Crossing Boundaries:
Mystical and Philosophical Conceptualizations of the *Dunyā*/*Ākhira* Relationship

International Symposium
University of Utrecht, 5 July 2013

HHIT

The here and the hereafter in Islamic traditions

Universiteit Utrecht

Crossing boundaries: mystical and philosophical conceptualizations of the
***dunyā/ākhira* relationship**
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This symposium is the second in a series of events in the framework of "The here and the hereafter in Islamic traditions" (HHIT), a four-year research project on Islamic eschatology, funded by a Starting Grant of the European Research Council (2011-14). Speakers are invited to reflect on the various ways in which the boundary between this world (*al-dunyā*) and the otherworld (*al-ākhira*) has been conceived in ascetic, mystical and Illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) traditions: where this boundary is located, how compact or how permeable it is conceived to be, and therefore, how easily or not it can be crossed. The programme is structured around three main topics, to wit:

(1) This world and the next in *zuhd* and in early Sufism: fear of hell and longing for paradise among the *zuhhad*, *al-zuhd fi l-dunya*, *zuhd* and seeking the hereafter (both spiritually and physically, i.e. in *jihad*), early Sufi reactions to, or dismissal of, *zuhd* conceptualizations of paradise and hell, etc.;

(2) Eschatology in 'classical' Sufism, esp. in Sufi *tafsir*: interpretation of eschatological verses in the Qur'an, conceptualizations of immanent paradise(s) and hell(s), Sufi attitudes toward eschatology in *kalam*, etc.;

(3) Ishraqi eschatology: the place of paradise and hell in Ishraqi cosmology; eschatology and the World of Image; imaginal bodies in the afterlife; eschatology and its relationship with dreams, prophethood and mystical visions; etc.

Serving as it does to frame the ongoing research projects of the three PhD students affiliated to HHIT, the symposium will be conducted in a workshop-like atmosphere, with ample room for discussion, including (but not necessarily so) of selected texts from the original sources.

http://hhit.wp.hum.uu.nl/

Programme

9.00 – 9.20	REGISTRATION/ARRIVAL
9.20 – 9.30	WELCOME: Christian Lange

Panel 1: Eschatology and boundary-crossing in *zuhd* and in early Sufism
Chair: N.N.

| 9.30 – 9.50	Yunus Yaldiz (Utrecht University) *Aspects of boundary-crossing*: al-zuhd fī l-dunyā, tawakkul *and warfare in early renunciant Hadith literature*
9.50 – 10.10	Michael Ebstein (Hebrew University Jerusalem) *Mystical Ascensions and the Hereafter in the Here and Now: Some Notes on Eschatology in the Traditions Attributed to Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī*
10.10 – 10.30	Ahmet Karamustafa (University of Maryland) *Eschatology in Early Sufi Thought*
10.30 – 11.00	Q&A
11.00 – 11.30	COFFEE BREAK

Panel 2: Eschatology in Sufi *tafsīr*
Chair: N.N.

| 11.30 – 11.50	Pieter Coppens (Utrecht University) *Moses and the Beatific Vision in mediaeval Islamic mystical exegesis*
11.50 – 12.10	Pierry Lory (EPHE Paris) *The Greater Resurrection according to Kāshānī's commentaries of the Qurʾan*
12.10 – 12.30	Jamal Elias (UPenn) *Commentary as Method vs Genre: An Analysis of Ismaʿil Haqqi Bursawi's commentaries on the Qurʾan and the Masnawī-yi maʿnawī*
12.30 – 13.00	Q&A
13.00 – 14.30	LUNCH

Panel 3: Eschatology in the Ishraqi tradition
Chair: N.N.

