

IBRAHIM KALIN. *Mulla Sadra*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 181 pages. Paper US\$24.95 ISBN 0-19-945117-6.

Kalin's *Mulla Sadra* follows a number of scholarly works that the author previously published on the seventeenth century Shī'ī Persian philosopher, Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1635 or 1640). Given Kalin's earlier work, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), the present work generates high expectations, as the specialist reader hopes to benefit from the intellectual fruit of the author's many years of research and writing on this subject. Yet one is reminded that Kalin's recent work is published in the format of an introduction and, therefore, must address a wider audience than academics with a background in the nuances of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy. Kalin's book fulfils both expectations in a single work: He presents the quintessence of his findings about Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas and synthetic methodology in a clear language that is useful and accessible to a broad readership.

Before discussing Mullā Ṣadrā's method of philosophy and his major ontological and epistemological teachings, the book concisely delineates his intellectual position at "a critical juncture in Islamic intellectual history" (33). The reader receives a good glimpse into the historical and intellectual context of the philosopher's position as the first two chapters discuss not only the historical circumstances of Mullā Ṣadrā's time, but also the past intellectual influences and contemporary controversies. It is the latter in particular which explains Mullā Ṣadrā's concern about the relation between faith and reason, an old rivalry that appears in the garb of Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs during the Safavid period. Although the clash was still in its inception during Mullā Ṣadrā's life, Kalin emphasizes the influence that this dispute had on the philosopher. Yet Kalin only highlights Mullā Ṣadrā's opposition to the Akhbārīs, whom he refers to as "these dogmatic literalists" (16). One could also argue that instead of suppressing the Akhbārī voice completely, Mullā Ṣadrā accommodated their concerns by trying to address those problems that tended to cause rifts between the faithful and the philosophers by formulating a philosophy that was also consistent with the "literal" meaning of the religious texts. One important example of this attempt is the problem of physical resurrection that, according to Kalin, is handled by Mullā Ṣadrā in light of "a proper ontology" (159). By "a proper ontology," Kalin is referring to one which regards existence as the primary foundation of all things and that existence comes in different grades of intensity. In this ontology, human identity at any stage of her life is based on the level of existence

she occupies. Thus, human life is a journey through different levels of existential intensification leading an individual toward higher levels of existence depending on the moral and spiritual state of the soul. Upon death we reach the final state of our existential intensification, so our life after death is determined by the level we have reached (161–162). At this point, the soul reaches such a level of intensity that can create a body for herself. This last point is not mentioned by Kalin as he suffices to explain the growth of the human existence from a corporeal mode to a spiritual one without clarifying where the subtle otherworldly body comes from.

Emphasizing the methodological breakthrough of Mullā Ṣadrā as a “unifier” who meant “to synthesize different strands of the Islamic intellectual tradition” (44), Kalin underscores the novelty in Mullā Ṣadrā’s approach to different forms of knowledge. Instead of viewing theology, philosophy, mathematics, sciences, mysticism, etc. in contradiction to each other, Mullā Ṣadrā, Kalin argues, presents them in a vertical order. Each belongs to a different level of analysis that corresponds to a certain mode of existence. For example, Mullā Ṣadrā does not find any contradiction between the way a scientist approaches reality by using his five senses and that of a mystic who relies on his vision to arrive at a realization of existence (44–46). The vertical arrangement also implies that each level participates in the other levels instead of being totally disconnected. For example, though primarily experiential, gnosis (*irfān*) also possesses a cognitive content which is the reason why “a true sage can explain his vision by using ordinary rational arguments” (47). On the other hand, a philosopher’s reasoning can be based on mystical experiences especially when he is trying to grasp the reality of existence that “evades conceptualization” (49). This holistic perspective also leads us to Kalin’s emphasis on “philosophy as a way of life” which, he argues, is reflected in Mullā Ṣadrā’s school through “the interplay between logical demonstration and spiritual realization” (52). Kalin proceeds to explain major teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy with this synthetic methodology in mind. The tone he adopts in the rest of the book is one of approval with respect to Mullā Ṣadrā’s success in reconciling reason and revelation, a view that is especially reinforced by Kalin’s organization of the material. For example, Kalin begins with “the crisis of epistemology” and “the crisis of methodology” (55, 58), and proceeds to some key points of conflict between philosophy and theology such as God’s knowledge of the world and what he calls “the paradox of creation” (76). The formulation of these long-standing problems is then followed by an analysis of Mullā Ṣadrā’s ontology, with Kalin presenting Mullā Ṣadrā’s views on the primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) and the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) as solutions to those problems. Mullā Ṣadrā’s ontology

is also admired by Kalin for discrediting “subject-centered epistemologies,” that make meaning the property of the human mind. Conversely, for Mullā Ṣadrā, meaning is generated as a result of the disclosure of existence, and as such it is a mode of existence rather than being an abstraction made by the human mind (95–96). In this light, Mullā Ṣadrā presents a “radically different world picture and the place of the human states in it” (97).

Kalin makes a strong case for the success of Mullā Ṣadrā’s synthetic methodology in addressing some major conflicts and crises in the history of Islamic philosophy. He lays a solid foundation in the beginning of the book and his arguments build on each other one chapter after another to demonstrate Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical status as a methodologically conscious problem solver. Nevertheless, Kalin would be more faithful to Mullā Ṣadrā’s holistic approach had he also discussed in the philosopher’s works the place of Shī‘ī narratives in their own right, not just in his Shī‘atized Sufism. For example, Mullā Ṣadrā’s use of philosophical tools in his proofs of the imamate and his attempt to rationalize the epistemic authority of jurisprudence are examples that could have been discussed in this respect. The same is true about the influence of politics on Mullā Ṣadrā’s thought. This is not the best forum in which to evaluate Kalin’s view that Mullā Ṣadrā “protected himself from human frailties and moral failures around him” (52). Yet, I believe that even if we affirm this statement as true, one could still discuss the influence of politics on his works without compromising his moral integrity since different discourses may influence each other beyond the intentions of the author.

To summarize, Kalin has written a book which is essential for understanding Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical agenda and his endeavors to facilitate the path of philosophy in the Muslim world. I strongly recommend this book to any student and scholar of Islamic philosophy who may not yet be convinced of the importance of reading Mullā Ṣadrā. Last, but not least, Kalin’s precise and beautiful translations of Mullā Ṣadrā’s texts included in this book make great additions to Islamic philosophical literature in English. ✨

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Sayeh Meisami
University of Dayton, Ohio

HENRI LAUZIÈRE. *The Making of Salafism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. viii + 317 pages, acknowledgements, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$55.00 ISBN 978-0-231-17550-0.

Contemporary academics struggle to arrive at a consensus of the terms they use. This complication is exacerbated by the work of sociocultural