Mulla Sadra wrote this book about three main issues in Islamic gnosis (that is, theology, which discusses the origin of being, cosmology, which discusses creatures and the whole universe and being, and eschatology, which discusses the soul after man's death, the survival of the soul, the intermediate world, and the Hereafter). It can be considered one of his interpretive books because, like Mafatih al-ghayb, it has referred to many Qur'anic teachings based on Qur'anic verses so that, in one sense, it can be considered “the pure Islamic philosophy” and, in another, “the Shi'i Islamic theology” which is free from the mistakes of other theologians.

Some might consider this book a selection of Ibn Arabi's books; some might say that it shows that the writer was an advocate of Pythagoras or Plotinus; some might consider it the essence of the school and ideas of Batiniyyah; and some might

1. Mulla Sadra’s gnosis is very close to the Greek-like Alexandrian gnosis, and, in Suhrawardi’s words, it is the eternal essence of the legacy of Xenon whom people said was originally called Abulfadl Thuban Ibn Ibrahim and was from Nubah or Egypt, the city of Akhym. He was a student of Jabir Ibn Hayyan and, as some say, a student of Imam Sadiq (as). He died in 860.
introduce the writer a neo-Platonist philosopher and a follower of ancient *Ishraqi* (Illuminationist) School. All of these opinions show the gnostic dimensions and epistemological depth of this work.

In spite of all the references to all those sects and schools, there are also some references to Aristotle’s ten-fold spheres and intellects and Ghazzali’s ideas and ethical views. By collecting all theses ambiguities and contradictory issues, Mulla Sadra has provided a theoretical philosophy for the way farers and seekers of the path of the truth.

From its writing style and short and implicit references to the fundamental principles of the Transcendent Philosophy, such as the trans-substantial motion, the corporeal createdness of the soul, the immateriality of imagination, the union of the intellect and the intelligible, and corporeal resurrection, we can conclude that he wrote this book in the last decades of his life. In this book, he has made fewer references to his own books and treatises; however, in some places, by using certain phrases such as “Reference is made to some of our books”, “As we said in our rational books,” and “And, in some of our treatises,” he has shortly and implicitly referred to or named them. Moreover, in one place he has directly referred to *al-Asfar* and *Mafatih al-ghayb*. He has also made an explicit reference to his own works by using the phrase “And except for those two long and average books...”

In this book, the issue referred to in “some treatises”, which is apparently the same *al-Hashr* treatise (written in 1032 AH), is the resurrection of man and other existents, and the issue referred to in *al-Asfar* (and *Mafatih*) is the soul and resurrection. As mentioned before, he must have written this volume of *al-Asfar* during the 4th decade of his life, that is, towards the end of his life, in Shiraz. Therefore, we can conclude that it is one of his last books in which he has given up the normal discursive and demonstrative philosophy and presented the essence of his school in three principles: theology, cosmology, and eschatology.

---

2. In this book Mulla Sadra assimilates Platonic Ideas to people before a mirror, and the material shadows and effects of Ideas to pictures reflected in a mirror (p. 113).
4. Ibid., p. 147.
5. Ibid., p. 142-150.
6. Ibid., p. 42.
Mutashabihat al-Qur'an

This is a treatise on a study of the meaning of metaphorical expressions of the Qur’an and explaining some of the referents there inside. It also examines the issue of understanding the Qur’an and interpreting it and appears to be an independent treatise. However, irrespective of some of the differences in the use of certain words, phrases, and titles of chapters and sections, it is the same 4th to 8th fatihahs in the 2nd miftah of his al-Mafatih al-ghayb. If it were not for the introduction to this treatise, one might consider it a selection of that book which has been compiled based on the taste of its writer.

In this treatise, Mulla Sadra has referred to al-Mafatih and written in its Introduction as follows:

This is one of the rays of revealed sciences intended to aid in perceiving the meaning of metaphorical verses of the Qur’an, and we explained some of them in some places of our great book of interpretation, which includes most of the points presented in other interpretation books.

As mentioned before, Mulla Sadra wrote al-Mafatih al-ghayb as an introduction to the science of interpretation and his book of Comprehensive Interpretation and does not view it as an independent book. That is why in the treatise of Mutashabihat al-Qur’an he refers to that book under the title of The Great Interpretation.

Perhaps, we can now conclude that this treatise was written after Mafatih al-ghayb and, primarily, after the interpretations of Qur’anic chapters. If, as we stated before, he wrote Mafatih al-ghayb in about 1030 AH, he must have written this treatise in later years and probably during the last decade of his life in Shiraz.

Interpretation of al-Tawhid Chapter

The last work attributed to Mulla Sadra is an incomplete interpretation of al-Tawhid (or al-Ikhlas) chapter. Not only, like in his other works, is there no name of the writer in this work but also its style of writing does not conform to that of this
distinguished philosopher and interpreter. Thus, it might have been written by one of his students or children sharing his name.

