

## A comparative Survey on the Stages of Philosophical Training in Plato's Allegory of Cave, in the Four Mystical Journeys, and in Mulla Sadra's *al-Asfar*

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### **Abstract**

At the beginning of his *magnum opus al-Hekmat al-Muta'aleiat fi al-Asfar al-Aqliyat*, Mulla Sadra says that he has nominated and arranged his book according to "the four journeys" of the Mystics. What he and the Mystics say on these journeys reminds those familiar with Greek philosophy of Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Republic* (Journey of souls onto sky and the Allegory of Cave, respectively). In spite of his promise at the beginning of his book, Mulla Sadra has not completely succeeded in arranging *al-Asfar* according to the four journeys of the Mystics, especially the fourth journey. In this paper, at first, we have a glance at Plato's method of philosophical training, his allegory of Cave and some positions on Mulla Sadra's four journeys; then we explain that in this respect the correspondence between Plato and the mystics are more than that found between him and Mulla Sadra.

**Keywords:** Plato, Mulla Sadra, The four journeys, The allegory of Cave, Mysticism, Transcendent wisdom.

## 1. Introduction

As the only speaking animal, human has used language to refer to sensible things and everyday affairs. The forerunners who had ascended from the earthly sensible world onto the celestial intelligible world had serious difficulty in employing such a general and ordinary language for expressing their thoughts; and they tried different ways to overcome this great challenge. Of these ways were making terminologies and employing allegories. These forerunners have expressed the very process of ascending from the sensible world to the intelligible world, and the very progress of the thought, in the framework of different allegories. In this paper, we have a survey on Plato's allegory of cave, the Mystics' allegory of journeys and Mulla Sadra's use of the latter allegory as a paradigm in writing his *magnum opus al-Asfar*. The paper will end with assessing the degree of Mulla Sadra's success in doing so.

It seems that in order to summarize Plato's philosophical method in a word, the best suitable term is "Dialectic." This word pertains to many opinions fundamental to Plato's philosophy, and by contemplating its applications we can penetrate different aspects of his philosophy: from "a friendly discourse between two partners in a discussion for revealing the truth" to "a skill at correct and purposeful using of the findings of mathematics and linguistics," and from "ascending all the stages of love and knowledge until arriving at the highest pick of them, i.e. seeing the Beauty and the Good" to "a skill in using the method of collecting and dividing in order to attain insightful discourse and behavior." Not only "the dialectician," in Plato's terminology, equals "the philosopher," but the very work of Plato during more than a half century exemplifies a "half-centennial dialectic."<sup>1</sup>

Plato usually shrinks from saying straightforwardly how the men of dialectic travel through the stages of knowledge and arrive at seeing the truths. As stated explicitly in *seventh letter* (341 ff.), Plato thinks that his serious thoughts could not be written. For him, successful investigation of any stages of knowledge requires that the investigator ascend unto that stages; without this ascending he cannot arrive at that knowledge, and his discussion brings but a misunderstanding. So, in order to teach his thoughts, what Plato does for his readers in his writings are: 1) composing dialogues which bring the interlocutors into the discussion, and making them experience how to travel through the dialectical way; and 2) appealing to myths and allegories in order to borrow the language of sensual world and make use of it in nonsensual world. Thus, for presenting an image of the nature of the good itself, i.e. Idea of Good, at whose knowledge only the philosopher can arrive, Plato appeals to three allegories in the sixth and seventh books of *Republic*: the allegory of sun, the Divided Line and the allegory of Cave.

In the passage of the Sun (507b- 509c), after making a brief reference to the difference between visible particulars and intelligible Ideas, he proceeds to compare the sun with the Idea of Good. What the sun is to the visible world, the Good is to the intelligible one (508b ff.): 1) the sensible things can only be seen in the light of

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1. On the meaning of dialectic in Plato's philosophy, see Fathi, 1381 (h), 1-22.

the sun, and intelligible objects (Ideas) only under the illumination of the Good; 2) the sun itself is visible, so the Good is intelligible; 3) the sun, in addition to making the visible things visible, is the cause of their generation and growth, likewise the Good, in addition to making the Ideas intelligible, is the cause of their being and sustenance; 4) the sun itself is beyond the level of generation<sup>2</sup> and growth, so the Good is superior even to Being in dignity and surpassing power. Moreover, the relation between sun and Good is far closer than a similarity, and here we see an ontological relation. The sun is "the offspring of the Good which the Good begot to stand in a proportion with itself" (508b). It means that there is a hierarchical connection between the visible and the intelligible worlds; a connection that is illustrated by the Divided line more vividly and detailedly.