14.30 – 14.50	Nicolai Sinai (Oxford University) *Al-Suhrawardī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī on the World of Image*
14.50 – 15.10	Eric van Lit (Utrecht University) *Continuity and change in the commentaries on Suhrawardī (d. 1191): the notion of the World of Imagination (ʿālam al-mithāl)*
15.10 – 15.30	Sajjad Rizvi (University of Exeter) *Personal Identity in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Resurrection and the Human in the Afterlife*
15.30 – 16.00	Q&A
16.00 – 16.30	COFFEE BREAK

18.00 – 19.00	BOAT TOUR
19.15	DINNER for speakers and invited guests

Locations and general info
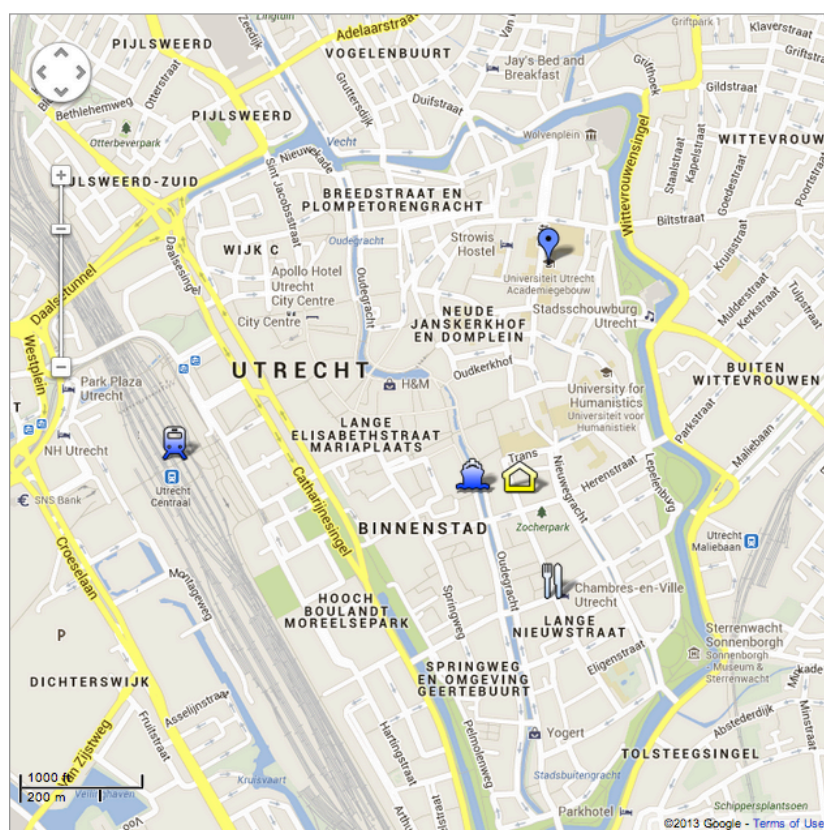
1. Sweelinckzaal, Drift 21
2. Court Hotel, Korte Nieuwstraat 14
3. Meeting point canal trip, Oudegracht 175
4. Restaurant Deeg, Lange Nieuwstraat 71
5. Utrecht Central Station

Round Trip meeting point

Restaurant Deeg

Sweelinckzaal

Court Hotel

Utrecht Central Station
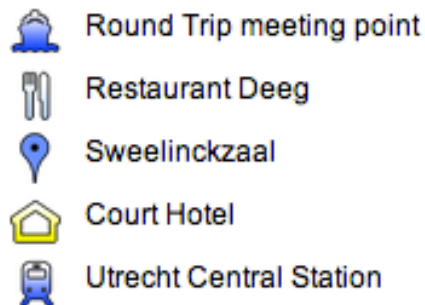
All locations for the conference are within walking distance in the city centre.
The conference is held in the 'Sweelinckzaal', Drift 21.

Rooms have been booked for you at the Court Hotel Utrecht (Korte Nieuwstraat 14), a 7-10 min. stroll from the conference venue. See http://www.courthotel.nl/.

Saturday afternoon we will meet at Oudegracht 175 for a small round trip through the historical city centre by canal boat. Afterwards we will have dinner at restaurant Deeg, close to the hotel.

Christian Lange's mobile phone number: +31 (0)64-815-5295.

Abstracts

Panel 1 (9:30-11:00): Eschatology and boundary-crossing in zuhd *and in early Sufism*

Aspects of boundary-crossing: *Al-zuhd fi 'l-dunyā, tawakkul* and warfare in early renunciant Hadith literature
Yunus Yaldiz (Utrecht University)

I will speak about how the concepts of *hawān al-dunyā, ūl/qi ar al-amal, dhikr al-mawt* and Jihad, all of which figure prominently in the thematical Hadith collections of the 2nd and early 3rd centuries of Islam called *Kutub al-Zuhd*, connect to inner-worldly and to eschatological boundary-crossing. The main questions I will want to answer in this paper are: What role does the fall of humankind play for *zuhd* in general? To what extent is the orientation towards the afterlife important for *zuhd*? And what role do the battlefield stories play for *zuhd*? This will invite thoughts about the possible origin(s) of *zuhd* and its development in the traditional sources, while also showcasing its centrality and importance for the formation of later Islamic piety.

