bliss as described in the revelation would be sensed through internal senses, imagination in particular. But Avicenna excluded any kind of bodily resurrection or afterlife body: this would be impossible in his system, and more importantly, this would be superfluous, even in order to understand a sensible afterlife for human souls unable to reach the intellectual bliss or to make sense of the descriptions found in revelation, since perception is truly a function of the inner senses (on this see Michot 1986; the understanding of Avicenna's imaginal afterlife outlined here is that followed by Ṣadrā; the proper way to understand what Avicenna says on this question is a matter of discussion among scholars studying Avicenna).

Ṣadrā's idea of an afterlife lived in imagination, or created by the soul's power, is less problematic than Avicenna's, since he conceives imagination as a nonmaterial function of human soul, and since, for him, the nonmaterial is not limited to the intellective. Ṣadrā holds that internal senses are not located in matter: matter is just the condition of the emergence of the first levels of internal perception, but it is not necessary as such for the soul's perception of forms that are beyond the physical world (*Shawāhid*, 197/237). In its various activities, the human soul is constantly ascending and descending in the planes of reality, performing its actions in the physical, intermediate, and, for the most perfect, intellective worlds (see *Shawāhid*, 88/112, 195–96/236, 227–28/271). As for the fact that the immaterial is not limited to the intellective, Ṣadrā maintains that the immaterial is divided into the intellective, which is wholly disengaged from matter and dimensions, and into a world or plane of reality and perception that is disengaged from matter but not from dimensions, which is the proper world of imagination. Souls that are disengaged from external senses and the physical world through death, but that are not disengaged from imagination, live their afterlife in this dimension of reality. As for the souls who are disengaged from imagination, they are “among the ones who are near (God)” (*Shawāhid*, 266/316).

If these points make Ṣadrā's idea of an imaginal afterlife less problematic, his position on imagination yields a different problem, that of the fate of higher animals, which are said precisely to live at the level of imagination and estimation. In the *Shawāhid*, the difficulty is stated but left unresolved (see *Shawāhid*, 90/114: “Concerning the souls of animals, there is another (deeper) secret,” and *Shawāhid*, 237/281: “We do not reject that there can be for a number of them a level close to the first levels of humanity”).

In his *Muḥaṣṣal*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī pointed to the fact that the discussion on afterlife, and in particular the discussion concerning the possibility and the modality of bodily resurrection, is linked to the conception of what a human being is (or more precisely, what I refer to when I say “I”), of the place of the body in the definition of human nature, and on the body’s own nature (*Muḥaṣṣal*, 537). This is clearly what is at stake here. Şadrā’s eagerness to think an afterlife body, and to give a coherent account of corporeity and perception that fits this understanding of what afterlife is, reflects his conception of human nature. For Şadrā, the body, or some form of corporeity, is part of the identity of human beings: human being is body and soul, a “combined reality” (*ḥaqīqa jam’iyya*, *Shawāhid*, 366/427). More precisely, what Şadrā holds is that the being-a-soul (*nafsiyya*) of the human soul is fundamental to what it is. And being a soul means having a relation with a body or act through a body. “The being-a-soul of the soul is not an accidental relation for its being,” says Şadrā in the *Wisdom of the Throne*. “No, the being-a-soul of the soul is nothing but the mode of its being. . . . One cannot conceive the soul—so long as it is soul—as having being except for a being such that it is in connection with the body and using its powers, unless it should become transformed in its being and intensified in its substantialization to such a degree that it becomes independent by its own and able to dispense with its connection to the physical body (but not yet to any kind of body)” (*Arshiyya*, 238; trans. Morris 1981, 139, slightly modified). The evolution toward perfection is a process that affects body and soul. The *Asfār* provides here again a clarification of what is said in the *Shawāhid*: “The more perfect the soul gets in its mode of existence, the more purified and subtle the body becomes: its junction with the soul is more intense and the union of the two is stronger, to the point that when the intellective mode of being is reached, they become one and the same thing, without any differentiation. Most people think that when the mode of existence of the soul changes from a worldly existence to an afterlife existence, the soul gets rid of the body and remains naked, having thrown away its garment. But this is not the case. They think like this because they believe that the body that the soul governs and manipulates in an essential and primary manner is this inanimate cadaver abandoned after death. But this is not so: . . . the genuine and real body is that body where the light of perception and life flows essentially, not by accident, and this is to the soul like brightness is to the sun. . . . What abstraction in perception means is not that some qualities are cut off while others remain: it means rather a transformation of the mode of being, as a lower, more deficient, mode of being is replaced by a higher, nobler one” (*Asfār*, 9, 98–99).