**Alfad munfaradah and some other Treatises**

This is a treatise attributed to Mulla Sadra and is said to be “the first *miftah* of *Mafatih al-ghayb*”. Another treatise on the interpretation of *an-Naml* chapter: 88 and *al-Ahzab* chapter: p. 72 has also been attributed to him. However, this is not for certain.

***

After Mulla Sadra’s interpretive works, we will now return to his other works. Before dealing with his philosophical and gnostic books, we will first introduce the two social-critical books of *Kasr al-asnam al-jahiliyyah* and *Si asl*, which are on ethics and practical wisdom.

**Kasr al-asnam al-jahiliyyah**

This book can be considered as a work on practical wisdom and ethics. It can also be viewed as a book on the discipline of practical gnosis or *adab al-murid* or an introduction to it. During the Safawid era, when the kings themselves were considered as poles of Sufism and officially managed it, Sufism became very strong and the Safawids, who were themselves Turkmen and followed the Teymurid culture, used it as a means to protect their Shi’ite government against the two Sunni-Ottoman and Uzbek governments.

Although during the reign of Shah Abbas Safawid this policy changed and, as a result, jurisprudents were praised and encouraged, while the political Safawid leaders were oppressed, the ordinary tradition of Sufism, which worked against true gnostics, on the one hand, and jurisprudents and *muhaddiths*, on the other, remained

---

alive. As Mulla Sadra has referred to in this book, the advocates of this group were involved in debauchery, fornication, pederasty, merrymaking, and jugglery and ran a luxurious and aristocratic life.

Under such conditions, Mulla Sadra, like Abraham, took an axe and, in accordance to the name of this book, broke the idols of ignorance (al-Asnam al-jahiliyyah) and revealed the scandals and deception of these false poles.

No explicit reference has been made to the time of writing this book and, unlike the common style of this philosopher, no reference has been made to his other books, except al-Asfar, either. Therefore, it is impossible to determine its time of writing. Some say that it was written in 1027 AH; however, there is no evidence for it, particularly, because at that time he was certainly in Qum and its suburbs. Its mature and teacher-like language style, on the one hand, and his official opposition to false Sufism in this book, on the other, suggests that it was written during the last period of his life in Shiraz. This is because, as far as we know and the evidence suggests, the Sufism which was mixed with debauchery, corruption, and pretension did not exist in Qum and was, rather, common in Isfahan and Shiraz.

The other point is that in his other books, except for the interpretation of al-Baqarah chapter, there is no name of this book, and it is high unlikely that, in spite of the existence of this book and the demands for referring to it on various occasions, he has avoided referring to it. In the interpretation of the 21st verse of this chapter and expressing the necessity of pairing worship with knowledge and reflection, Mulla Sadra refers to Mu‘attaliyyah, Hashwiyyah, and the false sufists who are heedless of knowledge and reminds that he has written a treatise called Kasr al-asnam al-jahiliyyah on rejecting and opposing them. The interpretation of al-Baqarah chapter is one of his last works which was written after his interpretations of other Qur’anic verses. On the other hand, in this book he frequently refers to al-Asfar and “our books”, specifically, to the last volume of al-Asfar, which was apparently written in Shiraz and at the end of his life.

This invaluable book on education and ethics, which was exceptionally written in Persian, lacks a clear date of writing. It appears from the following quotation that he was more than 50 years old at that time and must have written it after 1040s AH, when he lived in Shiraz.

You, dastard! Beware that the knowledge that I have collected during 50 years by hard work and giving up glory, dignity, and wealth is now the target of the enmity and sarcasm of some wretched, ignorant people! And, a knowledgeable person like you, who has also turned into a superficial man, just pays attention to appearances, and, by killing the wishes of the soul, is satisfied with humility and despondency, also denies my knowledge!...  

If we assume that he started his education and mystic, divine, and spiritual journeys when he was ten years old, he must have been about sixty or perhaps older at the time of writing this book. This is in conformity with 1040 AH, when he was in Shiraz. If we believe that he wrote this book in reaction to another attack made by his enemies, that is, theologians, jurisprudents, muhaddiths, and philosophy knowers, we have to agree that it was not in the time of Sardar Imamqulikhan. This is because, due to his support of Mulla Sadra, no one dared to attack and insult this distinguished philosopher. Therefore, since Imamqulikhan was killed by Shah Safi in 1042 (in Isfahan), we can say that this book was written after this event.

For a specific reason, the writer speaks of man’s intellectual union with the active intellect in this book and says, “We have explained this issue in our books in the clearest and most complete way possible...” This point itself indicates the posteriority of this book to al-Asfar and his other philosophical books, and that it was written towards the end or his life.