After a short introduction to the topic and the *Kutub al-Zuhd*, an understudied genre of early Islamic literature, I will analyze a couple of exemplary Hadiths to address the proposed questions. For this purpose I focus in this paper particularly on Ibn al-Mubārak's (d. 181/797) *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. Here, we will encounter different aspects of boundary-crossing: (1) crossing the boundary from the *dār al-Islām* to the *dār al- arb*; (2) crossing the boundary from urban civilization to the harsh borderlands in which jihad takes place; (3) crossing the boundary from life to death, from this world to the next world.

The fall of humankind is treated only scarcely in the *Kutub al-Zuhd*. Nevertheless, it is in my opinion the origin of much of renunciatory thought and conviction. This will be the focus of the first part of the lecture. The second part will deal, first, with the moral aspect connected to *zuhd* terminology mentioned in the title of this paper. Trust in God and the shortness/length of hope are central in the conduct of the renunciants. In order to point out the human disposition of deferring (religious) obligations to a later time, the *Kutub al-Zuhd* authors collected various sayings of the Prophet and his Companions reminding the believers of the closeness and inevitability of death. These sayings provide psychological observations, portrayals of battle scenes, allegories and mythical dream-like stories, all in the tenor of *memento mori*. The Prophet thereby appears in different ways, at times teaching his followers the correct mental attitude of belief, at other times testing the trust in him and God through different trials inflicted on humankind.

Secondly, and in conclusion to my paper, I will examine the sayings that deal with death on the battlefield and exemplary or avoidable behavior considering salvation or punishment in the life to come. The participation in warfare and martyrdom may be regarded as an active search and engagement for death and salvation, a kind of boundary-crossing that occurs in this life already. The battlefield elaborations have a special place in the *zuhd* collections. We are at times placed in the midst of a battlefield (for example, Yarmūk [15/636] and U ud [3 or 4/624-5]) among those who are dying due to their combat injuries, or witness a Companion's self-reflection on related experiences. Various theological and social aspects and discussions are implicitly included in the sayings. In the case of the famous Companion Abd al-Ra mān b. Awf (d. 31/652), reflection on the death of the early Companions amza (d. 624-5) and Mus ab b. Umayr (d. 624-5) makes him realize that 'the good ones' are all dead already and what that means for the ones who are still alive. Connected to the last point, I want to briefly

discuss the preference given to the first generation of Islam and how this suits renunciatory rhetoric.

I aim to show in my paper that the internalization of the fall of humankind motivated the *zuhhād*'s commitment to pious and scrupolous religious practice in ritual prayer, recitation, and Jihad on the battlefield. I maintain that *zuhd* is deeply rooted in the two major sources of Islam, the Qur ān and Hadith.

Mystical Ascensions and the Hereafter in the Here and Now: Some Notes on Eschatology in the Traditions Attributed to Dhū l-Nūn al-Mi rī
Michael Ebstein (Martin Buber Society of Fellows / Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The relation between eschatology and mysticism is undoubtedly an intriguing subject. Whereas eschatology pertains to the course of human sacred history and particularly to its future and its end (the events related to the coming of the messianic figure, *al-mahdī*; the victory of the righteous believers over their evil enemies; judgment day; heaven and hell; etc.), mysticism deals with the immediate encounter between man and God, attainable in the here and now. If indeed the goal of the mystical path is to draw closer to God and to experience an unusual, direct encounter with Divinity – perhaps even unite with God – already in this world and during this lifetime, what then is the meaning and significance of the eschatological future as described in the traditional or canonical sources?

Various sayings attributed to the 9th century Sunnī mystic Dhū l-Nūn al-Mi rī – an influential teacher in the formative period of the Sufi tradition – reflect the tension between the historical, linear, and universal aspect of eschatology, on the one hand, and the ahistorical and vertical dimension related to the mystical experience of the individual, on the other. Analyzing these sayings and comparing them with other mystical teachings will demonstrate the wealth and typological diversity of medieval Islamic mysticism.

