

AVICENNA'S ALLEGORY ON THE SOUL



An Ismaili Interpretation

An Arabic edition and English translation of
'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd's *al-Risāla al-mufīda*

Arabic edition by WILFERD MADELUNG
Translated and Introduced by TOBY MAYER

AVICENNA'S ALLEGORY ON THE SOUL

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Introduction

Avicennan Allegory: Between Philosophy and Religion

In Muslim dream interpretation (or ‘oneiromancy’, *ta‘bīr*), a pigeon is a beautiful omen. The dove and pigeon family has potent scriptural and cultural associations. While the Christian tradition even views the bird as a symbol of the Spirit (following Matthew 3:16, where it descends in a dove’s form on Jesus at his baptism), the Muslim tradition mainly associates it with another narrative traceable to the Bible: the first evidence for Noah that the world-destroying flood was receding was that his dove returned to the ark with an olive branch.¹ This is clearly a motif of great antiquity, as in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (ca. 2100 BCE), Utnapishtim also releases a dove to try to find dry land and return to him. Such accounts rest on a fundamental behavioural feature of birds of the genus Columbidae, namely, that they can return home from even vast distances. The mysterious mechanism which underlies this ability remains debated, some claiming that navigation is through the use of infrasound, some that it is through an acute sensitivity to atmospheric odours, and some that a specially adapted nerve allows ‘magnetoception’. In view of this homing ability, pigeons were kept and bred as a popular pastime in the great urban centres of the medieval Muslim world. The objective of the sport of pigeon-flying (*zajl*) was to test from how great a distance a bird could return to its dovecot, and it was claimed that the champion birds (called ‘celestials’, *samāwiyyāt*) could fly, say, from the Bosphorus to Baṣra at one stretch. From as early as the 3rd/9th century trained carrier-pigeons also had a serious military and intelligence role in Muslim lands by conveying long-distance messages.² In the medieval

1 Franz Rosenthal, tr., *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (Albany, 1989), vol. 1, p. 357. Also see Genesis 8:6–12.

2 For a detailed study of this subject see Youssef Ragheb, *Les messagers volants en terre d’Islam* (Paris, 2002). Also see F. Viré, ‘Ḥamām’, *Encyclopedia of*

Arabic texts contained within this volume, the soul itself is presented as a 'homing pigeon' par excellence – descending here from an impossibly remote heavenly abode and then navigating all the way back to it.

This volume involves two distinctive philosophical artefacts from the early 5th/11th century and the late 6th/12th century. The first is a brief allegorical poem, the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* ('The Poem on the Soul'), attributed to Ibn Sīnā ('Avicenna'), the great master of Muslim Aristotelianism, who was not generally known to be a poet; it is a poem, moreover, with a seemingly anomalous, Platonic portrayal of the soul as fallen down into its earthly, material embodiment which it pre-existed, and from which it may well yet escape. The second is a line-by-line commentary on this poem, entitled *al-Risāla al-muḥīda*, by 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd, an early leader (*dā'ī muṭlaq*) of the Ṭayyibī branch of Ismailism which took root and flourished in medieval Yemen. His exegesis is based on Ṭayyibī cosmological teachings which are, in some respects, cognate with those of the Gnostic movements of late antiquity. Based on the idea that our physical universe is overshadowed by, and results from, a primordial rupture in the architecture of the higher, spiritual world, these are unusual doctrines within the intellectual scene of medieval Islam.

Despite his great reputation as a Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*), Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) did not just re-work teachings passed down from Aristotle but interwove certain Platonic and Neoplatonic themes in a whole that was more than the sum of its parts. A Platonic debt is felt, for instance, in certain texts by Ibn Sīnā on the human soul's predicament, development and final salvation. In such texts he limns his teachings in stories rich in imagery, in a manner that echoes Plato's use of narrative. The latter had articulated his philosophical thought through a dramatic, dialogic format, and also myth. Though the Corpus Platonicum remained neglected in Arabic compared with the Corpus Aristotelicum,³ some knowledge of Plato, unmediated by Neoplatonism, did percolate into Muslim philosophy, for example through quotations by Claudius Galen (d. ca. 216 CE). These included a summary of the *Timaeus*,

Islam, 2nd ed. (EI2); and Adam J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 113–114.

3 Dimitri Gutas, 'Platon. Tradition Arabe', in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, ed. R. Goulet (Paris, 2012), vol. Va, pp. 845–863.

that major case of the Platonic ‘reasonable myth’.⁴ Ibn Sīnā remained unsure of Plato’s value as a philosopher on account of the meagreness of the textual evidence available to him, and Plato’s influence on his narrative experiments is unlikely to have been direct.⁵

Allegories had already been circulating in Arabic philosophy before Ibn Sīnā’s stories came to be viewed as their prime exemplar. It was Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (d. 260/873), the famous translator of Greek texts into Arabic, who wrote down the first version of *Salāmān wa Absāl* in Arabic, distinct in its details from Ibn Sīnā’s tale a century and a half later.⁶ Many allegories feature in the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* (‘Epistles of the Brethren of Purity’), dating from the first part of the 4th/10th century.⁷ Ibn Sīnā’s older contemporary and a fellow ranking functionary of the Buwayhids, the philosopher Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) showed some interest in the genre, as demonstrated by his text *Lughz Qābis* (‘The Riddle of Cebes’).⁸ In view of such precedents,

4 Or ‘truth-like myth’ (Gk. *eikōs muthos*). In addition to Galen’s summary, the *Timaeus* came to exist in three translations in Arabic. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyā al-Rāzī moreover wrote an Arabic super-commentary on Plutarch’s commentary on the *Timaeus*. The *Republic*, the *Sophist*, the *Phaedo* (also in Persian), the *Crito*, the *Laws* and the *Symposium* (but it seems, only Alcibiades’ speech) were made available in Arabic in varying degrees of expurgation, abbreviation and paraphrase. See R. Walzer, ‘Aflātūn’, *EI2*. Also see P. Kraus, R. Walzer, F. Rosenthal and F. Gabrieli, ed., *Plato Arabus* (London, 1951–1953), 3 vols.

5 Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works* (Leiden, 1988), p. 38, quoting Ibn Sīnā from the Epilogue to the *Sophistics* of the *Kitāb al-shifā’*.

6 On a possible, remoter provenance of this story see Shlomo Pines, ‘The Origin of the Tale of Salāmān and Absāl: A Possible Indian Influence?’, in Sarah Stroumsa, ed., *Studies in the History of Arabic Philosophy* (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 343–353.

7 The *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* adopt some material wholesale from Plato, notably the Gyges story from the *Republic*, Book 2 (359d1 ff) which is reproduced in Epistle 52, *On Magic*, ed. and tr. Godefroid de Callatāy and Bruno Halflants (Oxford, 2011), pp. 97–99. Also see a recent study of the *Rasā’il*’s narrative and allegorical content by Shatha Almutawa, ‘Imaginative Cultures and Historic Transformations: Narrative in *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’*’ (PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2013). An involved allegory about an island of apes is quoted from the *Rasā’il* in the course of Ibn al-Walid’s commentary in our own text.

8 Miskawayh (alternatively, Miskūyah), has here produced an Arabic version of the *Pinax* or *Kebētos Thēbaïou*, a book attributed to Cebes of Thebes,

Ibn Sinā's symbolic narratives should be seen as forays into an already attested philosophical genre in Arabic, not solely his invention.

Precedents from outside philosophy could also be pointed to. Despite his ambivalent view of it, Ibn Sinā's reference to the apologue or animal fable *Kalīla wa Dimna* (by Ibn al-Muqaffā', d. 139/756, in the earlier Arabic version, and Rūdakī, d. 330/941, in the later Persian version), means that it was familiar to him. Birds feature in his own stories, and also other animals.⁹ Another likely, though less quantifiable, influence may be found in lateral oral traditions of didactic story-telling in Sufism. The deep oral strata later drawn on by, say, the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Balhki or 'Mawlānā Rūmī' (d. 671/1273), were partly laid by Ibn Sinā's time.¹⁰

Through Ibn Sinā, allegory would presently be taken up by a line of Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185–6), Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1228),¹¹ not to mention their close philosophical kindred in the Jewish community (indeed, various Hebrew adaptations of Ibn Sinā's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* and the *Risālat*

a disciple of Socrates, but almost certainly in reality by a writer of the 1st or 2nd century CE. The tale involves an old man who, for the instruction of some young onlookers, interprets a mysterious picture from the temple of Cronos at Thebes or Athens. The picture's imagery concerns life's pitfalls and the development of character. See Aḥmad b. Miskawayh, *Le Tableau de Cébès* (*Laghz Qābis ṣāhib Aflāṭun*), Arabic and French text, ed. and tr. René Basset (Algiers, 1898). Also see Franz Rosenthal, 'The Symbolism of the Tabula Cebitis according to Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib', in *Recherches d'islamologie: Recueil d'articles offert à G. Anawati et L. Gardet par leurs collègues et amis* (Louvain, 1977), pp. 273–283.

9 The third chapter of *Kalīla wa Dimna* concerns, in part, the story of a trapped pigeon which is freed with her companions through a rodent's assistance. This bears some comparison with Ibn Sinā's *Risālat al-ṭayr*, in which a trapped bird is helped to freedom by other birds.

10 Cf. Margaret A. Mills, 'Folk Tradition in the Masnavī and the Masnavi in Folk Tradition', in A. Banani, R. Hovannisian and G. Sabagh, ed., *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 136–177.

11 *Al-Risāla al-kāmiliyya*, ed. and tr. by M. Mayerhof and J. Schacht as *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn al-Nafīs* (Oxford, 1968). Ibn al-Nafīs's work is based on the idea of a solitary, spontaneously generated individual, the 'Kāmil' of the title, in this regard using the same starting point as Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* (which has little connection with Ibn Sinā's allegory of that name, save its title). Compared to Ibn Ṭufayl's narrative, Ibn al-Nafīs's is more theological and ethical/juridical in content.

al-ṭayr are found).¹² In another development, Sufi literature too would come to be influenced by Ibn Sīnā's philosophical stories. Majdūd b. Ādam Sana'ī (d. 525/1131?) composed a *mathnawī*, *Sayr al-ʿibād ila 'l-ma'ād* ('The Journey of the Devotees to the Place of Return'), whose stylistic similarity to Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* has been noted. The famous extended mystical allegory *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* ('The Conference of the Birds') by Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221) has been argued as developing the *Risālat al-ṭayr* ('Epistle of the Bird') of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), or possibly by his brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), whose thematic inspiration has in turn been traced back to Ibn Sīnā's own *Risālat al-ṭayr*.¹³ In due course, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492) would bear witness to the weighty debt of this whole Sufi genre to Ibn Sīnā, by composing his mystical romance *Salāmān wa Absāl*.

Whatever their historical impact and specific interest, Ibn Sīnā's philosophical narratives, as fictive and intentionally enigmatic, cannot work in isolation as a basis for conclusions on his psychological and soteriological teachings. There is also the likelihood that one or more of the relevant texts are pseudepigrapha. The list covers the following: *Risālat al-ṭayr* ('The Epistle of the Bird'), *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, *Salāmān wa Absāl*, a key case of allegoresis, namely the *Mi'rāj-nāma* ('Book of the Ascension'), and our own *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* ('Poem on the Soul'), also sometimes titled *al-Qaṣīda al-ʿayniyya*.¹⁴ The more cautious readings of

12 Sarah Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories: Aristotle's Poetics Reinterpreted', in *Arabica*, 38 (July 1992), pp. 183–206, p. 186, note 19. *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* was adapted into Hebrew by the Neoplatonist polymath Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (d. 1167), and three different authors adapted the *Risālat al-ṭayr* into Hebrew. See Gad Freudenthal and Mauro Zonta, 'The Reception of Avicenna in Jewish Cultures, East and West', in P. Adamson, ed., *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 214–241, esp. pp. 224–225 and 229. On Ibn Ezra's version of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, see Aaron W. Hughes, *The Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington, IN, 2004).

13 Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Sharḥ-i aḥwāl wa naqd wa taḥlīl-i asrār-i Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Aṭṭār-i Nīshābūrī* (Tehran, 1339/1960), pp. 336–345.

14 The *Risālat al-ṭayr* and *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* are listed in the so-called 'Shorter Bibliography' by Ibn Sīnā's student and biographer Abū 'Ubayd al-Jūzjānī (respectively, no. 46, with the title *Kitāb al-shabaka wa 'l-ṭayr*, = 'The Net and the Bird, and no. 37) and they are also listed in the anonymous 'Longer Bibliography' (no. 24 and 18). Both bibliographies are found in William E.

these texts will surely be in keeping with the psychology of Ibn Sīnā's more representative, expository texts, even where the match is elusive.

Reacting strongly against Henry Corbin's valorisation of the symbolic method in Ibn Sīnā's writings, Dimitri Gutas quotes a lengthy statement in which the 'Chief Sheikh' (*al-shaykh al-ra'īs*) seems to place it firmly beneath the demonstrative method, stressing that the style marks no doctrinal split whatsoever.¹⁵ Yet the fact that a prime instance of it, *Salāmān wa Absāl*, is found in an élite presentation of Ibn Sīnā's thought such as the *Ishārāt* ('Allusions'),¹⁶ implies that the symbolic style was not just aimed at the un-philosophical masses (*jumhūr*) but also had a pedagogic role for intimate philosophical disciples. According to Gutas, in their case its aim was to train them in decipherment and prompt their further research,¹⁷ thus rather close to the indicative style of the *Ishārāt*, which is also 'to prompt the student to further investigation and train him'.¹⁸ Presumably, in the case of the indicative genre the challenge to the student was to discover the correct syllogisms within different kinds of enthymeme, whereas in the case of the symbolic genre the challenge was to interpret the images and tropes correctly, in relation to the sheikh's expository texts.

Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation* (Albany, NY, 1974). *Salāmān wa Absāl* is referred to in Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, although any full version by the author is lost (see note 16). In the discussion below, the question of the authenticity of the *Mi'rāj-nāma* and the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* will be touched upon.

15 Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 297–318. In all, Gutas isolates four styles of discourse in Ibn Sīnā: (1) the symbolic, (2) the indicative or 'allusive', (3) the syllogistic or demonstrative, and lastly (4) the 'mnemonic' (e.g., *rajaz* poems on logic and medicine). Analysing a lengthy passage on the function of allegory in prophetic communication with humanity (from Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-shifā': Ilāhiyyāt* 442.10–443), Gutas concludes six points on Ibn Sīnā's theory in the passage, which involve allegory being aimed at the un-philosophical masses with a status subordinate to the demonstrative method.

16 More accurately, Ibn Sīnā refers his readers to it in the *Ishārāt*. Although the original is lost, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī supplies a summary version of it at this point in his commentary, *Ḥall mushkilāt al-ishārāt*. It is located at the beginning of the Ninth Namaṭ. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihāt* with Ṭūsī's and Taḥṭānī's commentary (Qum, 1375 Sh/1996), vol. 3, pp. 364–369.

17 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 302.

18 Ibid., p. 307.

This last challenge falls short of the aim as understood by Corbin, who shuns the very term ‘allegory’ as too base for the texts in question. According to him, Ibn Sīnā’s naming his philosophical narratives by the term *qiṣṣa* (story) must be taken seriously. One sense of the triliteral root *q-ṣ-ṣ* is ‘to follow in a person’s footsteps’. Therefore, for Corbin, ‘the *qiṣṣa* is indeed a «re-cital», in which the reader is called upon to situate himself in the place of the hero and re-live his experiences’.¹⁹ In his major study of Ibn Sīnā’s symbolic stories, he takes three of the relevant texts (*Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, *Risālat al-ṭayr* and *Salāmān wa Absāl*) and treats them as a unified ‘visionary cycle’ with a subtly cumulative construction.²⁰ Corbin elsewhere stresses that ‘These are not allegories but symbolic recitals, and it is important not to confuse the two. They are not stories about theoretical truths which could always be expressed differently; they are figures which typify an intimate personal drama, the apprenticeship of an entire lifetime. The symbol is both key and silence; it speaks and it does not speak. It can never be explained once and for all. It expands to the degree that each consciousness is progressively summoned by it to unfold – that is to say, to the degree that each consciousness makes the symbol the key of its own transmutation.’²¹

This view shares the high Jungian regard for myths – ‘public dreams’ just as dreams are ‘private myths’ – symbolic communications which ultimately concern and further an individuation process. The symbols of such narratives are taken to derive from the unconscious. That is, they are liminal in character and are taken to form on an interface between

19 Stroumsa, ‘Avicenna’s Philosophical Stories’, p. 194.

20 Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, tr. W.R. Trask (Princeton, 1988), pp. 35, 44–45 and 184. The reasoning behind Corbin’s arrangement is that the first tale concerns the narrator’s initial education as to his bearings, with the psychopomp-figure (*Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*) literally ‘orienting’ the narrator by turning him from the occident to the orient. The narrator is however told that he may not himself yet venture into these realms. The *Risālat al-ṭayr* next expresses the soul’s awakening to itself and the ‘ecstasy of mental ascent’. The bird-protagonist indeed ventures up through the various cosmological levels and into God’s presence. Finally, the figure of *Absāl* in the last narrative of the cycle ‘dies, and his mystical death is a prefiguration and an anticipation of the final ecstasy, of the journey into the Orient *without return*’: *ibid.*, p. 45.