In the passage of the Divided line (509d- 511e), Plato asks us to imagine a line divided into two unequal parts, and each part subdivided in the same ratio (see Fig. 1). Of two main parts, one represents the visible world (to orato= to doxaston) and the other the intelligible one (to noeton= to gnooston). The former is itself subdivided into: a) images (shadows), reflections and the like (eikones); and b) and actual objects of the natural and artificial world (zoa, k. t. l.). The latter is similarly subdivided into: a) mathematical objects (mathematika); and b) the Ideas (archai). Corresponding to each of these four parts we have a stage of cognition (or a state of mind): illusion (eikasia) for the images and shadows, believes (pistis) for the originals of these images and shadows, reasoning (dianoia) for the mathematical objects, and intuitive science (noesis) for the Ideas. The first two are opinions (doxa) and the last two are knowledge (episteme). Of the two main parts of the line, the visible part stands in the same relation to the intelligible part that the images and shadows stand to their originals; and the same applies to the two parts in the other main part of the line. So, we have two main degrees of being and cognition which are subdivided into four; from the images up to the Ideas (the Good being at the top of them) and from the illusion up to the intuitive science. That how should we go through this hierarchical path, Plato illustrates it in the allegory of Cave (514a- 519b) by which he begins the seventh book, and at the end of the allegory he says explicitly (517 a-b) that we must apply this as a whole to what has gone before, i.e. to the two previous similes.

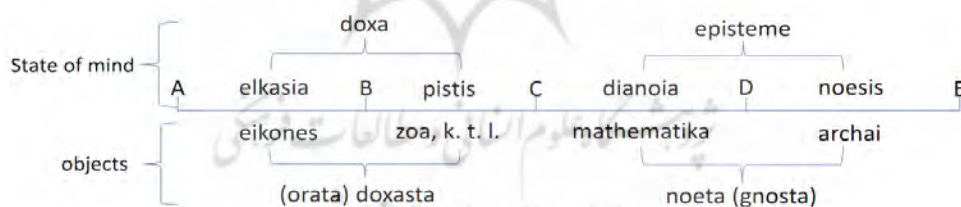


Fig. 1

2. i.e. the kind of generation that we see in the visible world.

## 2. The Cave

Imagine a long, sloping cave<sup>3</sup> with its entrance out of sight (Fig. 2). In it men have been imprisoned since childhood, seated and fastened by leg and neck so that they can only look straight ahead. Behind and above them is a fire, and between them and the fire runs a transverse road, along which a wall has been built, like the screen above which showmen exhibit their puppets. Behind the wall men walk along carrying all sorts of gear (any useful man-made object) and models of men and animals in stone, wood and other materials, in such a way that they (but no part of their bearers) project above the wall. Fixed as they are, the prisoners see nothing but shadows of the moving objects cast on the wall of the cave in front of them. These they assume to be real things, and if cave has an echo, they will suppose the voices of the bearers to come from the shadows. These prisoners, says Socrates, are “like ourselves” (515 a).

Next suppose one of them released from his bonds made to stand up and turn round. It will be a painful experience. Dazzled by the light, he will be bewildered and incredulous if he told that the things he can now imperfectly see are more real than the shadows he was used to, and will turn his aching eyes thankfully back to what he can see more clearly. If he were then dragged forcibly up the rough, steep path to the daylight, he would complain bitterly, and at first be unable to see anything of what he was now told was real. His cure would be gradual. It would be easiest to look at shadows and then reflections in water, before turning his eyes to real men and things. The sky itself he would prefer to look at by night, in moonlight or starlight, before facing it by day, and last of all he would be able to look directly at the sun itself. Then he would reason that the sun is responsible for seasons and years and controls the whole visible region, and is directly the cause of all that they used to see in the cave.