Eschatology in Early Sufi Thought
Ahmet Karamustafa (Washington University)

Sufism emerged from within the bosom of renunciation (*zuhd*) when some prominent renunciants began to direct their energies increasingly to the cultivation of the inner life. The 'discovery' and cultivation of the inner dimensions of the human person was accompanied by a parallel effort to discern the inner meaning of the divine revelation as well as an increasing focus on the concept of divine selection. Interestingly, this "inward turn" involved a disengagement from eschatological themes. Questions of death and afterlife, which had been central concerns of Muslim renunciants, were now downplayed and deemphasized by early Sufis in favor of a concentration on the spiritual present. This talk will be an exploration of the peculiar place of eschatology in the emergence of Sufism.

Panel 2 (11:30-13:00): Eschatology in Sufi tafsīr

Hearing and seeing God in medieval Sufi *tafsīr*: the case of Moses
Pieter Coppens (Utrecht University)

Islam, like Judaism, is generally portrayed as a religion that is auditory rather than visual.

The believer who wants to perceive God in this world is encouraged to listen to God's word being recited, rather than making himself an image of God. Although the idea that the believers will enjoy a *visio beatifica* in Paradise is accepted in Sunnism, Islamic theologians have generally held the position that the vision of God in this-worldly existence is impossible.

Also within Sufism the possibility of the vision of God in this world was a matter of debate, since mystics never operate in a vacuum from broader debates within the religious tradition. A group of Sufis tried to overcome this taboo concerning the vision of God. The idea of a this-worldy *visio beatifica* was not entirely denied by them, and in some cases even considered something that should be strived for. For them the visual was a more important sense than the auditory for perceiving God, whether in this world or the next.

In the argument of theologians who wished to deny the possibility of the vision of God in this world, Q7:143 plays an important role. The verse relates the story of the seclusion of the prophet Moses on Mount Sinai, where Moses hears God speak to him without intermediary. He subsequently requests to see God, which God (apparently) refuses. Islamic mystics who argued for the possibility of a this-worldly vision had to find ways to interpret this prophetic story in such a way that it did not rule out their claim.

In this paper I will explore and compare three commentaries on this particular verse from three subsequent centuries: the *tafāsīr* of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), Rāshid al-Dīn Maybudī (d. 530/1135) and Rūzbihān al-Baqlī (d. 606/1209). The authors have different ways of dealing with the theological challenges of the Qur'anic text, hailing from their different positions within Sufism and the broader Islamic tradition. The *tafsīr* of al-Baqlī is considered to be strictly esoteric and a representative of a more 'ecstatic' form of Sufism, while the *tafsīr* of al-Qushayrī consists of both exoteric and esoteric elements subtly interwoven. Maybudī treats the exoteric and esoteric aspects in clearly separated paragraphs, switching between Arabic and Persian.

In this paper, then, I aim to achieve three things. Firstly, I will argue that the story of Moses is used to establish a hierarchy between the auditory and visual senses, making the visual encounter the focal point of mystical training and the ultimate 'proof' of the elevated state of a prophet or a mystic. Secondly, following a constructivist approach to mysticism, I will show that the mystical commentary on the text cannot be understood in isolation from exoteric explanations. Thirdly, I will reflect on whether the often used classifications of 'ecstatic' and 'sober' Sufism are indeed workable categories and applicable to the three works under scrutiny.

The Greater Resurrection according to Kāshānī's commentaries of the Qur'an
Pierre Lory (Sorbonne University)

Kāshānī exposes in his works a threefold conception of the Resurrection: 1) The lesser resurrection takes place after physical death. 2) The middle resurrection is the transformation of the sufi's heart when it becomes filled with divine life. 3) The greater resurrection is brought about by the annihilation of the mystic in God, and his "return" through Him. This point of view represents an absolute upheaval of the theological vision of time and retribution. The accustomed concepts of past and future disappear. The true time is marked by the evolution from the status of the ordinary man to the realization of the 'Perfect Man'.