21 Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, tr. Liadain Sherrard and Philip Sherrard (London and New York, 1996), p. 172.

the conscious and the collective unconscious, which in certain ways 'knows more'. Corbin believed such Jungian postulates to be foreshadowed in medieval Islam. He notably proposed the existence of a *mundus imaginalis*, based on the Illuminationist (*Ishrāqī*) teaching of a 'World of Image-Archetypes' (*ālam al-mithāl*).²² Corbin's *mundus imaginalis* was in turn warmly received by figures in the field of analytical psychology like James Hillman, who advocated combining 'Jung's technique with Corbin's vision'.²³ In sum, this premise of Corbin's that the imaginal world has an intrinsic, semi-autonomous reality made him distrust bids to exchange its living symbols with terms drawn from Peripatetic psychology. Such reductions, he says, ensure that 'the whole mental dramaturgy of Avicennan and Suhrawardian recitals vanishes; nothing is left but pallid "allegories"'.²⁴ He dismisses such readings as merely 'an exegesis of the texts, without exegesis of the soul'.²⁵ In addition to the role of Jungian concepts in Corbin's exegesis, one should note here the strong impact on it of his tendency to construct a 'Suhrawardian Avicennism', in germinal form, from Ibn Sina's largely lost work 'the Eastern Philosophy' (*al-Ḥikma al-mashriqiyya*). According to this understanding, alongside the sheikh's regular, broadly Peripatetic, thought he had advanced certain teachings diverging from the latter – and it is this side of his philosophy to which his symbolic narratives supposedly also bear witness. Gutas, in his article 'Avicenna's Eastern ('Oriental') Philosophy: Nature, Contents, Transmission', satisfactorily shows that 'the Eastern Philosophy' can be reconstructed as fundamentally concordant with the sheikh's established thought.

22 Corbin explicitly links his own stance on 'the world of symbols' with C.G. Jung's, and, in passing, even critiques the 'naturalistic interpretations' of Freudian psychoanalysis on Jung's behalf (Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, pp. 259–260). It has been pointed out that Corbin drew heavily on the vocabulary of Jung's Analytical Psychology and that *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* is 'by far his most Jungian work' (Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 186–187). Corbin was a regular participant at the famous Eranos conferences at Ascona in Switzerland, which were strongly influenced and guided by Jung.

23 James Hillman, 'On the Necessity of Abnormal Psychology: Ananke and Athene', in J. Hillman, ed., *Facing the Gods* (Dallas, 1980), pp. 1–38, esp. p. 33.

24 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 260.

25 Ibid., p. 167.

In his more cautious view than Corbin's, based on studying all the relevant Ibn Sīnā texts, the late Peter Heath in effect weds facets of both Corbin's and Gutas's reading. He observes that a major modern scholar of Avicennism such as A.-M. Goichon has conveyed all the rich narrative detail of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* in terms of the psychological theories found in Ibn Sīnā's formal philosophical expositions – designated his *logos* texts by Heath.²⁶ Goichon's reductive approach is, moreover, in step with the medieval Avicennan tradition of interpretation itself, for Ibn Zaylā and Jūzjānī deciphered these texts in just this way and, we note, being Ibn Sīnā's direct disciples, may capture the spirit of the author's own oral commentary, if such existed.²⁷ Heath thus grants to Gutas that these symbolic tales 'do not represent doctrines, esoteric or otherwise, substantially disparate from those embodied in Avicenna's philosophical system'.²⁸

Yet when he sums up his findings he resists demoting *muthos* beneath *logos* in gauging the former's significance within Ibn Sīnā's discourse.²⁹ Heath states: 'the investigation and depiction of the interaction between human beings and the intelligible realm stretches conventional philosophical terminology and modes of discourse to their limits. At this point, the philosopher is compelled to abandon logical demonstration and employ the creative "visionary" powers of metaphor, thus bringing into play the "likely stories" of *muthos*'.³⁰ Heath concludes that these texts

26 Amélie-Marie Goichon, *Le récit de Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān commenté par des textes d'Avicenne* (Paris, 1959). In respect to her conclusions in this study, Goichon distinctly prefigures Gutas in his opposition to Corbin's approach. The conflict of Goichon's and Corbin's readings was adjudicated in George Anawati, 'Gnose et philosophie: A propos du Récit de Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān de A.-M. Goichon', in his *Études de philosophie musulmane* (Paris, 1974), pp. 291–305. My thanks to Hermann Landolt for bringing this article to my attention.

27 Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā)* (Philadelphia, 1992), p. 48.

28 Ibid.

29 *Muthos* refers to the mythopoeic and *logos* refers to reason.

30 Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, p. 99. Heath's middle position here can be likened to that of Anawati (see note 26), who concluded that Goichon's approach, while 'parfaitement autorisée' and, indeed, 'un travail indispensable', remained centred, so to speak, on 'la cause matérielle'. Anawati continues: 'Il n'exclut pas la possibilité d'y déceler des "motifs", une orientation, une finalité proprement spirituels. Et de ce point de vue, les analyses, interprétations et reconstructions de M. Corbin, quoi qu'il en soit de caractère subjectif du

have been formulated to bring about a step-change in the reader's view-point. He ventures in his study of the *Risālat al-ṭayr* that 'the conscious plan of the text is that the narrative, with its stylistic difficulties, rhetorical obscurity, metaphorical riddles, and symbolic allegory, should serve as ... an object of meditation aiming at provoking the attentive reader into shedding one plane of awareness and adopting another.'³¹

There is no scope here to delve further into this ternary of stances on this small, but disproportionately intriguing, mythopoeic side of the Avicennan corpus. Sarah Stroumsa's findings may lastly be cited in evidence. In an article published at the time of Heath's study and thus unmentioned in it, she likewise put forward a middle view, in some ways like his, but resting on a key, if neglected, witness: Ibn Sīnā's handling of Aristotle's *Poetics* in his *Fann al-shi'r min kitāb al-shifā'* ('Poetics of the Book of the Healing'). Though not part of the central texts on logic making up Aristotle's Organon, the *Poetics* was given the respect befitting a sub-department of Aristotle's logic. Stroumsa notes that Ibn Sīnā's study is 'a commentary in the strict sense of the word'.³²

In his *Fann al-shi'r* Ibn Sīnā does not tidy over the mismatch between Aristotle's ancient Greek literary reference-points and contemporary Muslim ones, unlike other Muslim commentators on Aristotle's *Poetics* (notably Ibn Rushd), who switch Greek poetical examples for Arabic ones.³³ Rather, according to Stroumsa, Ibn Sīnā's solution was to admit the gap and himself create a genre to fill it. He thus takes up the *Poetics*' principles and generates writings informed by them in his own tongue or tongues – precisely, his philosophical stories.³⁴ The focus of Aristotle's

plus grand nombre d'entre elles, ne laissent pas d'être éminemment suggestive et, jusqu'à un certain point, valables': Anawati, 'Gnose et philosophie', pp. 304–305.

31 Peter Heath, 'Disorientation and Reorientation in Ibn Sina's Epistle of the Bird: A Reading', in Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen, ed., *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson* (Salt Lake City, 1990), pp. 163–183, esp. p. 180.

32 Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', p. 197.

33 Ibn Rushd here follows a trend going back to Fārābī's teacher, the Christian Arab philosopher Abū Bishr Mattā, who translated Aristotle's references to Greek tragedy in terms of the Arabic poetic encomium or panegyric (*madh*), and references to comedy in terms of Arabic satirical poetry (*hijā'*). L.E. Goodman, *Avicenna* (London and New York, 1992), p. 218.

34 'In writing his stories Avicenna applied principles derived from the *Poetics*, and ... aimed at a literary form that would have the effect of

Poetics was largely ancient Greek dramatic genres like tragedy. It is, then, that essential component of any drama which is termed its 'plot' (Gr. *muthos*, Ar. *qiṣṣa*) in the *Poetics*, that mainly defines Ibn Sīnā's own narrative experiments, and *qiṣṣa* is the term he reserves for them, not *shi'r* ('poetry'). It is through including this definitive component that his own experiments qualified in his eyes as poetic, and the criteria of rhyme and metre are of small concern to him.³⁵ Merely versified discourse fails to meet the criteria most decisive for Ibn Sīnā such that his own mnemonic *rajaz* verses on logic or medicine would not qualify, and likewise, versified history is precisely deemed *history*. All such texts are just 'poetry-like' writings, not poetry – a distinction also made by Aristotle.³⁶ These genres may, like poetry, involve the technique of *mimēsis* (imitation, Ar. *muḥākāt*), but it is inferior in type.

The highly focused character of poetry's subject matter is a key here. Aristotle's curious ruling that the subject of poetry does not relate to 'what has happened' but to 'what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity' is interpreted by Ibn Sīnā as referring, respectively, to the phenomenal world and the intelligible world.³⁷ In this way, Ibn Sīnā's view of what is fit to be considered as poetry in the strict sense rests on its 'philosophical' content and its focus on intelligible realities, despite the fact that the vehicle for such truths here becomes aesthetic and imaginative, not demonstrative. Though non-demonstrative, Ibn Sīnā held that poetry *could* impart assent or conviction to its audience.³⁸

the literature described by Aristotle': Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', p. 198.

35 Stroumsa nevertheless notes that one of the relevant Ibn Sīnā texts is indeed fully a poem, namely, our own *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*: 'and it is hard to imagine al-Fārābī, Ibn Bāḡga or Averroes writing true poetry' of this kind. It can also be observed that in his non-versified symbolic narratives such as *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* Ibn Sīnā does break into 'rhyming prose' (*saj*). Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', pp. 195–196.

36 *Poetics* XI, 1–3, 1451a 36–1451b 5.

37 Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', p. 201.

38 In one noteworthy formulation he says that poetry, through which 'a true saying is phrased in an unusual way', can 'impart *both* verification (*taṣdīq*) and imagination (*takhyīl*):' (Stroumsa, *ibid.*, p. 199). 'Assent' or 'conviction' is arguably a more precise translation here of *taṣdīq* than 'verification'. Compare Ismail M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle* (Leiden, 1974), p. 63.

It complemented the demonstrative method, and was by no means simply aimed at non-philosophers.³⁹

A crux in the scholarly debate on Ibn Sīnā's own understanding of how to read the symbolic narratives in his oeuvre, is that in the *Fann al-shi'r* he demotes allegory, along with historical narratives. The overt didacticism of the allegorical type of exercise is not to be compared with the mimetic discourse focused on intelligibles that defines true poetry: 'Know that the kind of *mimēsis* which appears in parables and historical narrative (*al-amthāl wa'l-qaṣaṣ*) does not belong to poetry in any way.⁴⁰ It is the prose apologue *Kalīla wa Dimna* which is the example Ibn Sīnā specifically cites here. He states that even if this fable were written in verse, it would not be 'poetry' in his pointed understanding of the term. In sum, Stroumsa suggests that Ibn Sīnā's philosophical narratives are best viewed as a kind of 'Aristotelian dramaturgy'. Though rejecting Corbin's wholesale back-projection of Illuminationist notions onto this aspect of Ibn Sīnā's writing,⁴¹ Stroumsa makes clear that the author did not want these texts read just parabolically, as cerebral challenges and philosophical games. Her view of course implies that philosopher-commentators such as Jūzjānī, Ibn Zaylā, later Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, and later still Mīr Dāmād, missed Ibn Sīnā's deeper intent in their interpretations.

The three broad stances just outlined on these Avicennian narratives could thus be summarised as proposing: (1) the monovalence of Ibn Sīnā's system of ideas and the relative insignificance he attributed to the use of the symbolic genre in his corpus; (2) the bivalence of his system and the symbolic genre's significance; and (3) the monovalence of his system and the symbolic genre's significance. In regard to the last stance it could be argued that, though untypical of Ibn Sīnā's self-expression as a philosopher, these (so to speak) prose-poems (and the true poem, the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*) had the following, hidden distinction within his wider corpus. In his view, religion and philosophy were the obverse and reverse of one coin. Both articulate the same intelligible realities and have the same salvific goal. Ibn Sīnā held that prophets

39 Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', pp. 199–200.

40 Amended from Stroumsa, *ibid.*, p. 201. The vowelless *qaṣaṣ* (= 'historical narrative') seems preferable to *qīṣaṣ* (= 'stories') here, as the latter is hard to reconcile with the fact that *qīṣṣa* ('story') is elsewhere applied as a positive term for the relevant 'poetic' genre of Ibn Sīnā's writings.

41 Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', p. 194.

paradoxically attain intelligibles more directly than philosophers but communicate them more obliquely. Their 'holy faculty of soul' (*quwwat al-nafs al-qudsiyya*) lets them reach, spontaneously, straight through to the middle terms of syllogisms and, crucially, they express these truths in rich symbols generated from the compositive imagination (*al-mutakhayyila*). Through translating truths into somatic symbols, prophets concretise them and render them operative for other humans, thus compassionately helping them towards salvation.⁴²

In short, Ibn Sīnā saw scriptural locutions as enshrining an adjusted, symbolic form of philosophical truth. In the light of this, it is noteworthy that the passage Gutas puts forward to gauge Ibn Sīnā's intent in using the symbolic method concerns, in reality, the use of this method by *prophets*, not philosophers, to communicate.⁴³ Extending this radically philosophical way of thinking about prophetic speech, Ibn Sīnā finds hidden within scripture the stock range of argument categories treated in philosophy, such as demonstration (*burhān*), rhetoric (*khiṭāba*) and dialectic (*jadāl*).⁴⁴ This is bold, but there is evidence that he also explored the other

42 As the point is put in the *Mi'rāj-nāma*: 'The condition of prophets is that they arrange every intelligible that they perceive as a sensible and put it into speech so that the community can follow that sensible. They perceive it as an intelligible, but make it sensed and concrete for the community.' (Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, p. 121). But the details of Ibn Sīnā's teaching on this are more elaborate than this quotation suggests. A prophet's compositive imagination only acts in this way in the case of particular (*juz'ī*) truths as passed down by celestial souls. The universal (*kullī*) kinds of knowledge, passed down by celestial intellects, are instead *not* subject to the action of the compositive imagination of a prophet. See M.E. Marmura, 'Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology', in W.S. McCullough, ed., *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T.J. Meek* (Toronto, 1964), pp. 159–178, especially p. 167.

43 The passage is quoted from *Kitāb al-shifā': Ilāhiyyāt* 442.10–443.12. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 300–301.

44 In the discussion of rhetoric in the *Logic of the Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā puts forward Q. 16:125 in evidence: 'Summon to your Lord's path with wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) and with beautiful exhortation (*al-maw'iza al-ḥasana*), and dispute with them (*jādilhūm*) with whatever is best ...' Ibn Sīnā holds that the Qur'ān, as promulgated by the addressee of the verse, Muḥammad, is here specified to contain: apodeictic demonstration (corresponding with 'wisdom', i.e., philosophy as such), albeit usually in the form of incomplete syllogisms or enthymemes (*damā'ir*); rhetoric depending on 'suasive' reasoning (corresponding with 'beautiful exhortation'); and lastly dialectic in the interests of criticism and polemic (corresponding with 'disputation'). Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': La Logique VIII – Rhétorique (al-Khaṭābah)*,

side of this equation: if scripture involves adjusted forms of philosophical expression, then philosophical discourse might incorporate imageable, motivational forms of expression akin to those of scripture. Ibn Sīnā had experimented along these very lines in some of his writings, exposing himself to charges of sacrilege and endangering his career. The writings in question bore the title *al-Khuṭab al-tawḥīdiyya* ('The Sermons on Divine Unity') of which only a single sermon survives.⁴⁵ The symbolic narratives – for their part, thankfully extant – arguably belong to the same broader experimental genre within the Corpus Avicennianum, amounting to a bid to develop a mythopoeic dimension to his philosophy. In their case, however, a chastened Ibn Sīnā obviously has shunned anything that smacks, stylistically, of scripture.

Despite its controversy, this bridging of discourses was a key aim of Ibn Sīnā's intellectual project, and more could be said on it.⁴⁶ For

ed. M. Salem (Cairo, 1954), pp. 1–6. Also see Goodman, *Avicenna*, p. 212 ff.

45 David C. Reisman, 'The Life and Times of Avicenna: Patronage and Learning in Medieval Islam', in P. Adamson, ed., *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 7–27, especially pp. 17–19. Basing himself on the surviving sermon (*khuṭba*) (found in M. Māyandarānī, ed., *Ḥikmat-i Bū 'Al Sīnā* (Tehran 1038/1629) and MS Nurosmāniye 4894), Reisman plays down the significance of the lost work ('merely an exercise in using classical Arabic prose to articulate Avicenna's Neoplatonic cosmology and salvationist theory of the human soul': Reisman, 'The Life and Times of Avicenna', note 41, p. 17). But one wonders why the 'Sermons on Divine Unity' had the potential to cause such a furore, if the exercise was so modest. In fact Reisman reconstructs a scenario in which the controversy haunted Ibn Sīnā for a number of years, even though Jūzjānī contrives to mention nothing about it in his biography. According to Reisman, the crisis was the probable cause for the sheikh's precipitate departure in 1015 CE from his recently gained position in Rayy as the secreary (*kātib*) of the Queen Mother, *al-Sayyida*, and his relocation at the court of the rising Būyid prince Shams al-Dawla in Hamadhān. It is likely that at the head of those bringing the charge of imitating the Qur'ān, was Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Kirmānī, a would-be fellow philosopher, whom Ibn Sīnā came to detest. Reisman also ventures that it is the basis of the petition found in Ibn Sīnā's letter to Abū Sa'd, the Būyid wazīr ('It seems reasonable to assume that Avicenna was petitioning Abū Sa'd to intervene also in a legal capacity, perhaps with regard to the charge of imitating the Qur'ān': Reisman, 'The Life and Times of Avicenna', p. 18). See Y. Michot, tr., *Ibn Sīnā. Lettre au vizir Abū Sa'd* (Beirut, 2000).