Fig. 2

3. Condensation of the picture is from Guthrie, 1975, 513f.

When he now remembered his previous state and what passed for wisdom there, he feels pity for his fellow-prisoners and contempt the honors and prizes which perhaps they awarded for clear vision of the passing shadows and a good memory of their order of succession, so as to guess correctly which would come next. If he then returned to his old seat in the cave, until his eyes got used to the darkness (which might take some time) he would be no good in their guessing games. They would laugh at him and think that his journey to the upper world had ruined his sight; and if anyone tried to free them in turn and made them go up, they would want to kill him.<sup>4</sup>

"This image then, dear Glaucon, we must apply as a whole to all that has been said, likening the region revealed through sight to the habitation of the prison, and the light of the fire in it to the power of the sun. And if you assume that the ascent and the contemplation of the things above is the soul's ascension to the intelligible region, you will not miss my surmise, since that is what you desire to hear. But, God knows whether it is true. But, at any rate, my dream as it appears to me is that in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of Good, and that when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light and the author of light,<sup>5</sup> and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this" (517a-c).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, what we do in the course of education consists only of turning the face of the learning up to the higher world. They have the powers of cognition in their souls from the first. We must turn this power unto the light and go along with it until its going up beyond the world of becoming and its entrance into world of essence and the highest degree of Being.

### 3. Plato's educational Program

After these three allegories, Plato says something about the necessity of making some of those who went up to the outside of the cave to return into it and lead its residents to go upward (i.e. the necessity of making philosophers to rule) and about how they play this role. Then, he explains the details of the educational program to be carried out about these future leaders; a program about "the study that would draw the soul away from the world of becoming to the world of being" (521d).<sup>7</sup>

4. Guthrie's condensation ended.

5. i.e. the sun

6. P. Shorey's translation

7. This Program, to be implemented after the ordinary educational program of Athens, is comparable with the situation inside the cave. Plato's Academy was founded to carry out this program.

In the program Plato proposes for this purpose (521c- 541b) we see mathematics and a special meaning of dialectic; after these comes the practical exercises in political field. Here mathematics and dialectic are analogous with the two higher parts of the line. The mathematical sciences consist of arithmetic, plane geometry, solid geometry, astronomy and music. Apart from its practical benefits in military affairs and other fields of worldly life, arithmetic “leads the philosophic mind onto reason about pure numbers as opposed to collections of visible and tangible object” (Guthrie, 1975, 522). This preparative role is also played by other branches of mathematical sciences. It is through contemplating these branches that we ascend from the sensible world onto the intelligible world, and our reasons are prepared to reach the highest goal of research, namely to knowing “ the Beautiful “ and “ the Good.” The science that makes us reach this goal is “Dialectic”<sup>8</sup>. The first step in the way of dialectic is to grasp the common characters of the branches of mathematical sciences, to understand their reciprocal relation and to see them as the members of one family. This helps us in seeing the order and harmony between their objects and works as preparation for seeing the universal order of world which shows itself in the Good and the journey from the shadow to the vision of the sun as we are told in the allegory of the cave; with the difference that there the faculty of sight reached the highest sensible object in the visible world but here the faculty of reason (the nous) reaches the highest intelligible object in the intelligible world.

The dialectician is “the man who is able to extract an account of the essence of each thing” (534b). This is so about the Good itself. These learners must be subjected to such an education that enables them to pass through all the obstacles and reach Good. They must learn how to ask and answer scientifically with their interlocutors in dialogues and with themselves when they are thinking. Dialectic is the highest degree of investigation and so it must be taught to those who are endowed with the highest abilities.<sup>9</sup> The mathematical learning is completed in ten years (from 20 to 30 years of age). The selected of this period who have proved that they are outstanding in both fields of practice and theory will engage in dialectic for five years; then they must spend another 15 years in the cave, where normally they must engage in military and/or political services in order to earn experience and at same time to be tried. The final selection will be made at the age of fifty, and the selected will meet the very idea of Good; “and when they have thus beheld the good itself they shall use it as a pattern for the right ordering of the state and the citizens and themselves

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8. Here, a special sense of dialectic is intended. What we said about it in the introduction above was the broad sense of dialectic in Plato which comprises this special one too.

9. Plato has discussed at length the abilities required to be a dialectician (i.e. to be a philosopher) at the beginning of the sixth book, and he recapitulates them here: justice, courage, temperance, good memory, keen understanding, charity and gracefulness. The one who has these properties is enamored of dialectic, “he fixes his gaze upon things of the eternal and unchanging order, ... he will endeavor to imitate them... and associating with the Divine order will himself become orderly and Divine in the measure permitted to man” (500 c-d).

throughout the remainder of their lives, each in his turn (540 a-b). Here, they divide their time between philosophical contemplating and engaging in political affairs. This is the last stage for Plato's selected men. And now, let us turn to Mulla Sadra and his statements on the journeys.

