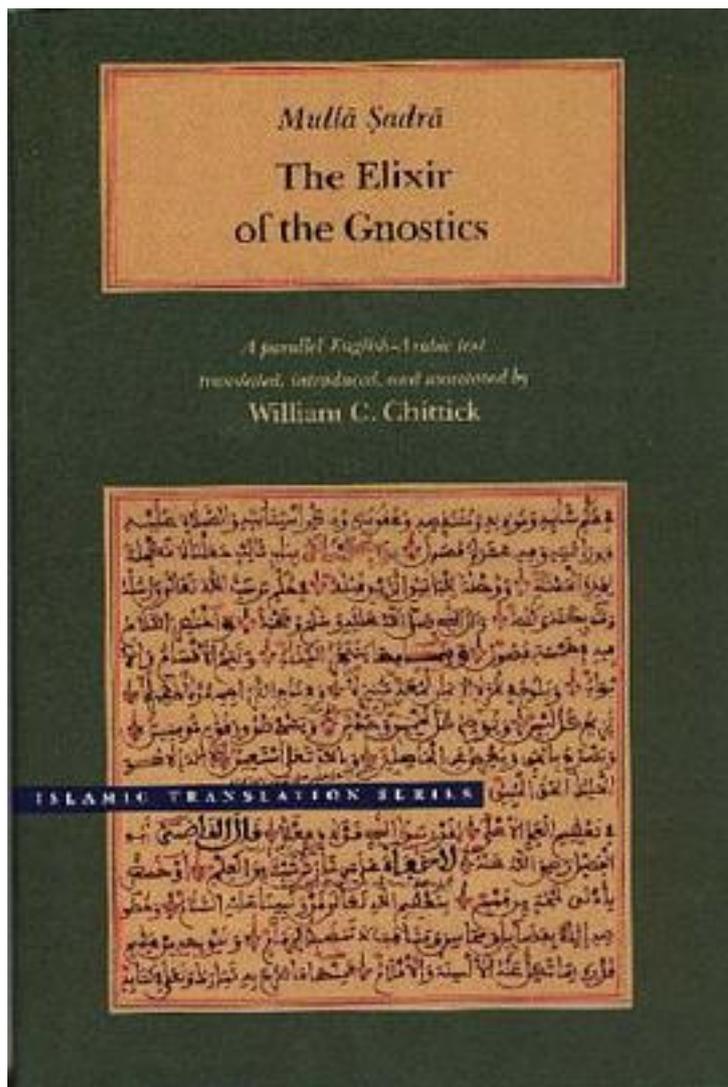


The Elixir of the Gnostics



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Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi (1572-1640), more commonly called Mulla Sadra was one of the grand scholars of later-period Islamic philosophy and has grown to become one of the best-known Muslim philosophers. "Iksir al-Arifin" or "Elixir of the Gnostics", is unique among Sadra's writings in that it reworks and amplifies an earlier Persian work, the "Jawidan-nama" ("Book of the Everlasting") by Afdal al-Din Kashani, or Baba Afdal. The underlying theme of Sadra's amplification is emblematic of Muslim philosophy: the importance of self-knowledge is an individual's journey of "Origin and Return", the soul's origins with God and its eventual return to Him. Everything, Sadra says, is on such a path, gradually disengaging from the material world and returning to a transcendent essence - all leading to a final fruition in which everything in the universe returns to God and finds permanent happiness. Philosophy, Sadra argues, is the most direct means to self-knowledge - and thus the best tool for navigating this journey.

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