

Avicenna and Al-Ghazālī and the Making of Mullā Ṣadrā's Metaphysics

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Abstract:

By analyzing Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics, the proposed presentation will discuss the profound impact of both Avicenna and Al-Ghazālī on post-classical philosophy in Iran. The 16th century Safavid philosopher, Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1635-6) famously created an existence-oriented monistic metaphysics out of synthesizing Avicennian and Sufi ideas. I argue that, with respect to the Avicennian influence, he relates the logical structure of propositional knowledge to the metaphysical structure of the world. After attributing necessity to propositions which are necessary at indefinite times (*al-qaḍāyā al-dā'ima*), he argues that to understand this, one must refer to "the science that is nobler," i.e. metaphysics, according to which all things, even temporal occurrences (*al-hādithāt*) are necessary in relation to the origins (*al-mabādī'*) and in relation to the [rest of] universal propositions and the order [of the universe] in total. At this level, his position is premised on the Avicennian axiom in *ilāhīyāt al-shifā* according to which, "whatever is possible in its existence does not exist unless rendered necessary with respect to its cause." As evidenced by his *al-Ta'līqāt 'alā ilāhīyāt al-shifā* and *al-Asfār*, Mullā Ṣadrā adapts the above axiom into his metaphysics as a premise for his own argument for the necessary connection among all things in the world in virtue of their existential unity. I argue that to move from Avicenna's position to existential unity, Mullā Ṣadrā interprets the Avicennian above-mentioned axiom in light of Al-Ghazālī's attribution, in his *Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn*, of true knowledge to a "True unifier who does not see anything but God." I will show in the paper that although Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics is influenced by a host of preceding philosophers and Sufis, at the very ground level of his metaphysics, one often reaches Avicenna and al-Ghazālī, both of whom he reveres greatly in all his writings.