#### 4. The journeys in Mulla Sadra

In the introduction of his *magnum opus al-Hekmat al-Mota'aleiat fi al-Asfar al-aqliyat*, (1981, vol. 1, P. 13), Mulla Sadra says, concerning the title and divisions of his book, that "the mystics and initiates have four journeys ahead: 1) a journey from the creatures to the Truth; 2) a journey in the Truth by the Truth himself; 3) the contrary of the second journey, for it is from the Truth to the creatures by the truth; and 4) the fourth is somehow contrary to the second, for it is a journey among the creatures by the Truth. For this reason, I composed my book according to their [=the mystic's] movements through lights and effect, in four journeys and named it transcendent wisdom in the intellectual journeys."

Dividing his book into four parts, he begins the first part by saying that the first journey (which is from the creatures to the Truth) is on general thing or on theology in the general sense .i.e. "contemplating the nature of the existence and its essential properties" (vol. 1, p.20). At the beginning of the section dealing with "substances and accidents," we read only the second journey on natural science, while about the third journey he refrains from saying the very title, and finally in the fourth journey we have only the title of "on the soul".

Mulla Sadra's commentators differ on how to associate the four parts of *the transcendent wisdom* with the four mystical journeys, specially the second and third parts.

Haj Mulla Hadi Sabzewari (1981) first says something on the mystics' four journeys using their own terminology (pp. 13-15) then compares their four journeys and invitations to those of the philosophers (pp. 15-16): the philosophers in their first journey realize God's existence and His names and attributes by travelling in the outer and inner worlds; at the end of their travel they recognize that the whole being and its perfection must be abolished in God's being and perfection, that they are nothing but a manifest of his manifestations. In the second journey, they contemplate the existence itself, its essential necessity, its simplicity, unity, science, power, life and all its professional beautiful and splendid attributes as well as their identity with its essence. In the third journey they know the unity of God's work, the effusion of the plurality from Him, and the falling hierarchy of intellects and souls, the universes of highest tyranny and celestial kingdom down to earthly kingdom and sensible world. At the light of what they have earn so far, they contemplate the fourth journey in the created world, the relations between the creatures, and the practical affairs of men's good and salvation; and they behold what the prophets have brought.

In Rafi'i Qazwini's view (1367 (h), p. 197), the first journey is concerned with "umooore amma" (theology in its general sense, general judgment on the existence, metaphysics); the second with "theology in its special sense" (knowledge of God and his attributes and works); the third with "the substances and accidents"; and the fourth with "the soul, its faculties, sensations, ascension, fallings, happiness and unhappiness." This last journey is the same as "the journey of prophecy and legislation" in mysticism.

According to Motahhari (1371 (h), vol. 5, p. 28), the first journey is on the general (= first) philosophy; the second on the theology in its special sense and the discussions about God's rank, names and attributes; the third on God's works and the hierarchical worlds; and the fourth on the soul and the resurrection.

Sayyed Mohammad Khamanei (1383 (h), p. 43), "neglecting" Mulla Sadra's own text, claims that both the third and fourth journeys are concerned with the soul. And, in Javadi Amoli's view (1386 (h), pp. 106-7), the first three concern the very existence of God, His attributes and His works (i.e. the creation) respectively, and the last journey is about the soul.<sup>10</sup>

### 5. A glance on the four journeys of the mystics

The four journeys have been discussed at length in mystical literature, and a significant space has been devoted to the word *safar* (= journey, travel) and its dependancies (such as road, director, way, station, provisions of road) in mystical

10. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli (1382 (h), pp. 83-101) comments on Mulla Sadra's text in fourteen points all of which are instructive; but something can be said criticizing some of them. He says in the fourth point (p. 85) that it is not necessary and universal in the first journey that we go from the *creature* [my italics] to the Truth, but we can travel straightforwardly from the very Truth to the Truth; and in the eleventh point (p.90) the ontological proof for the existence of God (*tariqe seddigin*) is said to be an instance of this travel, which has no need to contemplate the creature. It is true that all the four journeys are intellectual and reason can go ahead from the Truth to the Truth, but the "intellectuality" of these travels should not make us to neglect how the intellect begins its activity. Is it possible for our intellect to begin its work on pure intelligible thing without contemplating at first the intelligible essence of the sensible things? It seems (as Aristotle says, for example, in *Metaphysics*, 1019a and 1029b; and in *posterior analytics*, 71a-72b) that we must notice the difference between "prior and knowable for us" and "prior and knowable in the nature of things." It is necessary for us to begin with the creatures, but with the individuals. When we reach the true essence of thing, the universal and the intelligible, we understand that indeed these are prior and knowable. Mulla Sadra himself did not reach the ontological proof at the beginning of his meditations, but it was after passing through so degrees that he has beheld this proof. What Javadi Amoli narrates from Allameh Sha'rani and criticizes it (in page 92) seems more corresponding to the real process of the knowing than his own. In Platonic terminology, no one sees himself all at once outside of the cave, let alone seeing the very idea of Good, at the beginning of his journey.