46 The Baghdad Peripatetic School generally opposed this bridging of discourses, and so Ibn Sīnā's experimentation in this area may have been one way in which he marked out his own project from that school. See, for

now, suffice to say that it had a vital epistemic corollary. The mutuality between prophetic and philosophical ways of speaking was linked to a claimed mutuality between prophetic and philosophical ways of *knowing*. If, as Ibn Sinā ventured, supreme rational acumen underlay prophecy, there was, by turns, an intuitive (*bi'l-ḥads*) mode of knowing – a lesser analogue of prophecy – at work in philosophical discovery.⁴⁷ Ibn Sinā stated that he had himself tasted epistemic prodigies of this very kind. His own earlier progress, as he explains, sometimes involved an experience of breaking through to solutions while asleep, dreaming (*fī manāmī*) – presumably, in other words, in a symbol-laden, non-discursive state.⁴⁸ Gutas has proposed that such details of his life as a thinker were mainly included in his *Sīra* for Ibn Sinā to offer himself as a model for his intuition-based epistemic theories.⁴⁹ In these aspects of his perspective he was, arguably, building a case for a deep complementarity of philosophy and religion, driven by the concerns of his medieval Islamic milieu.⁵⁰

example, the account of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* by Ibn Sinā's contemporary, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), who extensively quotes Tawḥīdī's teacher, Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī. The latter sets religion and philosophical inquiry firmly apart, and he roundly condemns the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* for their bid to combine the two. A likely reason for this hostility was the religious diversity of the Baghdad school (e.g., Sijistānī's teacher was the Christian Yaḥyā b. 'Adī, and possibly also Ibn Yūnus), which predisposed it to maintain the strict secularity of philosophy, and isolate it from the discourse of any given faith. See Joel L. Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and his Circle* (Leiden, 1986), pp. 232 ff. Also see Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1992), pp. 168–174. My thanks to Omar Alí-de-Unzaga for bringing these references to my attention.

47 Defusing any blasphemous implication of this epistemic accommodation, Ibn Sinā stresses that prophethood is wholly rare and of unique authority. For instance, he says: 'If someone combines theoretical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-naẓariyya*) with justice, he is indeed a fortunate man. And whoever, in addition to this, wins the prophetic qualities, becomes almost a human god (*kāda an yaṣīra rabban insāniyyan*). Worship of him, after the worship of God, becomes almost allowed (*wa kāda an tuḥilla 'ibādatuhu ba'da 'Llāhi ta'ālā*). He is indeed the world's earthly master and God's deputy in it.' *Al-Shifā': Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 455.

48 'Whenever sleep seized me I would see those very problems in my dream; and many questions became clear to me in my sleep': Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, p. 31.

49 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 173.

50 On their mutuality in Ibn Sinā's thought, see Fazlur Rahman,

Ibn Sīnā's Symbolic Narratives

The *Risālat al-ṭayr*

The 'Epistle of the Bird' constitutes a valuable sidelight on our own *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*, more fully treating the same ideas and symbolic motifs as are alluded to in it. In both allegories the soul is signified by a bird and the location of the action is a mountain. The Epistle starts with this originally free bird joining a flock, only to be caught with the other birds by hunters. They all begin trying to flee but, finding they cannot, they give up hope of their erstwhile freedom and even wholly forget it. The bird's earlier freedom and forgetting of it, with the core message that a process of *anamnēsis*, or recollection, is the prerequisite for the bird's (i.e., the soul's) salvation, is strikingly shared with the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*, as is the premise that the soul pre-exists its state of embodiment. 'Recollection' could, at a stretch, be a trope for awakening to some new-fledged understanding of the higher, intelligible realm, but the outward sense of *both* texts is more in step with Platonic, not Aristotelian, noetics.

In the *Risālat al-ṭayr* deliverance only begins when the avian narrator notices escapees from the nets and cages, so 'they made me remember what I had been made to forget (*fa-dhakkaratnī mā kuntu unsituhu*), and made loathsome that to which I had grown accustomed.'⁵¹ The escapees fly along with their snares still visible, clinging to their legs – referring to the on-going trammels of material existence, even for those awakened to philosophical contemplation of the higher intelligible world, and thereby *already*, in principle, freed: 'these [snares] did not burden them, for deliverance filled them with determination (*fa-tu'aṣṣibuhā al-naḥāt*). Nor did the birds feel them, for life had become clear for them (*fa-taṣṣfu la-hā al-ḥayāt*).'⁵² The escapees now in turn help the narrator free himself from his cage, and he flies up the mountain with them, only to be confronted by greater and greater peaks beyond them – eight in

Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy (Chicago and London, 1958), esp. Chapter 2, p. 30 ff. Also see Marmura, 'Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology'.

51 Heath, 'Disorientation and Reorientation in Ibn Sina's Epistle of the Bird', p. 165. For the Arabic, see August F. Mehren, ed., '*Risālat al-ṭayr*', in his *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne* (Amsterdam, 1979), 2nd fascicule, p. 44 (Arabic).

52 Heath, 'Disorientation and Reorientation', p. 165. Mehren, '*Risālat al-ṭayr*', 2nd fascicule, p. 44 (Arabic).

all. If we recall that the birds have already mounted a first peak from the lowest level where they were entrapped, we reach the tally of ten – that is, the ten nested spheres which form the architecture of Ibn Sīnā's Ptolemaic cosmos. After pausing for rest to enjoy the exquisite environment of the seventh peak whose forms 'filled our ears with rapturous melodies and heartrending songs', they press on to the eighth peak where they meet and mingle with perfect, beneficent birds – apparently standing for a summit of creaturely perfection identifiable with angels. These, however, let it be known that the quest is not yet over and that lying beyond their peak is an entire city, where the 'Greatest King' rules.

The birds fly on as directed, and passing through the palace courtyards 'whose vastness description does not encompass', a veil is raised and their eyes at last behold the King of whom Ibn Sīnā evocatively says: 'in his beauty, he is all a Face; in his generosity, all a Hand' (*kulluhu li-ḥusnihi wajhun wa li-jūdihi yadun*).⁵³ Listening to their story, the King mysteriously explains that only the hunters themselves can undo the snares still attached to the birds' legs. He therefore promises to send the hunters his own messenger who will demand of them that they fully release the birds from the snares still on them. The hunters surely represent the terrestrial elements which temporarily imprison the bird of the soul in its earthly embodiment. Heath thus states insightfully that the King's emissary here is Death personified: 'After reaching an advanced state of spiritual progress, one sees Death as an ally whose arrival is welcomed rather than an enemy whose onslaught against bodily matter is feared or hated. This is because only Death can fully and finally release the soul from material bondage.'⁵⁴

53 As per the translation given by Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, p. 99, rather than Heath, 'Disorientation and Reorientation', p. 167. For the Arabic, see Mehren, 'Risālat al-ṭayr', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 2nd fascicule, p. 47 (Arabic).

54 Heath, 'Disorientation and Reorientation', p. 176. In this reading of the symbolism Heath sides with Mehren (for whom the messenger is 'l'ange de la mort') and rejects Corbin's reading as 'erroneous', that the King's messenger is the Active Intellect. Ibid., p. 182, note 18, referring to F. Mehren, *Traité mystiques d'Avicenne*, 2nd fascicule, p. 26 and p. 31, note 1 (French); and Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, pp. 194–195.

Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān

Amongst Ibn Sīnā's allegories *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* marks his fullest attempt to represent his cosmological and psychological system in a narrative with somatic imagery. The anonymous narrator, who stands for the rational soul, is visiting a garden with three friends. There he meets the charismatic old man whose name the tale bears, which can be translated as 'Alive, son of Awake' (rendered by Corbin with the Latin 'Vivens filius Vigilantis', that is, 'the living one, son of the watchful one'). The sage explains that his 'profession is to be forever journeying, to travel about the universe so that I may know all its conditions ... since my journey embraces the whole circle of it, it is as if all the horizons of all the climes were brought together before me.'⁵⁵ He has gained the keys to all knowledge (*mafātīḥ al-'ulūm kullihā*) through his father, the 'watcher' or 'awakened one', towards whom he is ever facing (*wajhī ilā abī*). Assuming that Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān himself personifies the Active Intellect, his father stands for the first or Universal Intellect.⁵⁶ Despite the ease with which these figures can be matched with the elements of Avicennan noetics, to view Ḥayy as *no more* than an amusing way of representing the Active Intellect is contradicted by an odd detail recorded elsewhere in the philosopher's oeuvre: Ibn Sīnā mentions in passing that this figure played a role in his inner life and records an experience of his apparition approaching him to advise him. The context is evidently a recollection and not fictive.⁵⁷

55 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, pp. 137–138.

56 Alternatively, but less likely, the Active Intellect's 'father' is its immediate superior within the series of celestial intellects.

57 Though Corbin only alludes to this in a footnote, it lends weight to his maximalist approach to Ibn Sīnā's allegories, in terms of which Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān is an archetype of the unconscious, in keeping with Jung's theories. Corbin specifically equates Ḥayy (surprisingly, *not* with the *senex* or 'old sage' archetype, but) with the *puer aeternus* or 'eternal youth' archetype explored by Jung in 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype', in C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (New York and London, 1959), and presents him as Ibn Sīnā's *spiritus rector* ('ruling spirit'). Quoting from Ibn Sīnā's *Risālat al-qadar*, Corbin describes an occasion when Ibn Sīnā and a friend from Isfahan are arguing about the intractable subject of predestination, and they reach an impasse. It is in the ensuing silence, 'on the threshold of inmost consciousness, that the person of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān suddenly presents itself. "Lo, in the distance a silhouette [reading *shabḥ* for *shaykh* in the Ms] showed itself. I soon discerned

Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān strikes the anonymous narrator of our symbolic story with his grasp of physiognomy (*‘ilm al-firāsa*). He reveals that he sees that the narrator’s traits are wholesome, yet his nature is impressionable. He warns him that his friends might ruin him, as one is prone to lie (‘he sullies truth with error’), another to violence (‘as if a bereaved lion’), and the third to lechery (‘like a starving pig turned loose on the dungheap’).⁵⁸ The narrator is hereafter on his guard against their influence. If the ‘dangerous friends’ are matched with the terms of Avicennan psychology, they personify the potential bar to the rational soul’s development, found, respectively, in the ambiguous management by the *sensus communis* (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*) of percepts yielded by the five senses, and then the so-called irascible appetite (*ghaḍabiyya*) and concupiscent appetite (*shawqiyya*) which drive bodily movement in relation to the lower ‘animal soul’, namely the two impulses which would now be termed aggression and libido. Ḥayy shows stratagems to master them by using their *own* powers to moderate each other’s behaviour. The concupiscent impulse can be dominated by the aggressive one, or if needed, the aggressive one can be pacified by the ‘seduction of his gentle and caressing companion’. Nor, Ḥayy advises, should the narrator shun *all* that the talkative, but uncandid, friend says but he should learn to sift it: ‘for, in it all, there cannot but be something to be received and investigated, something whose truth it is worthwhile to realize.’⁵⁹ When the narrator next begs to launch out, like Ḥayy, into the world’s climes, Ḥayy answers that he can never do so before ‘separation [from your companions] comes to be your happy lot’ (*yus’iduka al-tafarrud*) and ‘the moment comes when you will break with them wholly’ (*ḥattā ya’tī la-ka an tatawallā bar’ataka minhum*).⁶⁰

its aspect. By God, I said, that silhouette has all the appearance of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān!” Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān having thus appeared in the landscape of helpless consciousness, he alone must be left to discourse on a subject that leaves those who argue impotent.’ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 154. Also see Mehren, ‘*Risālat al-qadar*’, in *Traité Mystiques d’Avicenne*, 4th fascicule, p. 1 (Arabic).

58 Mehren, ‘*Risālat al-qadar*’, in *Traité Mystiques d’Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, pp. 4–5 (Arabic). Compare Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 139.

59 Corbin, *Avicenna*, p. 140.

60 Ibid., p. 141. The second statement implies that separation from the dubious companions does not simply depend on bodily death but on the

This blunt interdiction is not without poignancy. Both Jūzjānī's Biography and the Longer Bibliography⁶¹ state that Ibn Sinā composed his *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* while he was kept prisoner on the orders of the Kurdish wazir Tāj al-Mulk in the fortress of Fardajān outside Hamadhān, only to be freed after four months in the course of 414/1023.⁶² Imprisonment and exile are not only a strong theme in *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* but also in the *Risālat al-ṭayr* and the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*.⁶³ The theme is, however, presented in tandem with the consoling promise that deliverance of a kind is attainable through philosophical contemplation. Whereas existential freedom must wait, intellectual release is feasible immediately.

Thus, though Ḥayy (the personification of intellectual liberation) states that the earth-bound narrator is as yet barred from escape, he yet transmits direct information to him on all the climes to which he himself has free access. The middle ones, between the West and the East, are familiar, but the West and East in themselves are only known to an elect. This elect has gained the power to go beyond all normal, natural barriers and enter these realms by bathing in, and drinking from, a stream gurgling close to the motionless Spring of Life (*al-ighṭisālu bi-ʿaynin kharrāratin fī jiwāri ʿayni ʾl-ḥayawān al-rākida*).⁶⁴ Through this immersion, the wayfarer even 'climbs Mount Qāf without difficulty, and its guards cannot fling him down into the abysses of hell ... he

narrator's choice. Another translation might be: 'Till it comes to you to undertake to rid yourself of them.' For the Arabic, see Mehren, '*Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān*', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 7. Note that Corbin's translation is of a Persian version, possibly by Ibn Sinā's student Ibn Zaylā. The Persian text is mostly a metaphor of the Arabic.

61 Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sinā*, pp. 91–113.

62 The reason given for this period of imprisonment was that Ibn Sinā's secret correspondence with the rival ruler in Iṣfahān, 'Alā' al-Dawla, was discovered. To judge from the verse Ibn Sinā is quoted as having composed in this situation, it was serious enough for him to doubt whether he would get out alive: 'As you can see, my going in [to Faradajān] is a certainty/And all the doubt is on the point of getting out.' Ibid., pp. 58–61, and 96–97.

63 Corbin suggests that it is 'possible or probable' that the *Risālat al-ṭayr* was also composed by Ibn Sinā while incarcerated in Fardajān. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 184.

64 Mehren, '*Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān*', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 8.

becomes so light that he can walk on water [and] can climb the highest peaks without weariness.⁶⁵ Those who go, in this way, into all orders of reality, accessing astronomical zeniths and mastering the elements, are surely none other than philosophy's adepts. The baptism in the life-giving spring-water, through which they gain their powers, must therefore signify their initiation into philosophy and its disciplines.⁶⁶

Ḥayy next speaks of the West's climes. The surreal details of these landscapes and their inhabitants seem unintelligible, till it is noticed that there is a chain of ten. The landscapes depict Ptolemaic cosmology, describing its architectonics in dreamlike images: a vast map of the material aspect of the universe. First of all, the settlers in the lowest clime, by feeding on its grass and water, get coverings 'strange to their Form' (*ghashiyat-hu ghawāshin gharibatun min šuwarihim*).⁶⁷ A human there might gain the hide of some four-legged creature and come to be covered in thick vegetation – symbolising our own sublunary realm, where matter's domination of form is strongest. The neighbouring

65 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 142.

66 Corbin accepts the interpretation in the commentary appended to his study, probably by Ibn Sina's direct disciple Jūzjānī (ibid., p. 129), that the spring is a metaphor for logic. He adds: 'But this is on an express condition that safeguards instead of degrading symbolic perception: it is Logic that must be raised to the horizon of this symbolic perception' (ibid., p. 160). Corbin's warning to treat cut-and-dried interpretations of the symbolism as a pitfall seems borne out when Ḥayy 'explains the spring more fully'. In his description its waters are said to spread over an isthmoid barrier (*barzakh*) located in the circumpolar darkness. If that darkness is fearlessly entered, one meets with a boundless, light-filled space within which the spring may be found. The traveller hereby reaches 'one of the two circumscriptions by which this world is intersected' (ibid., p. 142). This description alludes to facts of the earth's physical geography and the diurnal cycle at the poles, with their extremes of 24 hours of darkness and sunlight in the course of the solar year. On the symbolic level, however, the imagery relates to hylomorphism – the doctrine of a syzygy of matter and form, foundational to the classic Peripatetic worldview. The dark West stands for the purely hylic realm and the bright East stands for the purely morphic realm. The spring of wisdom lies at the ideal, polar convergence-point of East and West. Ibn Sina's detail that this realm is, at first, wholly dark but *then* wholly light, may hint that the luminosity of form is only to be reached by delving boldly into the obscurity of matter, i.e., the philosopher's route to the intelligible is, initially, *through* the perceptible.

67 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 143. Mehren, 'Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān', in *Traité des Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 9.

clime (i.e., the first celestial sphere) is the foundation of the heavens and borrows its light from a foreign source (meaning the Moon).

Despite Ibn Sīnā's refutation of astrology (*al-Risāla fī ibtāl aḥkām al-nujūm*), the symbolism which he now takes up is astrological. The nature of different planetary influences, as postulated by astrologers, is assumed. The next clime's denizens love the arts of writing and arcane sciences like astrology and magic (alluding to Mercury, the second sphere). The beautiful denizens of the next clime love festivity and music, and are ruled by a woman (namely, Venus, the third sphere). The inhabitants of the next clime are tall and fair, and greatly benefit what is far but harm what is near (meaning the influence of the Sun, the fourth sphere). The very fierce dwellers in the next clime are given to killing and mutilating, though the red individual who rules them is sometimes himself ruled, overwhelmed by his passion for the queen of the clime previous to the one just mentioned (describing the traits of Mars, the fifth sphere). The temperate, wise and pious denizens of the next clime are of 'extraordinary beauty and brightness' and extend friendship and compassion to both those near and far from them (representing the influence of the sixth sphere, Jupiter). Those who live in the next clime have thoughts which are abstruse and tend to evil, but if they lean instead to goodness, 'they go to its utmost extreme' (describing Saturnine traits, i.e., those of the seventh sphere). The identification of the next clime with the Sphere of the Zodiac, or eighth sphere, is obvious given that 'it is divided into 12 regions, which contain 28 stations. No group goes up to occupy the station of another [group] except when the group preceding it has withdrawn from its dwelling; then it hastens to replace it.'⁶⁸ Finally, the starless, ninth, heaven, or Sphere of Spheres, is virtually boundless and contains no cities. Its exclusive inhabitants are spiritual angels (*al-rūḥāniyyūn min al-malā'ika*) and 'from it the divine imperative and destiny descend upon all who occupy the degrees below' (*minhu yanzilu 'alā man yalihā al-amru wa 'l-qadar*).⁶⁹

Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān's adumbration of the East likewise bristles with strange detail. Since the East stands for the whole realm of form, it seems that all the involved symbols pertain to 'soul' (understood in the

68 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 145.