10. Si asl p. 82, ed. H. Nasr, Danishgah Publications.
11. Ibid., p. 102.
This book is a commentary on Ilahiyyat al-shifa and is considered one of Mulla Sadra’s most profound books in Peripatetic philosophy. This is the case while it is incomplete, and he has only commented and written glosses on less than half of this book (about $\frac{2}{5}$ of al-Shifa) up to the end of the sixth article (Discussions of causes).

Evidence suggests that this book is the product of his last period of stay in Shiraz during the last decade of his life (after 1040 AH). In this book, he has referred to al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah, al-Mabda’ wal ma’ad, al-Hikmat al-’arshiyyah, and, particularly, al-Asfar, as well as to his other books. In a place, he has also referred to Ilm al-ma’ad, which might be the same Zad al-musafir.

Some of these issues are related to the journey of the soul and its last chapters, which, as mentioned before, was apparently written in 1040’s AH in Shiraz. Thus this book might have been written in the middle years of this decade. Those who are familiar with Mulla Sadra’s spirit and character will certainly wonder why Mulla Sadra, who was spending the last years of his life and was busy with interpretation and writing hadith, was reminded of his youth and started studying al-Shifa and writing a commentary on it. It is highly probable that at that time, due to the requests made by his students and disciples, he taught this book and, at the same time, wrote glosses on it.

This book remained unfinished because in 1040’s AH, when he went on a journey to the holy shrines and the Hajj pilgrimage, he passed away. If we believe that the reason for the untimely halt in the writing of this book was his death, it is possible to come up with the date of the beginning of writing it. If, as it is known, he passed away in 1050 AH, he must have stopped writing this book in the same year. And, if, as we believe, he passed away in 1044-1045 AH (which is confirmed by his grand son, Shaykh Muhammed Ilm al-Huda Faydh), he finished writing Tahshiyah al-asfar. His Sharh-i usul kafi remained unfinished in the same year, either.

***

12. al-Shifa, p. 252.
13. Ibid., p. 36.
14. Ibid., pp. 30, 36, 38, 49, 60, 84, 137, 179, 253.
15. Ibid., p. 120.
This book can be considered a summary of *al-Mabda' wal-ma'ad*. The Introductions to the two books, the contents, and even many of their chapters, statements, and words are the same. Since *al-Mabda' wal ma'ad* was written in about 1019 AH, this book must have been written a few years before or after it. This depends on whether *al-Mabda' wal ma'ad* is a commentary on *al-Mazahir* or the latter a summary of the former.

Interestingly enough, unlike Mulla Sadra's common method and habit, he has not referred to the names of any of his books in this book. Likewise, as much as the writer remembers, he has not named this book in his other books either, which seems strange.

In the Introduction to *al-Mazahir*, we read, "I wrote a treatise on the results of my research about some of the issues related to *al-Mabda' wal ma'ad*." It appears from the tone of the sentence that he had not yet written *al-Mabda' wal ma'ad*. Therefore, he must have naturally written it before 1019 AH, but we are not positive in this regard.

**Ittihad al-Aqil wal m'aqul**

This is a treatise on the issue of the union of the intellect and the intelligent; however, its style of writing is different from that of *al-Asfar*, in which he has dealt with this issue more and better than in his other books. His method of beginning and ending this issue and discussing the related topics in this book indicates that he wrote it in order to reply to or convince someone or some people who had not had access to *al-Asfar*, had a pure Peripatetic taste for philosophy, followed Ibn Sina's philosophy, and had certain reasons and arguments for rejecting the principle of the unity of the intellect and the intelligible.

In this treatise, no reference has been made to any verses or traditions, and, apparently, his addressees mainly relied on reasoning and the ideas of other philosophers. It can be inferred from its words and contents that he wrote it in order to "decrease the intensity of the deniers' denial." In other words, from the

---

18. *Ittihad al-‘aqil wal m’aqul*, chapter 2, and the Introduction to the treatise.
following quotation, it appears that some of his students were also among the addressees of this book,

We explained this point also in al-Asfar and expressed it with specific words there. We did not present it here in order to avoid length of speech and due to trusting the understanding of some intelligent readers, particularly those who are familiar with the terminologies of that book.

In this treatise, reference has also been made to al-Asfar, and we read in its Introduction, “We have summarized here what we have extensively explained in al-Asfar on the truth of these words in order for the people of understanding to perceive them better.” Seemingly, this work was written after al-Asfar and Mafatih al-ghayb. We can also infer from his previous statement that this treatise was written when he was busy teaching, discussing, and disseminating the Transcendent Philosophy, which we believe to have been between 1030 and 1035 AH in Qum and after that in Shiraz. It is also possible that it was written in about 1040 AH.