writings. Here is a gist of what Sayyed jalal al-din Ashtiani (1370 (h), pp. 663-70) has extracted from them:

The spiritual journeys of the men of divinity and intuition are four in number. The first is from the creatures to the Truth. In this journey, the veils of the possible world, both dark veils (bodily veils) and light veils (degrees of the interval world, and world of longitude and latitude intellects), disappear and the traveler reaches the pure unity and is abolished in the essence of the Truth. In their own words, he ascends to the degree of *serr* (secret) or *mahv* (abolition).

The second journey is from the Truth to the Truth. Here, the traveler begins his travel from the essence to names, attributes and works of the Truth; so he sees by God's eyes and hears by His ears. This journey is accompanied by some awareness (*sahv*) and the traveler lives in nominal and attributive plurality.

The third journey is from the Truth to the creatures by the Truth. At this stage, the traveler passes his way through divine works, that is, through the manifestations of his names. In this journey, contrary to the first, the traveler reaches complete awareness and beholds the secret of the creation. He collects all worlds and participates in prophecy; but he is a follower of the absolute prophet.

The fourth journey is from the creatures to the creatures by the Truth (or, a journey in the creatures by the Truth). In this journey, the traveler apprehends by intuition and at length the relations between the creatures, the positions and states of human societies and the way in which the creatures return to the Truth.

Thus, our traveler invites the people to the degree of collection (*jam'*). He is qualified to found the true and stable utopia, and he has the right to intervene in all affairs of human society (ibid, p.668).

## 6. Plato and the Mystics

A comparison between Plato's educational program allegorized in the cave with what we see in the four journeys of mysticism reveals a great deal of similarity. The creatures (*al-khalq*) in mystical literature correspond with the sensual world or inside of the cave in Plato; and the Truth (*al-Haq*) corresponds with the intelligible world or outside of the cave.

In both we have a journey upward from the sensible to the intelligible, a journey in the intelligible, a journey downward from the intelligible to the sensible, and finally a journey among the sensible; while, after the first step, our traveler passes through the way in the light he has acquired from his vision of the intelligible, and in both the fourth journey is a social and political task; the traveler intervenes in public affairs and endeavors to show the road he has gone to his fellow citizens. Although aided by the light he has acquired from the previous journey, he lives amongst the people and is engaged in their affairs.

It is natural to find very differences in details, but a great divide between Plato and the Islamic mystics is that the latter speak in the context of a revealed religion, while in the former the context is philosophical and political. The philosopher-king of Plato

is substituted by the prophet, the Good and other ideas by the Truth and his names and attributes; the philosophical and political happiness by religious salvation.

### 7. Plato and Mulla Sadra

As mentioned above, Mulla Sadra says explicitly that he has borrowed the idea of the four journeys from the mystical terminology.

We see that his definition of these four journeys, as to the relation between the creature and the Truth, is the same as the mystics. However, in applying these to the divisions of his book, we do not see a reasonable stability and rigidity; what we see in general indicates that his work here has some subjective and arbitrary tone. This was so that as if he has forgotten to continue this comparison exactly and explicitly, or at least had a feeling of doubt about that. We are not told, for example, why the second division of his work (on natural science, on categories, especially on substances and attributes) is more suitable than the third division (on theological science, on God's existence and His attributes) to be the subject-matter of the second journey (from the Truth to the Truth by the Truth). It can be said that we see in each of his four divisions all ranks of investigations and all degrees of knowledge.

The lack of similarity between Mulla Sadra and both Plato and the mystics is most remarkable on the four journey. In the fourth division, Mulla Sadra discusses the problems of the soul and of the bodily resurrection. Here, no traces of the prophecy of the mystics and the religious legislation or the Plato's philosopher-king are found. It is true that the most important task of both the philosopher-king and the mystic-prophet is to lead men to purify their souls and pass their ways unto the Truth; and in this respect, they are concerned with the soul and with "the other world." But, Mulla Sadra says a little or rather nothing on practiced-political-religious tasks and works of the man who lives in his fourth journey. What we see in the fourth division of his *al-Asfar* are only theoretical discussions about the ontological and epistemological states of the individual soul and about its surviving after death and that how it lives perpetually. It is here that Mulla Sadra diverges from both Plato and the mystics.