69 Mehren, 'Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 13.

Aristotelian tradition as the *form* of the body). Thus the very first climes which Ḥayy describes represent the lowest part of the soul's hierarchy on earth, which extends up to the human soul.⁷⁰ The next set of symbols he puts forward, such as different kinds of demonic troop, depicts elements *internal* to the human psyche according to Avicennan psychology.⁷¹ The account then shifts up to the souls and intellects of the celestial spheres. But these are not immediately accessible: it is in ridding themselves of the demonic troops' influence that some individuals manage to move into the neighbourhood just beyond. Here the terrestrial angels (*al-malā'ika al-arḍiyya*) live, guided and purified by whom these individuals may go on to attain 'the course of the excellent spiritual beings' (*sayr al-ṭayyibīn min al-rūḥāniyyīn*).⁷²

70 To begin with, he gives symbols of the four elements (earth, water, air and fire): 'a vast desert, a flooding sea, imprisoned winds, a raging fire.' Next a clime where these elements are found together with minerals; next a clime where the elements and minerals are found with plant life; then a clime where all these occur with animal life; and finally a clime where all the above are found with human life.

71 Ḥayy thus states that 'the Devil has two troops' (*fa-inna li'l-shayṭān qarnayn*), of which the left one marches and the right one flies. The marchers on the left themselves comprise two quarrelling tribes, the one as feral as beasts of prey and the other as brutish as cattle (Mehren, '*Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān*', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 15). These, then, represent the aforementioned impulses of aggression and libido, i.e., the irascible and concupiscent appetites of Avicennan psychology. The flyers on the right, for their part, resemble Boschian figments, and Ibn Sinā indeed says: 'One would almost think that the composite figures (*al-tamāthil al-mukhtalifa*) that painters represent come from this clime!' (Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 146). This alludes to the faculty of the imagination, and in particular the compositive imagination, whose activity concerns re-combining sensible images stored in the retentive imagination. Next, five closely-guarded thoroughfares are said to lead into this realm of imagination on the right side of the easterly direction. The thoroughfares evidently stand for the five external senses. Despite their bulwarks and guards, the two kinds of demon from the left side of the easterly direction sometimes do infiltrate these routes, and 'insinuate themselves into the inmost hearts [of humans] with their breath'. Thus a feral type of marcher-demon 'nourishes hatred in the secrecy of [a human's] heart; it urges him to oppress and destroy', whereas a bovine marcher-demon 'never leaves off talking secretly to a man, beautifying sins, unworthy acts, and scoundrelly behaviour' (ibid., p. 147).

72 Mehren, '*Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān*', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 17.

These angels are presented by Ḥayy in traditional religious imagery, as descending and ascending divine functionaries, grouped to the left and right. The ones on the left obey and act (*mu'tamira 'ammāla*) whereas the ones on the right know and command (*'allāma ammāra*).⁷³ The nethermost representatives of these kinds of angel, which can come into contact with earthly individuals, are explicitly equated by Ḥayy with the angels known from Islamic traditions as the *ḥāfiẓān* (the 'two guardians').⁷⁴ However, the Persian commentator (probably Jūzjānī) is clear that Ibn Sīnā is alluding by these angels on the left and right to the key dyad of his noetics known as the practical intellect (*khirad-i kārkun*) and the theoretical intellect (*khirad-i dānā*).⁷⁵ The former safeguards the human individual's body and its interests (including ethical and social issues), while the latter is the subject of Ibn Sīnā's elaborate noetics (involving stages of progressive actualisation from the potential intellect to the intellect *in habitu*, the actual intellect, the acquired intellect, and then the 'prophetic' intellect). These are the lowest links extending down from the series of celestial souls and intellects, also visualised here as 'angels'. The knowing commanders on the right are the celestial intellects, 'spiritual angels denuded [of matter]', which Ibn Sīnā sometimes terms the Cherubim (*al-karrūbiyyūn*).⁷⁶ The obedient doers on the left are the celestial souls, which Ibn Sīnā sometimes calls the 'active angels' (*al-malā'ika al-'amala*).⁷⁷

73 Ibid., p. 18.

74 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 148. The *ḥāfiẓān* are the two angels said to accompany individuals throughout their time on earth. See e.g., Q. 50:17–27, and Şuyūṭī, *al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik*, ḥadīth no. 312–406, as cited in S.R. Burge, *Angels in Islam* (London and New York, 2012), pp. 72–73.

75 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 360. Ḥayy's designation of the left-side angels as *'ammāla* (actors) and the right-side angels as *'allāma* (knowers) reflects the fact that the practical intellect is sometimes called *al-'aql al-'āmil* and the theoretical (or 'speculative') intellect is sometimes called *al-'aql al-'ālīm*.

76 Ibn Sīnā, *Tiś rasā'il* (Istanbul, 1881), pp. 113–114.

77 Celestial souls and the practical intellect are congeneric, and celestial intellects and the theoretical intellect are congeneric. Celestial souls transmit particular truths to the practical intellect (which receives them with the help of the compositive imagination), and celestial intellects transmit universal truths to the theoretical intellect. See Dimitri Gutas, 'Imagination and Transcendental Knowledge in Avicenna', in J.E.

Ascending in this way there is finally an assurance that the individual may find 'an egress to what is beyond the celestial spheres' (*sabīlun khalaṣa ilā mā warā'a 'l-samā'i khulūṣan*). Here one may glimpse beings, 'the posterity of the primordial creation' (*dhuriyyat al-khalqī 'l-aqdam*), ranked according to their degree of intimacy with the King, who in Himself 'escapes the power of the clever to bestow qualifications'. The formulation is repeated from the *Risālat al-ṭayr*: 'He is all a face by His beauty, all a hand by His generosity' (*kulluhu li-ḥusnihi wajhun wa li-jūdihi yadun*).⁷⁸ His higher intimates have been granted 'to contemplate the face of the King in unbroken continuity' (*al-naẓar ilā wajhi 'l-maliki wiṣālan lā faṣāla fihi*), and have 'the privilege of being the final term to which all knowledge refers'.⁷⁹ The King's address (*khiṭāb*) comes to them through their 'father', who is nearest in rank to the King. The meaning here is clearly the mediating role of the First Intellect, the ontological basis of all the other celestial intellects, who are his 'children' (*awlād*).

Salāmān wa Absāl

The tragic allegory of Salāmān and Absāl is more narrowly focused on the soul's internal developmental struggle than *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*. Its symbolism is narrowly psychological rather than cosmological, and is restricted to the soul's task within the confines of its earthly life.⁸⁰ Through their mother, Prince Salāmān is Absāl's older half-brother. Absāl grows up to be a paragon of inward and outward beauty and his brother's wife becomes obsessed by him. She convinces Salāmān to arrange Absāl's marriage to her own sister but in the darkness of the wedding night she takes her place beside the groom. A storm is gathering and lightning suddenly reveals her true identity to the horrified Absāl. To avoid her he throws himself into a warrior's life, leading his older brother's army to all-round triumph, in both the West and East.

Montgomery, ed., *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank* (Leuven, Paris and Dudley MA, 2006), pp. 337–354.

⁷⁸ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 150. Mehren, 'Risālat Ḥayy bin Yaqzān', in *Traité Mystiques d'Avicenne*, 1st fascicule, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 149.

⁸⁰ Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Ibn Sīnā*, p. 95, terms it a psychomachia.

But on his return he finds his sister-in-law's unwelcome obsession undiminished. In a subsequent battle, the scorned woman bribes the other officers to mutiny, and Absāl is left almost dead. He escapes with his life through the loving attentions of a maternal wild animal (*murđī'a min ḥayawānāti 'l-waḥsh*) who suckles him (*fa-alqamat-hu ḥalamata thadyihā*). On returning to the court, he discovers that his brother has almost been overwhelmed by foes but Absāl defeats them and thus saves the realm. Still bent on destroying him, his sister-in-law finally bribes the cook and official 'taster' (*tā'im*) to kill Absāl with poison, and they succeed. The distraught Salāmān, having had enough of kingship, becomes a recluse. Communing deeply and confiding in God (*nājā rabbahu*), he is presently shown his wife's true nature and what she has done. Incensed, he obliges her, the cook and the taster to take the very poison by which they murdered his beloved younger brother.⁸¹

The allegory's stock philosophical interpretation reads Salāmān's wife as the animal soul with its drives which are by turns desirous and aggressive, and the hero Absāl as the acquired intellect. Absāl's intended, rightful bride signifies the practical intellect, which the animal soul strives to usurp. Escaping her, Absāl masters the West (the realm of sensibilia) and the East (the realm of intelligibilia), and brings their booty back to his brother Salāmān, symbol of the rational soul. The minutiae can thus all be worked out according to Avicennan psychology, such that even the wild creature that succours Absāl and revives him signifies the immaterial intellects and their intelligible emanations. The cook and taster who serve the wife's aims and end by destroying Absāl, are the animal soul's appetites, counteracting the development and survival of intellect in humans. Salāmān's unmasking and execution of his wife and her assistants, and his culminating act of renunciation, convey an ideal of contemplative asceticism – a final, full rejection of the animal soul and absorption in higher, intelligible realities. Although Ibn Sīnā frames the remedy in harsher terms here than in *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, its thrust is similar. In *Ḥayy* the obstructive elements in the animal soul are neutralised by playing them

81 For Ṭūsī's condensed version see Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihāt* with Ṭūsī's and Taḥṭānī's commentary, vol 3, pp. 367–368. Ṭūsī's commentary also provides the reader with a synopsis of the 'Hermeticist' version (pp. 365–367). For a summary and discussion, see Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, pp. 94–96.

off against each other,⁸² whereas in *Salāmān wa Absāl* they are actually killed off by turning their own toxic products against them.

The *Mi'rāj-nāma*

The *Mi'rāj-nāma*, for its part, is a Persian-language philosophical allegoresis of the Prophet Muḥammad's heavenly ascension.⁸³ Heath has claimed that though its authenticity is in question, the evidence either way is inconclusive and 'one may in fact have to resort to creating a category of Avicennian writings that falls between those writings that are incontrovertibly authentic and those that are demonstrably pseudonymous.'⁸⁴ The text is, minimally, a highly detailed application of Avicennian ideas on psychology and cosmology to that most central model of spiritual ascent and transcendence in Islamic culture – Muḥammad's journey through the heavens on the hybrid steed, Burāq, into God's presence. The opening lines of the *Mi'rāj-nāma* present it as an exercise in providing a methodical explanation founded on reason

82 See above p. 19.

83 Allegoresis, as distinct from allegory, is defined as 'the interpretation of *already existing texts* according to extrinsic philosophical or dogmatic criteria': Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, p. 7. Italics mine.

84 Ibid., p. 201. The work's authenticity is put in doubt by its absence from the Shorter Bibliography (in Jūzjānī's *Sīrat al-shaykh al-ra'īs*) and Longer Bibliography (anonymous) of Ibn Sīnā's works. Some modern scholars hold that the text's true author was Muẓaffar Maṣṣūr b. Ardashīr 'Ibādī (d. 547/1152), the composer of the *Ṣūfī-nāma*, who is however described as a faithful 'adherent of Ibn Sīnā'. Evidence suggesting (but by no means proving) Ibn Sīnā's own authorship of the *Mi'rāj-nāma* is Maḥdī Bayānī's discovery of the earliest manuscript of it, namely Sanā 219 [6:481], Tehran (Munzavī 7866), dated 584/1188. The Ms, already attributing the work to Ibn Sīnā, was personally transcribed by the famous Ash'arite theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī, d. 606/1209). (Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, p. 203.) Māyil-Heravī, whose critical edition is the basis of Heath's translation, argues that its author was Ibn Sīnā on the basis of a manuscript of the *Majma' al-baḥrayn* by Shams al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Abarqūhī (fl. end 7th/13th century), who introduces his book by explaining that a student of his gave him Ibn Sīnā's *Mi'rāj-nāma* and asked him to render it more understandable by way of a paraphrase (Ibn Sīnā, *Mi'rāj-nāma*, ed. N. Māyil-Heravī, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1366 Sh), p. 72). A close comparison of his *Majma' al-baḥrayn* and the text of the *Mi'rāj-nāma* indicates that the content is indeed substantially identical. Shokoufeh Taghi, *The Two Wings of Wisdom: Mysticism and Philosophy in the Risālat uṭ-ṭair of Ibn Sina* (Uppsala, 2000), pp. 180–186.

(*bar ʔarīq-i ma'qūl*) of this focal religious narrative, in response to the entreaties of an unnamed friend, and with the blessing of Ibn Sīnā's last great royal patron, the ruler of Iṣfahān, 'Alā' al-Dawla b. Kākūya (d. 433/1041). Though the Persian text's terms seem looser than those of the sheikh's Arabic expositions, the details arguably match well.

The whole first part goes over the salient ideas in Ibn Sīnā's psychological theory,⁸⁵ and has a medical turn befitting the alleged author, who was possibly the greatest Galenic medical theorist of all. More quotations from the Qur'an and *ḥadīths* are enlisted than might be expected in Ibn Sīnā's writings, attributable, no doubt, to the strongly religious subject matter of the interpretation. The first part ends with a plea to keep the text from the unworthy, like the plea for withholding (*ḍann*) found in Ibn Sīnā texts of unquestioned authenticity, notably the *Ishārāt*. There then begins the text's main discussion consisting of a thoroughgoing philosophical commentary on the *Mi'rāj*. The Prophet's initial slumber, for instance, is said to allude to the sleep of the senses; the house which the archangel Gabriel enters and lights up stands for the rational soul whose faculties are renewed through union with 'the Holy Spirit in the form of the (divine) Command'; the Prophet's following after Gabriel represents turning away from the world of sensibilia and pursuing the intelligible emanation back to the Active Intellect, which is symbolised by the unearthly steed, Burāq. The animal's traits are all viewed as philosophically meaningful: her intermediate size between an ass and a horse refers to how the Active Intellect is more than the human intellect but less than the First Intellect; her human face refers to the Active Intellect's character as an interface with humanity which it compassionately instructs with 'the same compassion for humans that a genus has for its species'; her reach (lit. her 'length in arm and leg') refers to the Intellect's far-reaching beneficence; her shying when mounted refers to the difficulty of coming into contact with the Active Intellect due to continuing bodily concerns; the lone traveller's anxious call to the Prophet to stop as he first leaves Mecca on Burāq (at least, in this version of the *Mi'rāj*) stands for the dubious intrusions of the estimative faculty (*wahm*), still asserting itself after the withdrawal from external sense impressions; likewise, the alluring woman who tries (again, in this

85 Amounting to 11 out of the 27 pages of Heath's translation in *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, pp. 111–138.

version of the *Mi'rāj*) to distract the Prophet from his journey but is firmly countered by Gabriel, is the faculty of imagination (*khayāl*).

As the Prophet ascends the heavens, each stage is tightly portrayed in terms of the Ptolemaic spheres, so the given angel of each level is explained in a manner combining notions of astrological influence and Muslim religion. For instance the angel of the fifth level who is the ordained proprietor of Hell, tormenting sinners, is identified with the violent planet Mars, whereas the ever-praising angel of the sixth is said to be Jupiter, that 'most auspicious of the planets' which 'rules over folk of rectitude, piety, and knowledge'. Ascending to the furthest confines of the universe, before the 'Lote Tree of the Far Boundary' [Q. 53:15], there is found a luminous world where spiritual angels do nothing but praise God in 'specified oratories from which they never depart'. The Avicennan commentary identifies this as a reference to the 12 houses of the zodiac, while the actual 'Lote Tree, larger than all things, roots above and branches below' is identified as the Sphere of Spheres.

Beyond this summit of the physical universe, the Prophet encounters (amongst other things) an ocean without shore from which an angel pours out water into a vast river, which conveys it to all places below. Even Corbin has 'no difficulty in here reading, with the commentator [i.e., pseudo-Avicenna] a symbol of the First Intelligence, eternal creation of the First Being, and first mediator of the divine effusion of being ...'⁸⁶ If the unbounded ocean is the First Intellect, then the river flowing from it is interpreted to mean the First Soul – that of the Sphere of Spheres. The prophetic saying is quoted here, according to which 'The first thing God created was the intelligence',⁸⁷ and in step with the distinctions of Ibn Sīnā's eternalist cosmology, this *ḥadīth* is interpreted to mean that the said Intellect is 'first' in the sense of the uppermost in rank, not the earliest in time, 'for that substance does not admit a temporal beginning'.⁸⁸

The final, climactic meeting with God is fully glossed in keeping with Ibn Sīnā's theology, in terms of the absolute simplicity of the Necessary

86 Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 175.

87 Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *al-Radd 'ala'l-manṭiqiyyīn* (Lahore, 1396/1976), p. 196.

88 Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, p. 134. The implicit reference here is to Ibn Sīnā's distinction between temporal inception (*al-ḥudūth bi'l-zamān*) and essential inception (*al-ḥudūth bi'l-dhāt*).