Commentary as Method vs Genre: An Analysis of Isma'il Haqqi Bursawi's commentaries on the Qur'an and the Masnawī-yi ma'nawī
Jamal Elias (University of Pennsylvania)

In this paper I explore commentaries written on the Qur'an and on an influential poetical work to argue that Sufi writers of commentaries on the Qur'an) do not always participate in the literary activity of writing *tafsīr*, where the term "*tafsīr*" is understood as referring to a genre of writing. Rather, Sufi writers treat the Qur'an as a "colony text", in the sense that, for them, the Qur'an does not impart its meaning (or its "best" meaning) through a sequential or linear progression through the entirety of the scripture. In this regard, such writing upon and use of the Qur'an is similar to the manner in which poetical works are used by Sufi authors. Ismail Haqqi Bursawi (Bursalı İsma'il Hakkı, d. 1725) provides an excellent case study in the purposes and forms of religious commentary literature in Islamic intellectual circles. Born in Aydos (Bulgaria) he lived most of his life in Bursa (Turkey) where he attained fame as a Jalwati Sufi shaykh and as one of the most renowned and prolific religious scholars of in the Ottoman Empire at that time. He wrote over one hundred works in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, among which his massive commentary on the Qur'an entitled *Rū al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (which allegedly took 23 years to complete) and his commentary on the *Masnawī-yi ma'nawī* of Mawlana Jalal al-din Rumi (d. 1273) -- entitled the *Rū -i masnawī* -- are of particular importance in this context. Bursawi was strongly influenced by Ibn al-'Arabi's (d. 1240) school of thought, especially as iterated through the latter's disciple Sadr al-din Qunawi (d. 1274), a fact that Bursawi openly acknowledges in his writings. However, Bursawi also owes an intellectual debt to Rumi, such that his own intellectual formation reflects a synthesis of two somewhat distinct trends within Sufism, but one which is arguably characteristic of the Ottoman world in the early modern period. In this paper, I compare Bursawi's methods of commenting on the Qur'an and on Rumi's most famous work to show the ways in which what is obviously a voluminous, comprehensive and sequential (*musalsal*) commentary on the Qur'an does not confirm in its structure and use to received notions of Qur'anic *tafsīr*'s status as a genre of Islamic scholarly writing. In so doing, I present preliminary suggestions of new ways of thinking about the nature of scripture and its literary status in early modern Islamic society.

Panel 3 (14:30-16:00): Eschatology in the Ishraqi Tradition

Continuity and change in the commentaries on Suhrawardī (d. 1191): the notion of the World of Imagination ('ālam al-mithāl)
Eric van Lit (Utrecht University)

Ghiyat al-Din Dashtaki (d. 1541) is the author of a super-commentary on the commentary of Jalal al-Din Dawani (d. 1502) on Suhrawardi's book *Hayakil al-nur* (Temples of Light). Even though the World of Imagination ('ālam al-mithāl) is one of the major contributions of Suhrawardi, he does not mention it in his *Hayakil*, and neither does Dawani. Dashtaki, however, does not only discuss this additional level of being, situated in between the material and the abstract world, but in fact includes an essay on it which is hidden inside his super-commentary. In this paper we will take a closer look at this essay. It will be shown that this essay relies entirely on an essay written by Qutb al-Din Shirazi (d. 1311), which in turn is based on his commentary on the *Hikmat al-ishraq* —the magnum opus of Suhrawardi—, which is in turned based on Shahrazuri's (d. 1288?) commentary on the same work.

The intricate relationships between these seven texts will be mapped out and put into context. This exercise will show itself to be not always straightforward. Though it is easy to establish a general relationship between several pairs of texts, it is not easy to judge what is going on at the level of words and sentences. However, such a detailed analysis is necessary not only to decide on the exact relationship between the two texts, but also to establish the genuine contribution of each author. Some of these surprising details will be showed, and explanations for the discrepancies will be put forward.