In al-Mafatih al-ghayb, reference has also been made to a book on the intellect and the intelligible, which could be this treatise. Since we believe that Mafatih al-ghayb was written in 1030 AH (or, as some say, in 1040 AH) if he is talking about this treatise, it must have been written before 1030 AH.

As we saw before, he himself wrote in the margin of al-Asfar (vol. 3, The Union of the Intellect and the Intelligent, ch. 7) that the date of the emanation of the accurate and precise principle of the unity of the intellect and the intelligible was Jamadi al-awwal, 7th, 1037 AH (naturally, in Qum). If we accept that this emanation was simultaneous with and for the purpose of writing this treatise, we must believe that it was written in the same 1037 AH in Qum. Therefore, the problem that we previously referred to – that the issues related to the intellect and intelligible (volume 3 of the present al-Asfar) were apparently written before 1030 AH and cannot have been written in 1037 AH – can be solved by finding the solution, (possibly by reasoning through the correlation between the intellect and the intelligent or through their unity in existence) not in the year of writing the 3rd volume but in 1037 AH. We should also accept that he added this principle to al-Asfar in the 7th chapter of this book under the discussions related to the intellect and

intelligible, and, before it, these issue, including the reference to emanation and inspiration from the hidden, did not exist in this book.

**Tasawwur wal tasdiq**

This treatise, which has been written only on concept and judgment and their definitions and philosophy, is an analytic book on formal logic and the subtle points concerning this issue. He stipulates in the Introduction of the book that he wrote it because of a request made by the friends who socialized with him. This is probably a polite statement that he used about his students: “I wrote this treatise due to a request made by some of my friends whom I visited at that time. I warned them to keep its contents out of the reach of the unworthy and wicked.”

The date of writing of this treatise has not been given in it; however, from the references that he directly or indirectly has made to al-Asfar concerning the issues related to the soul and the 4th journey of the four-fold journeys (vols. 8 and 9), we can approximately estimate it.

As mentioned previously, Mulla Sadra wrote the discussions related to the soul in 1040-1045 AH or a few years before it (the time of his return from Qum to Shiraz). Therefore, we can guess that this treatise was also written during the same years in Shiraz. However, the sentence “Says so anyone who runs away from everyone and finds refuge in God's presence!” in the preface of the book, as well as his recommendation to his students and friends as to keep this work away from the eyes of his enemies, suggest that he wrote it during his period of escape and seclusion. However, Mulla Sadra’s enemies were most probably in Shiraz and not in Isfahan or Qum and annoyed him to a great extent during both periods of his stay in Shiraz.

In this book, he has dealt with logic following a philosophical approach, particularly that of his Transcendent Philosophy. It must be considered a gigantic leap in the history of logic. In comparison with the books of his succeeding western philosophers (for example, Hegel, who intended to philosophize logic), this work is much more profound and free from defects and errors.

---

I’qaz al-na’imin

Although the Transcendent Philosophy, i.e. Mulla Sadra’s school, is mixed with gnosis, some of his works are non-philosophical and purely gnostic. In these books, he follows neither the method of philosophical books nor their contents.

This book is one of his purely gnostic books in which he has dealt with theology from the viewpoint of a gnostic and a pure Ishraqi philosopher. In this method, epistemology is the same as ontology.

It appears from the Introduction of this book that it was written in the last decade of his life because there he writes, “We have written in this book some valuable points which we had previously presented in our great book al-Asfar in a way that the worthy can succeed in understanding them.” It must have been written after al-Asfar, the writing of which continued until about 1040 AH. Moreover, he says in the same place, “We have previously explored the issue of oneness in our books and treaties following a discursive and inferential method.”

The above sentence also indicates that he had written his other philosophical books and treatises long before that time. In fact, he refers to them as distant memories. From the similarities between some of the statements and ideas in this book and those in Kasr al-asnam al-jahiliyyah, we can conclude that they were written close to each other in terms of time.

In addition to being a scientific book, this book enjoys several subtle and dhawqi (related to intellectual intuition) aspects which deserve the particular attention of every wisdom-seeking researcher. There are some other references in this book to al-Asfar, e.g., in the parts on perception, the copulative existence of possible things and their connection to the existence of Almighty Truth, and the identity of each possible existent with its mode of relation to Almighty Truth and holiness. Here, he says, “We have reasoned in al-Asfar that ‘ontological ipseities’ are among the lights of the theophany of the Truth and the beauty of God and presented some arguments in this regard therein.”

Moreover, concerning the meaning and depth of verse 88 in al-Qisas chapter in the Qur’an, he says, “If you wish to study about the non-existence of possible things, you must refer to al-Asfar.”

21. “In our time, there are countless groups who, instead of knowledge, have been dominated by ignorance.”