Existent, who is also the Unmoved Mover of all else. Thus, the meaning of the Prophet's being lastly borne 'to a world in which I saw nothing like what I had seen in this world', is that the Necessary Existent is 'neither body nor substance ... it is unique in purity ... the multiplicity of number does not exist in its unicity [*yagānagī*]'. When the Prophet experiences only tranquillity (*farāghat*) in God's presence, this means 'In that Presence, there is no movement [*ḥarakat*]. Movement is change in an existent, either by being acted upon in corporeal quantity and quality, or (by moving) from place to place ...'⁸⁹ All things that are moved need a mover. But movement is not admissible for it. The Necessary Existent is that which is the mover of all things.⁹⁰ However, the commentary does not just reduce the details of the Prophet's beatific vision in this way to the terms of Avicennan philosophical theology. The meeting is also spoken of as spiritual ecstasy (*ladhdhat-i rūḥānī*): 'he attained pleasure (*ladhdhat*) the like of which he had never experienced.'⁹¹ Moreover, when Muḥammad is bidden 'Praise!' the commentary states that human speech is objectively unfit to extol the Necessary Being. This is not only due to its phonic basis but also, crucially, the logical categories from which human language cannot free itself: 'This type of [linguistic] praise is only connected with particulars or universals, but it is not appropriate for the Necessary Existent, which is neither a universal nor a particular... The Necessary Existent is Single, One, and Incomparable, so the praise of a human is not concordant with it.'⁹² In the staunchly rational ambit of Avicennan thought, this ruling that God is not just beyond human speech but also reason, is noteworthy. The commentary ends with the Prophet's return to his earthly home 'where the bed clothes were still warm', which is read as meaning that, because the journey was strictly intellectual (*fikrī*), involving an intellectual perception of 'the order of existents until the Necessary Existent', it was not subject to normal constraints of time, so 'when cognition [*tafakkur*] was complete, he returned to himself. No time had passed.'⁹³

A remarkable unity can be seen in all the Avicennan texts sketched above. They dramatise the rational soul's embodied predicament

89 The list covers kinds of motion, according to Aristotle, but omits substantial motion.

90 Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, pp. 135–136.

91 Ibid., p. 137.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid., p. 138.

through ‘polysemous referential matrices’ and they depict its scope for salvation, the journey to which they map.⁹⁴ Making a motific composite from the *Risālat al-tayr*, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, *Salāmān wa Absāl* and the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*, Heath marks out six moments in ‘Avicenna’s configuration of this psychic journey’: ‘(1) the soul’s descent into corporeal amnesia, (2) its awakening to an awareness of the existence of the spiritual realm of Intellect and of its own rightful place in this realm, (3) the struggle that ensues between the material and spiritual souls for control of the psychic ego, (4) the soul’s eventual deliverance from the controlling bonds of matter and its progressive return toward its final goal of intellectual realisation, (5) its temporary return to participation in the world of matter, and (6) its final release, through death, from the material domain and subsequent eternal residence in the realm of Intellect.’⁹⁵ This list unifies the key episodes symbolised in Ibn Sīnā’s several narratives, whose individual focus of course varies and may omit given episodes. For instance *Salāmān wa Absāl*, which is uniquely tragic in character, has a symbolism mainly to do with the psychic struggle under (3). But amalgamating the content of these texts in this way brings home their striking thematic cohesion. Though their imagery enfolds many fields of Avicennan thought, from logic to theology, psychology, physics, astronomy, astrology and even humoral medicine, it only does so in an intensely focused context, namely, the soul’s salvation. The full range of philosophical disciplines gains a strong tendential oneness in these symbolic narratives. They seem Ibn Sīnā’s most pointed expression of his, at bottom, ‘soteriological’ sense of the whole philosophical project, and philosophy is clearly framed here as a path of liberation.

The *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* (Poem on the Soul)

In the double sense of having rhyme and metre, *and* meeting the philosophical criteria mentioned in his *Fann al-shi‘r*, the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* is a unique case of poetry attributed to Ibn Sīnā. It is also known as *al-Qaṣīdat al-‘ayniyya* because each of its 20 lines ends in a rhyme using the Arabic consonant ‘*ayn*, vowelised with a preceding *fatha* (or

94 Ibid., p. 176.

95 Ibid., p. 92.

exceptionally, *ḍamma*) and succeeding *kasra* (-a'ī). It is in the metre known as *Kāmil*. The poem has the bipartition of each line (*bayt*) into complete hemistichs (sing. *shaṭr*), which is part of the definition of the Arabic *qaṣīda*. Otherwise, it is only given the title of *qaṣīda* in the loosest sense of this term.⁹⁶ But the poem's designation as a *qaṣīda* is not without all significance. A *qaṣīda* lends itself to performance and, in principle, may be sung or set to music.⁹⁷ Though Corbin does not discuss the *Qaṣīdat al-nafs* in his study of Ibn Sīnā's symbolic texts, it distinctly supports his view that they are 'récits d'initiations'.

More than one recent scholar has viewed the *Qaṣīdat al-nafs* as pseudepigraphical.⁹⁸ Its uniqueness in Ibn Sīnā's corpus makes it

96 The *topoi* of the formal *qaṣīda* can be faintly made out in Ibn Sīnā's poem, which concerns a desolate encampment (as the symbol of the soul's earthly exile) and describes the soul's grief in this environment. Line 7 of the poem explicitly refers to 'the lowly traces of the camp' (*al-ṭulūl al-khudḍa'*). This nods at the *topos* of the *aṭlāl* (lit. the 'ruins', i.e., the abandoned tribal camp), or more fully, *al-bukā' alā 'l-aṭlāl* ('mourning over the camp ruins'), in the traditional Arabic *qaṣīda*. Again, when Ibn Sīnā's poem alludes to the soul's journey that has been made down to this current place of exile, this hints at another stock part of the traditional *qaṣīda*, namely the *raḥīl* or delineation of the journey made until the time and setting of the poem's delivery. On these and other criteria of the genre, see F. Krenkow[-G.Lecomte], 'Kaṣīda', *EI2*.

97 In this connection it is significant that, till recently, the *Qaṣīdat al-nafs* was included in the *nashīd* section of the prayer service of the Nizārī Ismaili community in Syria. In this context it was, of course, sung. See al-Majlis al-Islāmī al-Isma'īlī al-A'lā, *al-Anāshīd al-dīniyya* (Salamiyya, 1973), p. 14.

98 Some doubters are discussed in Fathalla Kholeif (Faṭḥ Allāh Khulayf), *Ibn Sīnā wa madhhabuhu fī 'l-nafs* (Beirut, 1974), in the section *al-shakk fī ṣiḥḥati nisbati 'l-Qaṣīdati 'l-'ayniyya ilā Ibn Sīnā*, pp. 131–137. Kholeif points out that some 'historians' (*mu'arrikhūn*) have tended to attribute the *Qaṣīda* to Abu 'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arri (p. 135). He specifically refers to Aḥmad Fu'ād al-Ahwānī as disputing the poem's authenticity mainly because it suggests that the soul pre-exists embodiment, starkly at odds with Aristotelian doctrine. This important point will be discussed below, but in any case, the *Risālat al-ṭayr* (whose authenticity is *not* queried) enshrines the same teaching. Kholeif also refers to Aḥmad Amīn who challenged the poem's authenticity on separate, stylistic grounds, since its elegance contrasts with Ibn Sīnā's normally awkward use of Arabic. He ventured that the real author was the poet-philosopher Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Shibl al-Baghdādī (d. 473/1080–1). Ibn Sīnā, however, does have other Arabic poems to his credit and composed a work called *Mu'taṣim al-shu'arā'* ('The Defense of Poets', no. 57 in the Longer Bibliography). Kholeif, for his part, accepts the poem's attribution to Ibn Sīnā.

suspect, as also the fact that neither of the authoritative records of his works (the Shorter and the Longer Bibliographies) mention it. It has, however, been rightly called 'a miniature version of the Epistle of the Bird'⁹⁹ whose authenticity, for its part, is undoubted. The closeness of their tropes and terms lends weight to the poem's traditionally accepted attribution. Michot is not alone in seeing it as amongst 'les oeuvres qui sont indubitablement d'Avicenne'.¹⁰⁰ De Smet stresses that it has always been popular in the East, for instance figuring as an anthology piece in many Arabic manuals, particularly during Ottoman times.¹⁰¹ Amongst a lengthy list of commentators, the poem caught the attention of some Sufi thinkers of high renown including 'Afīf al-Dīn Sulaymān b. 'Alī al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) and Muḥyī 'l-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) himself.¹⁰²

The poem's scenario is straightforward (see p. 116 for the text). Ibn Sīnā frames our earthly life as the soul having lost its way. Though a painful exile, our time here below is providential and has a positive function in the end. The human soul is represented throughout as an ash-coloured dove or pigeon (*warqā'*, related to the noun *wariq*, silver, silver coins).¹⁰³ Ibn Sīnā's metaphor here is wholly inexplicit. It is the

99 Stroumsa, 'Avicenna's Philosophical Stories', p. 196.

100 Jean Michot, *La destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne* (Louvain, 1986), p. xiii.

101 Daniel De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'Ismaélisme post-Fatimide, selon La *Risāla al-Mufīda fī Ḍāḥ Mulgāz al-Qaṣīda* de 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd (ob. 1215)', in J. Janssens and D. De Smet, ed., *Avicenna and his Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve September 8–September 11, 1999* (Leuven, 2002), pp. 1–20, esp. p. 6.

102 In Ibn 'Arabī's work *Muḥādarāt al-abrār* ('The Descents of the Pious') he refers to the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* as a well-known poem without naming the author. Franz Rosenthal, 'Ibn 'Arabī between "Philosophy" and "Mysticism"', *Oriens*, 31 (1989), pp. 1–35, esp. p. 17.

103 E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 3051. Kazimirski, after identifying *warqā'* as the feminine of *awraq*, meaning 'Gris cendré (se dit du pelage des chameaux lorsqu'il est naturel et non pas contracté par la fatigue)', 'Colombe', and 'Louve'(!), surprisingly adds the following meanings: 'L'âme de l'univers, qui est la même chose que *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz* ou *lawḥ al-qadar* ou l'esprit soufflé par Dieu dans la matière, la première des choses créées par une cause première, c.-à.-d. *al-'aql al-awwal* Qui existe sans une cause première' (A. De Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 1522–1523). Perhaps these last cosmological meanings

maximally implicit type known as *metaphor in absentia* in which the tenor is absent and only the vehicle present. It is the poem's title which alone informs the reader of the tenor here: *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*.¹⁰⁴ The bird's original abode is described as 'the highest place', apparently a mountain-peak sanctuary (*ḥiman*) where she had happily dwelt for time out of mind ('*uhūd*', 'aeons').¹⁰⁵ The plane of delineation for the poem's events is thus vertical, not horizontal. Plummeting from the vertex to the base of the cosmological mountain (described as 'the barren plain', *dhāt al-ajraʿ*, i.e., the earth), the bird is at first aloof from her new surroundings, feeling herself to be quite alien in this terrestrial locale. But a process of forgetting her origins takes place so that she has lost her bearings: 'she got used to ruin and the wasteland' and 'forgot (*nasiyat*) her aeons in the sanctuary and her [high] stations.' This, then, is a true nadir for her, since she has not only fallen into the cosmological depth but has also lost any conception of realities above it.

In the poem's sixth and seventh lines, this low point in the soul's fate is formulated in terms of Arabic letters, which may contain some recon-dite symbolic or even numerological significance: 'So that when by the *hā'* of her *hubūṭ* ("falling down") from the *mīm* of her *markaz* ("central position") she arrived (*ḥaṣalat*) at the barren plain/The *thā'* of *thaqīl*

have developed out of the basic sense of *waraq*, 'leaf' or 'paper' – but they fit, surprisingly tightly, Ibn al-Walid's Ṭayyibī interpretation of the symbol of the dove in the poem.

104 Metaphorical language has two levels of reference: the 'vehicle' is the image *for* the thing being compared; the 'tenor' is the actual referent or the thing *itself* which is being compared. In the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*, the vehicle is the dove and the tenor is the soul. The basic scale of kinds of metaphor is then as follows: *simile* ('the soul is as an ashen dove that alights'); *metaphor in praesentia* ('the ashen dove of the soul alights'); and *metaphor in absentia* ('the ashen dove alights').

105 It may be observed that the poem's repeated reference to 'the sanctuary', described in the first line as the 'higher (or highest) place', depends on the vowelling *al-ḥimā*. Vowelled as *al-ḥamā* it could mean 'the doves' and might be interpreted as an ellipsis for *burj al-ḥamām* (= dovecot or pigeon tower). See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 637; also see F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1977), p. 431. The interpretation of the imagery in terms of a mountain top sanctuary is, however, supported by other references in the poem, notably line 10, where a 'high, vast peak' is mentioned as the dove's original abode.

(“heavy”) was joined to her,¹⁰⁶ and she came to her senses between landmarks and the lowly traces of the camp.’ Notwithstanding the enigmatic symbolism, the main thrust of the lines is straightforward: the soul’s advent in its earthly body is likened to the bird waking up (*aṣḥaḥat*) in a new place and forgetting how she came to be there.

In his book-length study of the *Qaṣīda* in Arabic, Kholeif gives no definite solution to the puzzle of these lines, only cautiously observing that they must involve the metonymic substitution of a whole word with one of its letters, namely the first.¹⁰⁷ The 7th/13th century Sufi commentary by ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī offered a highly original explanation of the letters (which Tilimsānī quotes from a certain Shaykh Hamām al-Dīn). According to this interpretation, it is the actual shapes of the letters in Arabic orthography which are the key to their use here in the poem. The *hā’* of *hubūt* thus means ‘this world of sense-perception, since the fall of the soul ends up here and the *hā’* (هـ) is comparable with this world in regard to orthography through what it contains by way of knots (*‘uqad*) such as are involved in this world.’ The *mīm* of *markaz* means ‘the intellectual world, since the

106 Alternatively: ‘she was united with’, adopting the variant *ittaṣalat*. Although in his critical edition, De Smet opts here for *ḥaṣalat* based on his selection of Mss, he yet says: ‘Toutes les autres versions donnent *ittaṣalat*, ce qui est certainement la lecture correcte: «une fois qu’elle s’est unie» [as opposed to: «Ainsi, une fois arrivée»].’ De Smet, ‘Avicenne et l’Ismaélisme post-Fatimide’, p. 10, note 34.

107 ‘Ibn Sinā symbolises the word with one of its letters, so the *hā’* is a symbol of the *hubūt* (“fall”) from the highest to the lowest, the *mīm* is a symbol of the *markaz* (“centre”) or the *mabda’* (“origin”) or the first *mawtin* (“homeland”), from which she was separated. The *thā’* is a symbol of the *thaqīl* (“heavy”) which is the body or the lowest centre in which the soul comes to her senses after its fall and its separation from the highest centre. The body is “heavy” because it consists of clay and earth.’ (Kholeif, *Ibn Sinā wa madhhabuhu fi ‘l-naṣf*, p. 149, translation mine). Kholeif goes on to mention a basis for such letter-metonymy (*kināya*) in the Qur’an itself, taking it that the dismembered letters (*muqaṭṭa’āt*) are best understood in this way, such that, say, *Hā’ Mīm* [Q. 40:1; 41:1; 42:1; 43:1 44:1; 45:1; and 46:1] is a metonymy for *al-Raḥmān* (‘the All-Merciful’), etc. Kholeif additionally mentions the phenomenon in Arabic grammar termed *tarkhīm*, the abbreviation of a name in the vocative by eliding the final consonant, e.g., ‘*Yā Jābi!*’ for ‘*Yā Jābir!*’ and ‘*Yā Ḥārī!*’ for ‘*Yā Ḥārith!*’ Kholeif also mentions Dāwūd al-Anṭaqī’s proposal that Ibn Sinā’s poem resorts to letter symbolism here (a) to prompt the intellect to think about the subject of this trial that befalls the soul through its fall from the noblest to the basest state; and (b) ‘the gravity of the wisdom (*khuṭurat al-ḥikma*) entails that we are taught it in a symbolic fashion: *ibid.*, p. 150.

soul is [initially] restrained from it and [later] reverts to it, so it is, to begin with and in the end, like the *mīm* (م) at the start of its construction.' Finally, the significance of the *thā'* of *thaqīl* is again attributed to the orthography of the Arabic letter *thā'* (ث), with three dots cupped by a horizontal stroke beneath. Taking this underlying stroke to signify the body, Tilimsānī and his source view the three cupped dots as signifying the soul once incepted in the body, for it is always found there with two other entities that depend on it (*muta'alliqāt al-naḥs*), namely, the heart and the animal spirit.¹⁰⁸

Another possible answer to the enigma of the letters can be suggested here, starting from Kholeif's basic assumption that the key to the puzzle is letter-metonymy. The soul's fall may be articulated in terms of Aristotelian natural science as elemental change and the mingling of the four elements (*al-arkān al-arba'a*). These last indeed may be Ibn Sīnā's allusion below in the poem's ninth line, when he speaks of the 'ruins' of this sublunary realm as 'effaced by the recurrence of the four winds' (*al-riyāḥ al-arba'*), though this also conceivably refers to the four humours of the body in Galenic medical theory, each of which was understood to correspond with a given element.¹⁰⁹ At any rate, the soul itself has its natural locus above, like fire. Indeed, vital spirit could be viewed as corresponding with elemental fire whose nature is to rise and, correspondingly, Ibn Sīnā refers to the soul as 'flashing lightning' (*barqun ta'allaqa*) at the end of his poem. The loss of the soul's levity and its subjection to gravity (*thiqal*) takes place through intermixture with the other elements. Elemental earth, with its weightiness, is represented by the *thā'* of this last word, *thā'* also being the first letter of the Arabic word *tharan* ('soil', 'earth'). Ibn Sīnā, moreover, evidently alludes to elemental earth in these lines as the 'barren plane' (*dhāt al-ajra'*). The *hā'* then seems to stand for *hawā'* (elemental air) and the *mīm* stands for *mā'* (elemental water). This explanation remains tentative but seems to be in the right direction.