Why this is so? The answer is to be sought in the tradition which Mulla Sadra has inherited. His *al-Asfar* is a book on the theoretical wisdom, and has been composed in a Sinian tradition<sup>11</sup>, in which the science is divided into the theoretical and the practical branches. This tradition goes back to Aristotle, who discussed the ethics (*Al-Akhlaq*), the economics (*Al-Manzel*) and the politics (*Al-Madineh*) under the general practical science of "politics" and (perhaps influenced by Protagoras' man-the

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11. The tradition of Ibn- Sina, the Sheikh-al-Raiis (The head) of Islamic Philosophy; but, it must be noted that Mulla Sadra arranges the discussions according to his own system. For example, "the soul," which was a part of the natural (or the lowest) science (and should be related in *the first journey*), becomes an independent branch, and is discussed as the subject-matter of *the fourth journey*.

measure) considered it a relative and probable science. Unlike the theoretical science, the subject-matter of which is permanent and independent of our will and deeds (and so can be known with certainty), in practical sciences the absolute certainty is not reachable and we must content ourselves with probabilities (see, for example, *Nichomachean Ethics*, book one, chap. 1, especially 1064bff, and book six, chap. 5).

In Plato, we do not find such a division. Here, we see a hierarchical science which can be acquired dialectically and comprises all aspects of the reality; we can reach (although gradually and hierarchically) the absolute certainty in both theoretical and practical issues. Strictly speaking, theory and practice are coexistent; every investigation is a kind of existential realization; in each stage of this realization we reach the certain knowledge about the objects of that stage. Plato's doctrine on the unity of sciences is a corollary of his well-known doctrine on the "unity of virtue and knowledge" (which has been criticized by Aristotle) and needs an independent discussion.

In this respect, Aristotle and the Muslim Peripatetics stand on one side and Plato and the Mystics of this world on the other. The will is a determining factor for former, while it is not so for the latter. In this respect, Plato and the mystics are very similar. For mystics, too, the theory is not apart from the practice. Both Plato and the mystics think that the microcosm and the macrocosm (men and world) are subject to a single law. It is for this reason that the fourth journey of the mystics is comparable with the second life of the philosopher in the cave; while in Mulla Sadra's fourth journey the soul is discussed in a way different from that of them.

Another ground for the difference between Plato and Mulla Sadra must be sought in another aspect of the latter's inherited tradition. In the Islamic political history we hardly see a favorable condition for the men of philosophy to theorize and write without any fear and boundary. For a relatively clear picture of this aspect of the history of the Islamic world we need much more than what can be said here. About Mulla Sadra's own time, it is enough to remember his exile by the political and religious authorities of his days from the Capital (Isfahan) to an isolated village in the environs of Qom. In a society governed by political tyranny and religious literalism it is not reasonable to expect an explicit discussion of political-religious management in the fourth journey of a philosophical book. It is for this reason that even those mystics who called their leader a "king" had to restrict this kingdom to the realm of hearts and did not extend it to managing the public affairs.<sup>12</sup> It must be noted that this was the problem that Plato himself was faced with.<sup>13</sup>

12. It is so, for example, about shah [=king] Ne'matollah Vali [=leader].

13. Thus what we read in Plato's *Republic* must be modified in two respects. Firstly, this book has an ideal character. The ideal city is a paradigm to which every real city can come near, but none can reach. Plato himself eventually contents with the rule of laws (instead of philosopher-king). Secondly, Plato and other philosophers of Academy have played the role of advisors for the rulers or the role of lawgivers for the cities, not the role of the rulers.

## 7. Conclusion

Mulla Sadra's four journeys show some similarities to those of mystics and also to Plato's allegory of cave. However, there is an essential difference between them, in particular in the fourth journey. This difference was necessary due to Mulla Sadra's conception of the theoretical wisdom; indeed he could not follow Plato and the mystics entirely. As to the title of the paper, we must say that Mulla Sadra's *al-Asfar* explains only a part of philosophical training in theoretical and individual dimensions, while Plato's allegory of cave exhibits the whole philosophical life in both fields of theory and practice, and of individual and society.<sup>14</sup>



14. A survey on other philosophical works of Mulla Sadra (such as *al-Shawahid al-Ruboobyat*, *al-Mabda va al-Ma'ad* and *al-Masha'ir*) shows that there, too, his predominant concern is the theoretical aspect of philosophy.

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