The image that emerges from this analysis allows us to draw several conclusions. We will be able to say something about the continuity and change of the notion of the World of Imagination. It seems that this notion did not undergo much development in this timeframe of 400 years, but was rather transmitted as received knowledge. This also begs the question whether the authors themselves were favorable towards the notion themselves, and it will be argued that this cannot at all be presumed. We will also be able to say, based especially on the details of our analysis, the different ways in which the authors operated. Even though many texts repeat earlier texts, we may notice at times very subtle modifications in the composition of the text. It is especially the composition, that is, the arrangement, inclusion, and exclusion of different text blocks, that should be considered when deciding on an author's original contribution. If this sample set of texts is representative of medieval intellectual history in general, this will give us insights into what was considered normal practice, and thus it makes us understand better how to read and evaluate medieval texts. Lastly, based on a critical comparison of the various texts, we will be able to draw some conclusions regarding the strength of some of the manuscripts, and this information may in turn be used to construct better editions.

Al-Suhrawardī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī on the World of Image
Nicolai Sinai (Oxford University)

A mainstay of eschatological speculation in late medieval Islam was the notion of a "World of Image" located somewhere 'above' the material world. As various scholars have pointed out, the idea, developed in some detail by Ibn ʿArabī, was first mooted by al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191). In my workshop presentation I propose to re-examine key passages from al-Suhrawardī's *Philosophy of Illumination*, as well as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's (d. 1311) *Epistle on the World of Image*, in the hope of complementing Roxanne Marcotte's recent article on the topic. I will focus on al-Suhrawardī's claim that a material body can serve as a "subject" (*mawḍūʿ*) for a form without the relationship between the two being one of ordinary hylomorphic inherence, a thesis which arguably constitutes the ontological underpinning for the postulate of a separate "world of suspended images". Al-Suhrawardī's term for a substrate of this special kind is *maẓhar*, "locus of manifestation", which interestingly is also applied to the faculty of imagination and to sense organs (more specifically, to the crystalline humour of the eye). I will conclude with a number of experimental remarks on the structure of the World of Image itself.

Personal Identity in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Resurrection and the Human in the Afterlife
Sajjad Rizvi (University of Exeter)

Muslim philosophers were notorious for their denial of the Qurʾanic account of God resurrecting bodies of the deceased to face judgment in the afterlife. Neoplatonic accounts of the perfection of the human often seemed to lead to an impersonal afterlife. How could Muslim Neoplatonism on the nature of the human and final destination be squared with scriptural notions of the survival of personal identity tied to the resurrected body in the afterlife? Three specific issues arise out of Ġazālī's attack on this doctrine: first, is personal

immortality possible – does responsibility pertaining to acts in this world entail a persistence of personhood in the afterlife? Second, what is the relationship between the body and the soul caught between the seeming monism of the ḥadīṯ literature (at least in the Šīʿī tradition) and the dualism of the Avicennan tradition? Is the person a unity through the trajectory of human life or a dyad that is disintegrated and re-integrated? Third, to what extent is the world of the afterlife 'real' and what sort of body is resurrected and submitted to the pains and pleasures of the afterlife? My paper will address these questions from the perspective of the method and philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī (d. 1635), the eminent Iranian Šīʿī thinker, arguably the most important philosopher after Avicenna in the Islamic tradition. His position on the nature of the human and the resurrection is both novel and controversial; despite the hegemony of his philosophy in the Šīʿī seminary, it is the one part of his corpus that is not taught with followers like ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981) not being convinced, and opponents from among the *maktab-i tafkīk* (like Muḥammad Riżā Ḥakīmī) being rather hostile.

Drawing upon a range of texts both in philosophical theology and exegesis, I will attempt to demonstrate that Mullā Ṣadrā keenly felt the philosophical need to defend the accounts of the afterlife in the Qurʾan and ḥadīṯ literature while 'saving the appearances' of the Avicennan arguments and displaying the influence of the school of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) in his hybrid position. The striking melange of textual and apodictic arguments adduced in the final section of his magnum opus *al-Asfār al-arbaʿa* and *al-Ḥikma al-ʿaršīya* indicate to the reader how Mullā Ṣadrā arranges his synthesis. His solution to the problem of resurrection is also a good litmus test for his philosophy as such especially since his holistic approach is demonstrated in the eleven principles that sum up his thought that he insists are preliminary to understanding his argument. The paper will contribute to an increasingly nuanced and detailed understanding of the thought of Mullā Ṣadrā, facilitated by the availability of excellent new critical editions of his work, and to our historical appreciation of the position of philosophers in Muslim traditions on the key doctrine of Islam, namely resurrection and the afterlife (*maʿād*).