The dove next gets her bearings, marking a turning point in her fate and in the poem. A hemistichal parallel stresses that this is indeed a crux. Whereas the first hemistich of line 5 stated 'she forgot (*nasiyat*) her aeons in the sanctuary', the first hemistich of line 8 now describes how

108 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-bayān fī 'ilm ma'rifat al-insān*, King Sa'ūd University, Riyāḍ, Ms 2662, folio 12, line 3 ff.

109 The correspondence is as follows: blood = fire; black bile = earth; phlegm = water; yellow bile = air.

'she weeps when she recalls (*dhakarat*) her aeons in the sanctuary'.¹¹⁰ The bird has thus recovered the homing ability (= *ihtidā'*, in the terminology of pigeon-flying) that is her defining characteristic. This instinct is arguably so important as to constitute the true *tertium comparationis* (the 'third part of the comparison') of the entire extended metaphor explored in the poem: it is the shared trait that forms the true basis for likening the human soul to the dove. The return of the dove's innate directionality is critical, but still not enough, for even after she has recalled her old habitat and feels impelled to leave her surroundings, she finds that she is held back by nature's fierce bonds. Her dense form (*shakl kathīf*) – that is, the material body enclosing the soul – constitutes a 'cage' (*qafaš*) that hinders her from acting on her homing instinct.¹¹¹

This same juncture in the *Risālat al-ṭayr* – where the symbolism undergoes ampler elaboration than in the *Qaṣīda* – involves the bird and its companions actually ascending the cosmological mountain range despite their snares still clinging to their legs. The juxtaposition shows that this same crucial phase in the allegory, in which the soul has re-awakened to the reality of the intelligible world while embodied, is framed in distinct ways in the two texts. In the *Risālat al-ṭayr* Ibn Sīnā presents this awakening as already a release, despite the lingering of bodily bonds; the *Qaṣīda* instead stresses the on-going insurmountability of those bonds, only framing the awakening as a preparation for release, pending death. Whereas the former allegory marks the crux by the bird's companions releasing her from her cage, our poem speaks of the bird as still held back from the high peak within the confines of the body. With the same implication, Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān informs that allegory's narrator that he cannot yet accompany him into the higher realms, since the narrator is held back by the 'animal soul' in the form of his wayward companions.

The symbol of the soul's cage (*qafaš*) used in the *Qaṣīda* follows naturally from the extended avian metaphor and is also suggested by

110 Some Mss however have *naṣīyat* ('she forgot') in both lines (De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'Ismaélisme post-Fatimide', p. 8, note 8). This reading seems to remove the interest of the parallelism and reduce it to mere repetition. It most likely originates in a copyist's slip, specifically homoeoteleuton.

111 Note, however, the variant reading here which has *naqṣ 'an* ('a diminishment from' or 'lowering from') instead of *qafaš 'an* ('a cage against'). This has been adopted by De Smet in his edition, *ibid.*, p. 8.

the structural form of the body (*qafaş* can mean the thorax or ribcage, confining the heart). This trope for embodiment additionally has deep roots in Platonism. In Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*, he has Socrates liken someone whose soul has awakened to philosophy to a prisoner peering out from his cage.¹¹² A famous, closely related comparison of Plato's sprang from his wordplay, or rather 'semantic etymology', linking the Greek words *sôma* ('body') and *sêma* ('tomb').¹¹³ This too chimes with the imagery of the *Qaṣīda* in which Ibn Sīnā seems to speak of the whole material, sublunary realm as a graveyard, a depository for corpses, soon to be fled by the soul when 'she comes to leave behind her everyone staying on as an ally of the graves, not given the last rites (*ḥalīf al-turab ghayr mushayya*').¹¹⁴ The soul does not belong to this place of morbidity and must not identify with it.

The ten lines forming the latter part of the poem then deal with the soul's homeward flight and ponder the rationale for her strange exile. The dove's approaching 'departure for the widest expanse' when finally 'the veil has been drawn back so she beholds what no slumbering eyes have perceived', surely signifies the body's death, which eventually frees the soul to go back to its original realm and revert to the latter's intelligible realities. Fluttering back atop her peak at last, the dove warbles (*tugharridu*). Ibn Sīnā indicates that it is not only the onset of physical death that has allowed this return to her native environment but also her anticipatory familiarity with the realities of that realm, so that when the time comes, she willingly abandons those aforementioned stragglers 'staying on as an ally of the graves'. Release is thus the combined effect of the lapse of any practical impediment and the understanding which had *already* orientated the soul in anticipation, for 'knowledge elevates the rank of the one who was not elevated'. She has re-inhabited her peak even before the event, in her inner virtuality. Implicitly, Ibn Sīnā's view of philosophy here is as an *ars moriendi*, a preparation for the afterlife.

What then, asks Ibn Sīnā, could have occasioned this adventure in the first place, by which this bird of the soul was 'made to fall (*uhbiṭat*) from

112 Plato, *Phaedo* 82 d–e.

113 Plato, *Gorgias* 493 a. The derivation of the formula *sôma sêma* is originally Orphic.

114 Instead of *ḥalīf al-turab* here, De Smet opts for a variant, *khalīf al-turab*, and translates it accordingly: 'les chemins de poussière'. De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'Ismaélisme post-Fatimide', p. 10.

the lofty and sublime to the lowest depth of the foot of the mountain'? The agnostic note sounded at this point of the poem should be noted. The tone adopted here by the seasoned philosopher is one of bafflement concerning the reason for the soul's tortuous fate. Ibn Sinā frankly demurs that the deity's wisdom in bringing all this about is 'concealed even from the singular, the understanding, the most pious'. This tentative, questioning tone is at odds with that of our Tayyibī commentator who, as will be seen, feels quite assured of the answer on the basis of his esoteric cosmological doctrine, and takes it that Ibn Sinā shared the same certainty. His assumption was encouraged by a variant in the text of the poem which confronted Ibn al-Walīd. His text (as published in the present volume) has the categorical formulation: 'her fall, no doubt (*hubūṭuhā lā shakka*), was a necessary blow', whereas other versions have the more tentative, conditional formulation: 'if her fall was (*hubūṭuhā in kāna*) a necessary blow.'¹¹⁵ Be that as it may, Ibn Sinā proposes here (be it tentatively or certainly) that the reason for immersing the soul in matter for a time was that this was a 'necessary blow' to right its negligence and restore to it a knowledge 'of every mystery in the two worlds' (*bi-kulli khafīyyatin fī'l-ālamayn*). The author thus frames the dove's wanderings as a purgatorial pilgrimage imposed with the loving aim of enlightening her and developing her understanding. This ideal of 'intellectual *eudæmonia*', or salvation through the perfection of knowledge, is typical of Avicennan soteriology.

The last two lines talk of the soul's sheer speed of passing from the earthly realm, likening it to a setting star and the intense brightness of lightning which straightaway 'disappeared as if it had not lit up'. These images draw the reader into deeper layers of figuration. Given that the immediate subject of this imagery is the dove which itself, in turn, represents the soul, these are both tropes *within* tropes – to the third degree.¹¹⁶

115 Also see note 274 below.

116 Soul > dove > lightning/star. Note that the lightning trope is explicit but the star trope is implicit. That is, the former is a *simile* marked out by the words *ka-anna-hā barqun* ('It is as though she were lightning'), but the latter is a *metaphor in absentia*, for Ibn Sinā only speaks elliptically, of something as setting (*gharabat*) and of its dawning (*maṭla'*). This star trope thus leaves the poem's audience itself to supply all the references, upto the third degree: (1) the initial vehicle, a star; (2) the tenor of this vehicle, the ash-grey dove; and (3) the soul as the ultimate tenor of the dove as a vehicle in its own right. Depending

At any rate, these final images in the poem, linked to sources of stellar or atmospheric light, are ultimate transformations of the poem's focal symbol for the soul, the *warqā'* or silvery dove, which was introduced in the first line. In the two last lines it is transfigured and a full circuit has been traced.

The Puzzle of the *Qaṣīda's* Neoplatonic Psychology

A specific problem is raised by the variants for the penultimate line, likening the dove to a star or asterism. With the variant reading confronting Ibn al-Walid and so chosen in Wilferd Madelung's edition,¹¹⁷ the line has the words *la-qad gharabat bi-'ayni 'l-maṭla'i* which may be rendered 'she has set at the very place of dawning'. It emerges that Ibn al-Walid sees this last expression as a buried reference to the psychology he inherited from earlier Ismaili thinkers, notably Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020). To anticipate, in passing, the forthcoming discussion of his commentary: Ibn al-Walid's theory of the soul's emergence on earth takes it to involve a double movement – both a devolution and evolution. The descent of 'soul' from the higher, intelligible realm heralds an *ascent* from the lower, elemental order of the earthly realm itself. Ibn al-Walid has earlier alluded to this *prima facie* evolutionary aspect of his theory in commenting on the poem's opening line which concerned the dove's fall. The soul's fall from the intelligible realm is the prelude to its graduated climb within the physical realm, so the same event is by turns spoken of in the descensional framework of metaphysics and the ascensional framework of natural science. This, then, is supposedly the right way to understand the expression in question from the poem's close: the soul's setting at its 'very place of dawning' refers back to its earlier climb from the kingdoms of nature, but now taken in reverse at the time of death, such that the life force on earth lastly disappears into the mineral realm, whence, from the natural viewpoint, it had earlier emerged into this world. Kirmānī is quoted here in the commentary as stating that gypsum (*al-jiṣṣ*, hydrous calcium sulphate or chalk) is the crucial lowest mineral substance in the 'great chain of being'. This

on one's viewpoint, this doubled *metaphor in absentia* is either tropologically virtuosic or the stylistic vice of 'mixed metaphor'.

117 See Arabic text, p. 5.

is the precise point of the emergence of 'soul', generically speaking, into our material realm, like the heliacal dawn of a star.¹¹⁸

However, the words as found in most manuscripts are *la-qad gharabat bi-ghayri 'l-maṭla'i*, which may be translated: 'she has set somewhere *other* than the place of dawning'.¹¹⁹ These words have caught the attention of at least one commentator, in the context of a poetic statement in which Ibn Sinā has strongly implied certain Platonic and Neoplatonic teachings instead of his usual, broadly Peripatetic, ones. The implied teachings include *anamnêsis* (the theory that learning involves recalling what is already known before birth), the equation of the state of ignorance with forgetting, and the soul's pre-existence of the body. Another theory closely linked with these doctrines is that of reincarnation or metempsychosis.¹²⁰ The significance of the variant 'she has set somewhere *other* than the place of dawning' relates to this last teaching.

Some hundred years ago Baron Carra de Vaux edited an anonymous and undated commentary on the *Qaṣida* found at the bottom of two manuscripts from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.¹²¹ The unknown

118 Gypsum, vitriol and the varieties of alum were held to mark the lower border of the mineral realm, adjacent to earth, whereas the upper border of the mineral realm was held to be gold and sapphire (*yāqūt*). (See e.g., Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *On the Natural Sciences: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 15–21*, ed. and tr. Carmela Baffioni (Oxford, 2013), p. 340). De Smet points out that gypsum is, as it were, the precise point at which the return (*in'ikās*) begins to take place within this entire cosmology: 'le gypse [est] le degré le moins noble du monde minéral, le point précis s'opère l'*in'ikās*, le "retournement", le point de jonction entre *processio* et *reditus*.' De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'Ismaélisme post-Fatimide', p. 14.

119 De Smet (*ibid.*, p. 11) translates *bayt* 19 as follows: 'C'est elle dont le temps a coupé la route, de sorte qu'elle s'est couchée pour ne plus se relever.'

120 A locus classicus for all these ideas in the Corpus Platonicum is the myth of Er, son of Armenius, presented at the very end of Plato's *Republic*. Er is killed in battle but returns to life on his funeral pyre and reports what he has seen. In the course of describing his complex vision, he says that he has seen souls selecting their next incarnations, including as animals and birds, but just before re-incarnating they all camp by the river called *Lêthê* (Greek, 'forgetfulness'), and drink of its waters. Those predisposed to wisdom in the coming incarnation, drink less. Plato, *Republic*, 620a–621b.

121 Mss 1620 and 2541 of the Fonds Arabe, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. See B. Carra de Vaux, 'La qaṣidah d'Avicenne sur l'âme', *Journal Asiatique*, series 9, vol. 14 (1899), p. 157 ff.

commentator in question was concerned to reconcile the poem with what was known of Ibn Sīnā's psychology, assuming no ultimate conflict. In what survived of his *Kitāb al-inṣāf* ('The Book of Impartial Judgment')¹²² and also other texts,¹²³ the sheikh precisely rounded on Platonic and Neoplatonist theories of the kind. In the variant wording in question ('she has set somewhere *other* than the place of dawning') Carra de Vaux's anonymous commentator found clear evidence that Ibn Sīnā indeed wished to safeguard his audience against any literal, Platonic understanding of his *Qaṣīda*. For in these words is he not precisely countering the idea of rebirth? He is stating, expressly, that upon leaving this world, the soul does not revert to it; it departs elsewhere than where it dawned. The anonymous commentator remarks: the expression declares the falsity of metempsychosis (*buṭlān al-tanāsukh*).¹²⁴ In the light of this, Ibn al-Walīd's own variant seems the more striking, as it lends itself to the opposite, emphatically Platonic, reading of Ibn Sīnā. His differently worded version seems to say that the soul sets precisely where it presently dawns (*bi-ʿayni ʾl-maṭlaʿ*), that is, just as a star would, appearing with a cyclic regularity on the earth's horizon. It is intriguing that his Ṭayyibi Ismaili text of the

122 The huge, 20-volume *Inṣāf* was Ibn Sīnā's systematic commentary on Aristotle's works. It was tragically stolen during his lifetime by the troops of Sultan Masʿūd of Ghazna in 421/1030, and only survived in fragments mainly transmitted by Ibn Sīnā's third generation student, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣighnākhi. What thus survives, however, does contain the following, very valuable material: two overlapping recensions of Ibn Sīnā's detailed commentary on the major Neoplatonist work the *Uthūlūjiyā Aristāṭālīs* ('The Theology of Aristotle'), which is in fact a paraphrase of Plotinus, and commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima* and on Book Lambda of his *Metaphysics*. See Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 130–140.

123 E.g., Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-naḥs*, ed. A.F. al-Ahwānī (Cairo, 1952). See especially the section *Fi ibṭāl al-tanāsukh*, pp. 106–107.

124 Wilferd Madelung, 'An Ismaili Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', in Todd Lawson, ed., *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought, Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 157–168, esp. p. 165. The anonymous commentator seems here to interpret the word *maṭlaʿ* as the verbal noun or *maṣḍar* ('dawning') rather than as the *nomen loci* or *ism al-makān* ('place of dawning'), such that the star has set 'without dawning again'. However, this interpretation is weakened by the presence of the definite article: the expression is *bi-ghayri ʾl-maṭlaʿ*, not *bi-ghayri maṭlaʿin*, though the article may have been retained to fit the metre.

Qaṣīda had this particular variant, as metempsychosis is an occasional but discernable thread in the long history of Ismaili thought, though its formal acknowledgement was muted and it was often denounced.¹²⁵

Perhaps it is precisely through such strictures that Ibn al-Walīd's commentary discreetly reads these words as alluding not to reincarnation but, simply, to how the life-force fades at death, back into the mineral realm's depths, as just mentioned. De Smet has however claimed to find definite reincarnationist undercurrents running through Ibn al-Walīd's commentary, reflecting the guarded acceptance of this teaching in his Ṭayyibī milieu. De Smet cites certain Ṭayyibī writings including those by his older contemporary (and fellow chief missionary, *dā'ī muṭlaq*) Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 557/1162), which state that there is a human, natal hierarchy, defined by such factors as ethnicity and aptitude.¹²⁶ Furthermore, in contrast to more moderate versions of the theory, De Smet maintains that Ṭayyibī teaching of the time even extended to *maskh*, 'transformation', the embodying of human souls in animals, by way of correction.¹²⁷ Such mechanisms of rebirth, according to De

125 E.g., Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī was charged by Bīrūnī with maintaining a version of rebirth in his *Kashf al-mahjūb* which confined it to a given species, 'never crossing its limits and passing to another species'. The extant Persian paraphrase of this text is expurgated and omits this teaching. According to Nāṣir-i Khusrāw, Sijistānī later relinquished belief in all versions of the doctrine when instructed to do so, presumably by the Ismaili Imam himself. Thus, in his evidently later *Tanbīh al-hādī wa'l-mustahdī*, he has a chapter refuting metempsychosis. Paul E. Walker, 'Metempsychosis in Islam', in Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little, ed., *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams* (Leiden, 1991), pp. 219–238, esp. pp. 230–236. Also see Wilferd Madelung, 'Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and Metempsychosis', in *Iranica Varia: Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater* (Leiden, 1990), pp. 131–143.

126 De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'ismaélisme post-Fatimide', p. 15, citing texts such as Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī, *Kanz al-walad*, ed. M. Ghālib (Wiesbaden, 1971), p. 309.