21.10. PROPHECY AND GUARDIANSHIP

The ideas presented in the fifth and last *mashhad*, on prophecy and guardianship (*walāya*), are less original. What Şadrā has to say on these topics is reminiscent of Avicenna, Fārābī, Ghazālī, and others. Şadrā uses these authors sometimes word for

word, as in the section discussing what are major and minor sins (*Shawāhid*, 371–75/433–36), reproduced for the most part from Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (K. *al-tawba*, *rukn* 2, 4:17, 19–20). Ṣadrā acknowledges at the end of the section that this is a summary with a few additions of the sayings of “one of the ‘ulamā’s.” Other times, Ṣadrā uses his source with some changes, sometimes remarkable, as in his use of Fārābī's *Mabādi' arā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* on the characteristics of the leader (*Shawāhid*, 357–59/416–18; Fārābī, *Mabādi'*, 15.12–13, 246–49, or *Risālat Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Ep. 47, 4:129–30, where a similar text is found; there might be another intermediary source). Yet other times, the ideas expressed remind the reader of other authors, or sound familiar, even if no direct quotation or source can be found. Thus the discussion on the practical benefits of religious prescriptions and their division in actions and abstinence thereof evokes the discussion at the end of the Metaphysics of Avicenna's *Shifā' (Ilāhiyyāt*, 10.3, 444–45).

Two remarks ought to be made here. (1) First, the influence of the authors mentioned is visible in other places of Ṣadrā's oeuvre (for instance, Ṣadrā reproduces portions of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* on the ethics of the reading of the Qur'ān, and more precisely, on the veils that prevent us from seeing the meaning of the Qur'ān, in his own *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 62–63, reproducing *Iḥyā'*, K. *ādāb tilāwat al-Qur'ān*, bāb 3, 1:284). (2) But also, and more importantly, the ideas that are sometimes expressed in terms reminiscent of other authors or whose source can be traced to others, are endorsed by Ṣadrā, who makes them his own. Whatever their source, they are now part of Ṣadrā's thought. Hence the changes made by Ṣadrā to fit his own views, as, for instance, in the case of the three properties of prophethood. The ideas developed on the question are familiar and remind us of Avicenna, but also Ghazālī or Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (see Akiti 2004), but they are expressed, in conformity with Ṣadrā's thought, in terms of a perfection in perception and knowledge that implies being in several planes of reality, or several worlds (*Shawāhid*, 340–41/399). Again, the idea that the goal of religious laws is to bring the creatures to God's vicinity, even if it is, in its wording, a reprise from Ghazālī, is definitely congruent with Ṣadrā's views (*Shawāhid*, 372/433; *Iḥyā'*, 4:19).

Topics discussed in this chapter include the characteristics of the prophets; their rank in comparison to other men, which they surpass in the three perfections of knowledge, imaginative faculty, and power to set in motion; how they are necessary for the salvation of creatures; and their role in the organization of society, following the human need for association and the inability of individuals to live together in harmony when left to their egoistic inclinations.

Prophets are described as those who lead human beings from the stage of animals to that of angels, by defining rules for their social life, as well as rituals and pious deeds most appropriate to make them reach their ultimate perfection. The benefits and aims of each religiously prescribed practice, such as prayer, almsgiving, and *jihād*, are discussed in detail, as is the distinction between prophets and other divinely inspired men. When discussing the end of prophecy, Ṣadrā insists on its persistence through another mode, namely, the presence of the impeccable imams and of the *mujtahids* (*Shawāhid*, 377/438).

The discussion on *walāya*, mentioned in the title of the chapter, is rather short: the *walī*, or “legal guardian,” is said to be heir of the prophets, and Şadrā points to the fact that “heir” is an epithet God uses for himself. None of the two *shāhids* in which the chapter is divided mentions the word *walāya* in its title, and one might wonder, especially since some manuscripts end with a title “Illumination 10,” if the *Shawāhid* was left unfinished by its author. The absence of a closing chapter points to the same conclusion.

21.11. CONCLUSION

The thought expressed in the *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* is that of a strong mind, animated by a clear understanding of what is. It is remarkable how a small number of key ideas and principles are brought into play by Şadrā in his discussion of debated issues. This is particularly visible in those passages where Şadrā starts by enumerating fundamental metaphysical principles as a basis for his explanation of a delicate question (*Shawāhid* 118/146; 261/311; simple reference to these same principles can also be found; see *Shawāhid* 168/204; 296/351).

His reasoning may be difficult to follow at times for readers with a narrow (and somehow, unhistorical) understanding of what philosophy is, but Şadrā remains a pillar of later Islamic intellectual history, reinterpreting the past of philosophy and speculative mysticism to build an original thought, written in the first person, that presents a way of thinking anchored in an Islamic horizon of meaning.

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