127 'La doctrine ṭayyibite admet effectivement le *maskh*, la réincarnation dans des espèces inférieures en guises de punition': De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'ismaélisme post-Fatimide', p. 16, note 72. For further details on the teaching of metempsychosis in such contexts as Ṭayyibī Ismailism, De Smet refers readers to R. Freitag, *Seelenwanderung in der islamischen Häresie* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 170–182. In a recent article De Smet again cites this book in connection with a claim that transmigration and metamorphosis (*maskh*) 'deviendront des thèses centrales dans l'ismaélisme ṭayyibite qui s'est développé au Yémen dès le milieu du XI^e siècle'. (Daniel De Smet, 'La transmigration des âmes. Une notion

Smet, are implicit in Ibn al-Walid's discussion of the legitimate anxiety about dying that is felt by God's friends, in commenting on line 3, '... yet perhaps she is loath to be separated from you'. De Smet takes him to mean that their anxiety is that, deprived of further opportunity to perfect themselves in their current incarnation, they may reincarnate in countless other fleshly forms ('innombrables autres enveloppes charnelles') and even fall into a downward arc by rebirth into 'un corps moins noble', removing them further from their ultimate goal.¹²⁸ The mechanism's upward arc is instead referred to, according to De Smet, in Ibn al-Walid's commentary on line 14: 'And she warbles in the morning above a lofty peak, and knowledge elevates the rank of the one who was not elevated.' Ibn al-Walid says: 'By "lofty peak" [Ibn Sinā] means the upright stature [that a soul] ultimately gets to, similar to the first essences relating to origination, [the soul] progressing by steps through

problématique dans l'ismaélisme d'époque fatimide', in Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, ed., *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), pp. 77–110, esp. p. 78). It is hard to pronounce generally on this teaching, however, and some hold that the doctrine of metempsychosis is simply alien to Ṭayyibī Ismailism. See, e.g., Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 2007), p. 273.

128 De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'Ismaélisme post-Fatimide', p. 16. Studied with this premise, further putative references to reincarnation could be found in the commentary. A possible allusion to the mechanism's negative, downward aspect is contained in an allegory about an island of apes. In explaining line 4 of Ibn Sinā's poem ('but when she continued, she got used to ruin and the wasteland') Ibn al-Walid quotes the allegory – to be discussed later in this introduction more fully – in its entirety from the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. A central point of the quoted story is that, for all but lucky exceptions, souls stranded on the ape island risk becoming apes themselves. While the parable only speaks of the castaways inter-breeding with female apes, the simian imagery could hint at the debated tenet of *maskh*, as transformation into apes was a stock example of *maskh*, following the major scriptural proof-texts claimed for this teaching, Q. 2:65, 7:166 and 5:60. The yet remoter transmigrationist teaching of *faskh* ('disintegration') – the soul's embodiment in the mineral realm – could be read into Ibn al-Walid's aforementioned statement that the soul extends down, even to the level of gypsum. Reading this as an allusion to *faskh* turns on whether this comment is taken to refer to 'soul' in a generic sense or to individual souls, and whether it is interpreted as a unique or a recurring, cyclic process. If the reference is indeed to individual souls and a recurring event, this would signify *faskh*.

the degrees of the dignitaries, and ascending on its stairway consisting of the stations of ascent, so it gets to be in the exalted summit'.¹²⁹

It is questionable whether any of these statements in Ibn al-Walid's commentary puts forward reincarnation unambiguously. It moreover seems highly unlikely that Ibn Sīnā would himself have consciously alluded to reincarnation in any of the poem's relevant lines. He instead embraced a theory of the soul as the 'entelechy' (approximately 'actuality' or 'completeness') of the body, as formulated by Aristotle. The mature Aristotle's psychology was defined by his rejection of Platonic notions of the soul's pre-existence, which he himself had earlier propagated in his dialogue, *Eudemus*.¹³⁰ In his later, anti-Platonist, theory, laid out in *De Anima II*, the soul was taken to enter existence in a co-dependent relationship with the material body, just as form exists with matter – in line with the wider Aristotelian hylemorphic framework. Thus the individuated human soul only comes into being *twinned with* the human body.

Ibn Sīnā inherited this fundamental position, although it had been duly nuanced in the meantime by Aristotle's commentators to accommodate the soul's afterlife – a concern central to Judaeo-Christian, thus also Islamic, eschatology.¹³¹ In interpreting Aristotle's definition of the

129 De Smet comments: 'Dès lors, la colombe qui roucoule sur le plus haute sommet (vers 14 de la *Qaṣīda*) se réfère à l'allégresse de l'âme qui, parvenue au plus haut degré de perfectionnement, ayant pleinement actualisé son intellect et transmué son corps de camphre, échappe enfin aux cycles des réincarnations successive.' (De Smet, 'Avicenne et l'Ismaélisme post-Fatimide', pp. 15–16). The 'body of camphor' mentioned here, refers to the belief that even the élite of souls, such as prophets and imams, who ascend to the cosmological heights, are embodied *in some sense*. They supposedly gain a camphoric body (*jism kāfūrī*), a mysterious, sublimated body. This is explicitly alluded to at this juncture of his commentary by Ibn al-Walid, as discussed below.

130 See Anton-Hermann Chroust, 'Eudemus or On the Soul: A Lost Dialogue of Aristotle on the Immortality of the Soul', in *Mnemosyne*, series 4, vol. 19, fasc. 1 (1966), pp. 17–30.

131 In the history of interpreting Aristotle's psychology, a pivotal role was played by Ammonius, son of Hermeias (ca. 570 CE). Ammonius had moved from the 'hard' position adopted by Aristotle's great commentator, Alexander of Aphrodisias (ca. 205 CE), who stressed the soul's inseparability from the body. On the basis of lateral statements in Aristotle which presented the soul as the (separable) efficient and final cause of the body, not just its formal cause, the Ammonian commentarial tradition put the soul's afterlife on a firmer footing. Ibn Sīnā would inherit the Ammonian standpoint and develop it further.

soul as the body's entelechy, Ibn Sīnā's models stressed the soul's ultimate separability. The soul, he stated, is the body's entelechy just as the king is his city's entelechy and the pilot is his ship's entelechy.¹³² Another, well-known, facet of his teaching on the body-soul relation is his thought-experiment known as the 'suspended man' (*al-raġul al-mu'allaq*), which is again conducive to some idea of the soul's ontic autonomy.¹³³ Finally, Ibn Sīnā singled out the rational facet of the soul as the best basis for the individual's post-mortem survival.¹³⁴ Notwithstanding these modifications, Ibn Sīnā firmly upheld the Stagirite's fundamental hostility towards the Platonic notion of the soul's pre-existence and reincarnation, which Ibn Sīnā too strenuously argued against in the course of his writings. He held that, while the soul may not perish once it exists and as such, survives the body, neither may it *pre-exist* the body.¹³⁵

For De Smet, however, Ibn al-Walīd's reincarnationist readings of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣida* are not just misunderstandings sprung from his quite different intellectual background. In reality, Ibn Sīnā's original formation was not so far removed from that same background. Ibn al-Walīd's

Robert Wisnovsky, 'Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition', in Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 92–136.

132 *Fa-inna 'l-malika kamālu 'l-madīnati wa'l-rubbāna kamālu 'l-safina*. Fazlur Rahman, ed., *Avicenna's De Anima* (London, 1959), p. 6.

133 The 'suspended man' or 'flying man' was not put forward as demonstrative but 'in the manner of prompting and reminding' (*'ala sabīli 'l-tanbīhi wa 'l-tadhkīr*) and was presented by Ibn Sīnā in slightly different ways. For the version in the *Shifā'*, see Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 15–16; for the version in the *Ishārāt*, see the very beginning of the Third Namaṭ in Ibn Sīnā, *Le Livre des Théorèmes et Avertissements*, p. 119. In brief, the reader is asked to imagine a person without any sensory inputs via the body. The subject would, allegedly, nevertheless still have consciousness and self-awareness. See the recent study by Jari Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond* (Cambridge, 2015).

134 Wisnovsky, 'Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition', p. 101.

135 Hence the heading of the relevant section in Ibn Sīnā's *De Anima* is 'On the fact that human souls neither perish nor do they transmigrate' (*Fī anna 'l-anfusa 'l-insāniyyata lā tafsidu wa lā tatanāsakhu*) (Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima*, p. 227). Ibn Sīnā's basic line of argument here against metempsychosis is as follows: if the soul is taken to be the human body's entelechy, the entry into existence of the body *already* assumes an animating soul. Metempsychosis, then, absurdly proposes the entry of a second, alien, soul into this self-same body, naturally endowed with a soul on pain of non-existence: *ibid.*, p. 234.

own Ṭayyibī Ismaili tradition was elaborating teachings which may well have been known to Ibn Sīnā himself in his family environment some 150 years earlier, for he had been raised in an Ismaili family culture in the great Sāmānid capital of Bukhāra, as recorded in the autobiographical section of the *Sirat al-shaykh al-raʿīs*.¹³⁶ The sheikh even mentions that Ismaili teachings on the soul and the intellect were the topics specifically debated in those years with his father and younger brother, Maḥmūd.¹³⁷ Ibn Sīnā goes on to declare that, notwithstanding their appeals, his own ‘soul would not accept it’ (*lā taqbaluhu nafsi*).¹³⁸ For Ibn al-Walid, however, such a disavowal could only have been dissimulation (*taqīya*). As pointed out by both Madelung and De Smet, his clear assumption was that Ibn Sīnā had truly held to beliefs in step with Ismailism, encrypting them in the poem where he himself could unearth them a century and a half later. As far as he was concerned, Ibn Sīnā had secretly been a fellow Ismaili.¹³⁹

136 ‘My father was one of those who responded to the propagandist of the Egyptians (*dāʿī al-Miṣriyyīn*) and was reckoned among the Ismāʿīliyya’: Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, p. 19.

137 De Smet has even conjectured that the missionaries to whom Ibn Sīnā’s father played host in the family home in Bukhāra were specifically drawing on Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī’s works, given the latter’s authority for the Ismaili movement in Khurāsān and Transoxiana in the second half of the 10th century CE. If this hypothesis were true, the relevant teachings on the soul’s pre-existence, etc., are to be found in works like Sijistānī’s *Kitāb al-nuṣra*, *Yanābīʿ* and *Ithbāt al-nubuwwa*. De Smet, ‘La doctrine avicennienne des deux faces de l’âme et ses racines ismaéliennes’, *Studia Islamica*, 93 (2001), pp. 77–89, especially p. 86.

138 Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina*, p. 19.

139 De Smet draws attention to the esteem implicit in Ibn al-Walid’s way of speaking of Ibn Sīnā (*al-raʿīs*, ‘the chief’) and his placing the honorific formula *qaddasa Llāhu rūḥahu* (‘may God sanctify his spirit’) after his name. He ventures that this is a ‘eulogie que les Ismaéliens n’appliquent à vrai dire jamais à une personne étrangère à la secte’: De Smet, ‘Avicenne et l’Ismaélisme post-Fatimide’, p. 11. Madelung points out that the commentator’s whole manner of broaching the *Qaṣida* at the opening of the *Risāla muḥida*, presupposes the poem’s Ismaili complexion: ‘[Ibn Sīnā] obscured the meanings and hinted at esoteric mysteries (*asrār ḥaqīqiyya*). The author’s purpose in doing so was, Ibn al-Walid suggests, to reserve its noble concepts and subtle sciences for those whom God has blessed with seeking them from their owners (*arbāb*) and aiming for them through their gates (*abwāb*), while withholding them from the partisans of the satans and devils who claim the ranks they do not deserve. By the owners and gates of the esoteric science, Ibn al-Walid evidently means the

However unlikely this might seem, Ibn al-Walīd's vested assumption is admittedly based on a stubborn fact: in a text like the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* (as in the *Risālat al-ṭayr*) within the Corpus Avicennianum's allegorical part, the sheikh's message is unmistakably couched in terms of Platonic doctrines centring on the soul's pre-existence – doctrines in common with the Ṭayyibī Ismaili tradition. In reality such teachings would not only have been known to Ibn Sīnā from childhood encounters with Ismaili teaching; he had, after all, met with them in the received Aristotelian canon itself. Given the latter's inclusion of pseudepigraphy, Ibn Sīnā encountered both hostile *and* non-hostile references in it to the teaching of the soul's pre-existence. Aristotle attacks such doctrines in his *De Anima I* – with Ibn Sīnā even taking over the same strategies¹⁴⁰ – but the Pseudo-Aristotle material commented on by Ibn Sīnā in his *Kitāb al-inṣāf* actively promotes the Platonic teachings in question. The key Pseudo-Aristotle text known as *Uthūlūjīyā Aristāṭālīs* ('The Theology of Aristotle'), proclaimed these doctrines, and Ibn Sīnā had to negotiate this as part of his exegete's duties, notwithstanding his doubts that the work was truly Aristotle's at all.¹⁴¹

The source of the *Uthūlūjīyā* is, by now, well-known to be Plotinus's *Enneads* IV–VI.¹⁴² A prominent subset of modern Plotinus scholars

Ismaili Imams. He is thus implying that Ibn Sīnā, or the author of the poem, was in fact a disciple of the Imams who veiled the spiritual truths so that the members of their community might discover them through the teaching hierarchy of the *da'wa*. It may be recalled here that Ibn Sīnā's father and brother had, according to his own testimony, been attracted to Ismaili teaching by a Fāṭimid *dā'ī*. Madelung, 'An Ismaili Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Naḥs*', pp. 157–158.

140 Notably, Aristotle, *De Anima*, 407 b 13–25, where he attacks any idea of the soul's connection with the body being merely contingent, rather than necessary. Pythagorean (and Platonic) ideas of reincarnation instead suppose 'the soul to be inveigled into the body quite haphazardly'. In such a scenario, the condition of the body disposed to receive this soul must be looked into, says Aristotle. It would already need to have a shape and a 'form' or soul. Compare this with Ibn Sīnā's argument mentioned above, note 135.

141 Ibn Sīnā expressed this reservation in his Letter to Kiyā, stating 'the *Uthūlūjīyā* is somewhat suspect'. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 131.

142 The details of how the 'Theology of Aristotle' was put together and transmitted, and how it precisely maps onto the text of the *Enneads*, have been explored exhaustively in F.W. Zimmermann, 'The Origins of the so-called

holds that rebirth was significant or even central to his Neoplatonic psychology.¹⁴³ Though Plotinus partly approaches the doctrine didactically, using it to inculcate political virtue while maintaining that the serious man (*spoudaios*) does not really concern himself with such matters, he also treats it literally and views the bi-form soul as an objectively transmigrant entity from one, albeit inferior, angle.¹⁴⁴ Although large portions of Plotinus's text are passed over in the Arabic, it happens that already in the very first book (*mīmar*) of the *Uthūlūjiyā* the problem of the soul's pre-existence, fall and rebirth (which he terms *metensōmatōsis*), is probed. In the context of our present enquiry, this heightens the interest of Ibn Sīnā's comments on this text, since they will show how he sought to resolve these stances which were, seemingly, so much at odds with each other – his own Aristotelian soul-theory and a Platonic one. The solution to our puzzle will be found in these aspects of the sheikh's exegesis of the *Uthūlūjiyā Aristātālīs*.

The first passage,¹⁴⁵ matching *Ennead* IV.7.13.1 ff, speaks of how the soul, driven by desire, split away (*fāraqat*) from the intelligible world and descended (*inḥadarat*) into this sensory world of ours, and so came into the body. Plotinus insists that the soul is in fact Janus-faced, so its facet which is *of the intellect* stays above and is forever un-descended. However, another facet does become linked with the body through some kind of desire (Gk. *orexis*; Ar. *shawq*) or eager intent (Gk. *spoudê*; Ar. *ḥirṣ*). Plotinus by turns speaks of this facet of the soul as entering the sensory world but also, mysteriously, as actually constructing it (Gk. *dêmiourgei*) or generating it (Gk. *gennêsthai*; Ar. *yatamakhkhaḍu*).

Theology of Aristotle, in J. Kraye, W.F. Ryan and C.B. Schmitt, ed., *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts* (London, 1986), pp. 110–240. See also the review of Zimmermann's study by E.K. Rowson, 'The Theology of Aristotle and some other pseudo-Aristotelian texts reconsidered', in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, 3 (1992), pp. 478–484, and also Cristina D'Ancona, 'Pseudo-Theology of Aristotle, Chapter I: Structure and Composition', *Oriens*, 36 (2001) pp. 78–112.

143 See Giannis Stamatellos, 'Plotinus on Transmigration: a Reconsideration', in *Journal of Ancient Philosophy (English edition)*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2013), pp. 49–64. He cites A.N.M. Rich, J.M. Rist, H.J. Blumenthal and A.H. Armstrong as holding that Plotinus viewed transmigration as significant.

144 Ibid., p. 59 ff.

145 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Aflūḥīn 'inda 'l-'Arab* (Qum, 1977), pp. 18–19.

Picking up on the extended metaphor used in Plotinus's text, this last Arabic term quite pointedly means giving birth, with Plotinus here likening the soul, infused with the beauty it witnesses beyond in the intellect, to a pregnant woman undergoing labour pains (*makhād*), such as to bring forth what is in her womb (*li-taḍā'a mā fī baṭnihā*), so giving birth to the sensory world. Ibn Sinā's comment on this striking, last metaphor, though negligible, clearly shows that he concedes, in the frame of the *Uthūlūjīyā* commentary, to speak *as if* the soul pre-exists: 'It must be said: [the soul's] desire is fierce towards the sensory world, because of what we explained, consisting of the fact that the world that [the soul] is as yet in strives to be abstracted from matter.'¹⁴⁶ Ibn Sinā possibly fails to comment on the idea of the soul giving birth to the material realm, because he takes it in his stride as alluding, not to the individual soul, but to *celestial* soul's status as genetrix of our terrestrial realm – uncontroversial in the cosmology inherited by him.

Ibn Sinā's commentary is found to be peppered by such locutions that imply the soul's reality before embodiment and its *subsequent* entry into it, e.g.: 'the soul is something intellectual, essentially separate from matter, to which the form of a yearning for the sensorial world has come about (*qad ṣārat la-hu ṣūratu shawqin*'); 'the soul comes to adhere to the body (*laṣīqat bi'l-badan*'); 'when the soul becomes corporeal (*idhā ṣārat al-nafsu badaniyyatan*)', etc. Such expressions seem at odds, however, with the basic trend of Ibn Sinā's commentary, in which he strives to interpret the text through Aristotle's established psychology, as he inherits it. His commentary opens with an outright denial of the outward sense of the whole passage: '[Pseudo-Aristotle] does *not* mean that the soul of the human being for some period pre-existed the body, neither does it migrate (*tanzi'u*) into a body, nor come into association with it (*tulābisuhu*), and [only] *then* it betook itself to it – for the impossibility of this scenario has become obvious in [Aristotle's] writings.' Ibn Sinā says that all that the soul's so-called 'coming down' into the body really means here is that it is necessary for the soul (*wajaba la-hā*) *not* to be abstracted from the material body (*mujarrada 'an al-badan*) – in contrast with the purely intellectual entities. This connection with and tendency towards the body exists for the soul in its very beginnings (*fī awwali 'l-amr*). Though Ibn Sinā teaches that it later separates, at the

146 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Aristū 'inda 'l-'Arab* (Cairo, 1947), p. 39.

start of its life, it only exists bonded with the body and actively wants this relation. The soul's 'desire' mentioned here in the *Uthūlūjīyā*, supposedly merely refers to the usefulness or instrumentality of the body for the soul, as it is only through the body that the soul develops towards perfection. On the grounds of this instrumentality, the soul prizes its embodied circumstance: '[The soul] is a substance which is perfected (*yustakmalu*) through what accrues to it by some sort of acquisition (*kash*) and seeking (*ṭalab*), and [pseudo-Aristotle wants to explain] that an innate desire (*shawq gharīzī*) is entailed for it, to seek that perfection.'¹⁴⁷ Notwithstanding his accommodation of the *Uthūlūjīyā*'s expressions as *façons de parler*, Ibn Sīnā's hermeneutic of Plotinus here studiously eliminates the idea of any life for the individual human soul antedating the body.

By this manoeuvre, he wholly undermines the Plotinian doctrine of the soul's biformity with which the first *mīmar* ('book') of the *Uthūlūjīyā* emphatically opens. In this teaching it is not just the case that the soul pre-exists and descends into embodiment, but that one aspect of the soul never really descends, and remains above. This undescended aspect is the very basis of its salvation.¹⁴⁸ Here again, Ibn Sīnā affects to keep the nominal form of the teaching, while he eliminates its original significance. As De Smet argues, Ibn Sīnā actually adopts this Neoplatonic notion of the soul's two faces but limits them to aspects of the embodied soul itself, thought of according to his Aristotelian notions. Each soul has two faces, an upper one disposed in such a way that, through it, the soul's contiguity (*muwāṣala*) with the world of the intellect may be perceived, and a lower one disposed in such a way that its contiguity with the sensorial world may be perceived.¹⁴⁹ The first is covered by the term 'the speculative faculty' (*al-quwwa al-naẓariyya*) whereby the material intellect (*al-ʿaql al-hayūlānī*) develops gradually towards contact with the Active Intellect; the second is termed 'the practical faculty' (*al-quwwa al-ʿamaliyya*), comprising the internal and external senses.

147 See, for the series of references in this paragraph: Badawī, *Aristū 'inda 'l-ʿArab*, pp. 39–40, 41 (line 10), 42 (line 1), and 37.

148 'That intellectual substance abides in the intellectual world (*sākin fi 'l-ʿālamī 'l-ʿaqlī*), ever-subsisting in it, not passing away from it nor entering into any other place': Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda 'l-ʿArab*, p. 18. Compare *Ennead* IV.7.13.1–5.

149 Badawī, *Aristū 'inda 'l-ʿArab*, p. 69.

Though some idea of the soul's two faces has been retained, the teaching has been purged of its original significance and there is no question of an 'undescended' aspect of the soul.¹⁵⁰

However strained these readings, they show Ibn Sīnā's will to indulge the *Uthūlūjīyā*'s gamut of Neoplatonic formulations of the soul's predicament, on a nominal level. The teachings of the soul's discarnate pre-existence, misplaced desire, fall into embodiment and two faces are all adjusted to Ibn Sīnā's Aristotelian framework. After all, the party responsible for these formulations in this particular text had, to all appearances, been Aristotle himself. These formulations, then, must have been meant by him as motivational manners of speech – mythopoeic developments of the known architecture of Peripatetic psychology.

A key case of Ibn Sīnā's wider commentarial stance is his discussion of reincarnation, to which the *Uthūlūjīyā* repeatedly alludes in these pages. Again, the sheikh firmly rejects its literal truth, while having to explain its use in the text more sympathetically, within the parameters of his regular psychological teachings. One relevant passage, representing *Ennead* IV.7.14.1 ff, concerns the radical transmigrationist thesis of *maskh* or rebirth into other animal species: 'As for the soul of other animals – such amongst souls that proceed faultily (*khaṭa'an*) betake themselves into the bodies of predatory beasts ... etc.'¹⁵¹ Ibn Sīnā's rejection of this prospect may be sketched as follows. Souls freed from their bodies by death are in complete stasis, and if impure, they would keep the impurities (*awsākh*) from their recent embodiment unless 'nature' gave them further scope for development and cleansing. Ibn Sīnā then presents a destructive trilemma, rejecting all three disjuncts: either the opportunity is given through (a) rebirth as an animal, or (b) rebirth as a human, or (c) kinetic input from the celestial rotations. Then (a) is rejected because nature would not, absurdly, offer a soul the opportunity of cleansing itself from the forms of embodiment, through an animal embodiment *even more* subject to impurities. Next, (b) is rejected because nature would not, absurdly, offer a soul the opportunity of cleansing itself from the forms of embodiment, through a human

150 De Smet, 'La doctrine avicennienne des deux faces de l'âme', pp. 86–87.

151 *Wa ammā sā'iri 'l-ḥayawāni fa-mā salaka minhā sulūkan khaṭa'an fa-innahā šarat fī ajsāmi 'l-sibā'*. Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda 'l-'Arab*, p. 20.

embodiment *equally* subject to impurities. Lastly, (c) is rejected because a discarnate soul is held to be, by definition, immaterial. It thus lacks the material constitution on which the physical motions of the heavens could work their influence. What is chiefly of note in this thinking is Ibn Sinā's wholesale rejection of rebirth, which he even stresses with the rhetorical question: 'Is the great majority's lot merely to gain possession of the sensory faculties in bodies?!'¹⁵² That is, if most souls, carrying the on-going forms of pollution from embodiment, are only to be offered *further* embodiments, this would hardly help them get beyond their polluted state.¹⁵³

Though in this way Ibn Sinā denies the objective coherence of the *Uthulūjiyā*'s talk of reincarnation, he feels that he must still put forward a positive explanation for its repeated allusions to the teaching. He rules that, though rebirth is objectively impossible, it is yet possible as a *subjective experience* undergone by the base or vicious soul (*al-naḥs al-radī'a*). This explains why Pseudo-Aristotle has referred to it repeatedly. The experience arises through a kind of auto-suggestion on the part of a soul steeped in bodily forms, on its separation from the body: 'The interpretation (*ta'wīl*) in regard to some of them invoking rebirth, is that the vicious soul, subsequent to separating from the body, remains in base bodily forms. In that case it is precisely the latter's discomforts that it is given to experience. So it is *as if* (*ka-anna-hā*) it were returned to the body, and that is perhaps making the soul imagine a sort of illusion (*rubbamā kāna dhālika yukhayyilu ilayhā naw'an min al-takhayyul*) which has been referred to in [Pseudo-Aristotle's] writings.'¹⁵⁴

Next, the elements of Platonic psychology, mentioned so far, have an epistemological corollary, namely *anamnēsis* or 'Platonic recollection'. Ibn Sinā is found to tread a similar line here. In his symbolic texts such as the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*, he frames the descended soul's awakening to intelligibles (the objects of the intellect, as distinct from the objects of sense perception) in terms of recollection (*dhikr*), but in his *Uthulūjiyā* commentary he refutes recollection as a literal model, while (as with the other Platonic doctrines mentioned) accommodating it nominally. In a

152 Badawī, *Aristū 'inda 'l-'Arab*, p. 43.

153 Ibid., pp. 42–43.

154 Badawī, *Aristū 'inda 'l-'Arab*, p. 45. Also see De Smet, 'La doctrine avicennienne des deux faces de l'âme', pp. 79–80.

notable passage in the second *mīmar* of the *Uthūlūjīyā*, Pseudo-Aristotle invokes memory in presenting the soul's relationship with intelligibles. Intelligibles cannot just be integral fixtures of the soul's awareness, he rules, insofar as their actualisation depends on its anamnestic activity, summoning them by effortful thinking. Ibn Sīnā's comment uses the initial point that the soul must exert itself in attaining intelligibles, to overturn the very idea of memory as an objective model for intellection. In reality, the soul's identity does not incorporate intelligibles at all. They never belong to it but always belong to the Active Intellect, which transcends the soul as such. The soul's access to intelligibles is through contact with the Active Intellect, just as its deprivation of them is through non-contact with it. In Ibn Sīnā's psychology, memory (*al-dhākira/al-hāfiza*) is a highly specific faculty. It is a constituent of the animal aspect of our identity, one of the five internal senses, and is presented as a kind of storehouse situated in the brain's rear ventricle. All five internal senses are, in one way or another, engaged in processing percepts from our five external senses. The rational soul is over and above all such animal functions. Its knowledge comes about through turning away from bodily concerns and achieving contact with the Active Intellect, which in itself transcends the entire human identity-complex, including the rational soul itself. Yet let it be noted that, even here, Ibn Sīnā salvages Platonic recollection on the level of terminology. For he ends by saying that the term *dhikr*, when attributed to the rational soul, means its seeking to dispose itself to gain full contact with the Active Intellect.¹⁵⁵

Is there any attenuated sense for Ibn Sīnā, in which 'soul' has pre-existed earthly embodiment? I argue that only a premise of the embodied soul's links with its precursive celestial bases may explain some of Ibn Sīnā's bolder formulations.¹⁵⁶ Celestial souls are, indeed,

155 'What the soul has is conjunction and disjunction [with the Intellect], and 'remembering' is a searching for the disposition for fully accomplished conjunction. So if [the soul in question] cogitates and comprehends, its lot is to have conjunction as and when it wants to': Badawī, *Aristū 'inda 'l-'Arab*, p. 73.

156 An example of such a formulation is when Ibn Sīnā glosses the statement in the *Uthūlūjīyā*, 'Next [the soul cleansed from bodily impurities] reverts to its own world from which it [earlier] emerged (*alladhī kharajat minhu*)'. Our commentator bluntly states: 'That is, [the soul] survives, characterised by the region (or 'direction', *jīha*) of its own world from which its existence first

eternal components of Ibn Sīnā's cosmology. These, moreover, constitute the prior existentialising factors which combine to generate the embodied soul on earth, the latter being congeneric (*muǧānisa*) with them. The soul qua 'species and meaning' (*al-naw' wa 'l-ma'nā*) is a kind of unity. The soul, moreover, is precisely the *form* (*ṣūra*) of the body, and forms are emitted down into the sublunary realm by the Active Intellect in its role as the Giver of Forms (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*). In this carefully couched sense, soul's reality does antedate the body-soul syzygy. On the other hand, in the psychology of his various summae and in *al-Risāla al-aḏḥawiyya*, Ibn Sīnā argues strenuously against the pre-existence of the individuated soul.¹⁵⁷ Through dis-ambiguating the sense of 'soul' he plotted his course in interpreting the psychology of the Arabic Corpus Aristotelicum, including its pseudepigrapha.¹⁵⁸ By embracing the very same ambiguity, and actively equivocating, Ibn Sīnā allowed himself in his allegories to speak as if the soul pre-exists its embodiment.

In sum, Ibn Sīnā's commentary on the *Uthūlūjīyā* shows in detail how he felt able to appropriate, tropologically, various Neoplatonic teachings on the soul in texts such as the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*. Philosophy shifts

began (*alladhī minhu ibtada'a wujūduhā*), without perishing or passing away' (Badawī, *Aristū 'inda 'l-'Arab*, p. 43). The statement seems unambiguous, but the very careful way that Ibn Sīnā has put it is crucial: it is not the individuated soul as such but its *existence* which has 'descended'.

157 Ibn Sīnā states that souls may pre-exist as individuated in one of two ways: as multiple or as single. He rules that the former is absurd because matter is precisely the means by which a species proliferates as multiple individuals, and these souls are as yet, *ex hypothesi*, *not* combined with matter. He then rules that the latter scenario too is absurd – a scenario in which a single, pre-existent, individuated soul undergoes fragmentation or partition, to become manifold. But if two or more later souls were parts of a self-identical, individual soul, in that case an entity lacking all spatial extension or volume is treated as divisible. Ibn Sīnā declares this to be absurd 'according to the principles established in physics' (Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 56–57). An allied argument found in the *Shifā'* reasons that if multiple souls are fragments of an individual soul, they should all share the same knowledge. But clearly souls are not like that. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā': al-Ṭabī'īyyāt* (6), *al-Naḥs*, ed. G.C. Anawati and S. Zayid (Cairo, 1975), pp. 199–200.

158 A useful start has been made to the task of unravelling these equivocations by the late Michael Marmura in his 'Some Questions Regarding Avicenna's Theory of the Temporal Origination of the Rational Human Soul', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 18 (March 2008), pp. 121–138.

in these texts, from an 'objectivist' project of comprehending the world, to a fully soteriological project, engaging us in our deepest subjectivity to aspire to perfect and save ourselves. In this figurative, motivational discourse, Ibn Sīnā made free use of a gamut of Neoplatonic notions on the soul, each in the end, however, interpretable according to his own Aristotelian psychological system. Thus, the soul's 'pre-existence' is its congenericity with celestial souls; its 'descent' is its initial inability to subsist in abstraction from the body; its desire for embodiment is its valuing the body as an instrument for its perfection; the soul's two faces (the one incarnate but the other forever discarnate) become two aspects of the fully incarnate soul; *anamnēsis* is not so much the soul recollecting what it already knows but its predisposing itself for contact with the Active Intellect; and metempsychosis is no more than the reflex of a deep-rooted 'perceptual fallacy' explicable within Ibn Sīnā's psychological theory – a telling illusion generated by the habits of base souls, fixated with the concerns and pleasures of their bodies.

‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd and his Historical Context

Much of Ismailism's characteristic development in Yemen can be traced to the specifics of the 64-year reign of the great Ṣulayḥīd queen, Arwā bt. Aḥmad, generally known as *al-Sayyida* ('the Lady'), or more fully, *al-Malika al-Sayyida al-Hurra*, who is also celebrated with the epithet *Bilqīs al-Ṣughrā* ('The Lesser Queen of Sheba').¹⁵⁹ The career of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd would shortly unfold within the religio-political order that she forged. The initial basis of her power lay in the retirement of her ailing husband al-Mukarram from active rule to the fortress of Dhu'l-Jibla, where he was ultimately to die in 477/1084.¹⁶⁰ Al-Sayyida's awe for the imamate and sense that her own mandate rested on its historic mission, seem to have been in tension with an independence

159 On the inception of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Yemen and its history up to the time of Arwa, see Shainool Jiwa, 'The Genesis of Ismā'īlī Da'wa Activities in the Yemen', in *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, 15 (1988), pp. 50–63; and Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, passim.

160 Al-Mukarram apparently suffered from a form of paraplegia. Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 130.

of personality and a mistrust of the Fāṭimid court which found cause to deepen through her reign. This drove the dramatic shifts of her rule. She was, from the start, intimately identified with the Ismaili hierarchy and its sacred aura. In the year of al-Mukarram's death she had been awarded by al-Mustanşir bi'llāh (significantly, the last Fāṭimid Ismaili Imam common to both the Nizārī and Musta'li traditions) the very exalted rank of *ḥujja* or 'Proof', for her high dedication and learning in the cause of the *da'wa*. This was the highest rank in the hierarchy after that of the Imam and his *Bāb* ('Gateway'), and its possession by a female was all the more noteworthy. It was a higher degree than that of 'absolute missionary' (*dā'ī muṭlaq*). All the same, Queen Arwā's strongmindedness could make itself felt in her relationship with her Imam, al-Mustanşir, as when he directed her, in the aftermath of her husband al-Mukarram's death, to re-marry, putting forward the name of the warrior-*dā'ī* Saba' b. Aḥmad. Accounts vary as to whether she reluctantly agreed to the match but refused to consummate it, or that Saba' gracefully gave up the marriage proposal as soon as he realised her disinclination. Either way, in the matter of her second marriage she had made her feelings clear, even in the face of the Imam's own bidding.

Until the later years of her reign, open autonomy was, however, untypical of her. Queen Arwā's resolute habit had been to defer to the caliphal centre's authority, as seen in her response to the Nizārī-Musta'li schism. This split followed the death of the Imam al-Mustanşir in 487/1094 and witnessed the emergence of Nizārī Ismailism under the leadership of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ (d. 518/1124) in Iran. These events were partly rooted in the machinations of a disproportionately powerful Fāṭimid wazirate. To all appearances, the meddlesome figure of al-Afḍal, son of the great Armenian general Badr al-Jamālī, and inheritor of his absolute, waziral powers, had gone against al-Mustanşir's designation of Nizār in favour of his younger son Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad. The latter, who was married to al-Afḍal's sister, was hurriedly enthroned with the regnal name al-Musta'li. After a brief campaign and siege of the great port-city of Alexandria, which was loyal to Nizār and his place of refuge, he was captured in 488/1095 and taken back to Cairo where his younger brother al-Musta'li summarily commanded him to be walled up alive. The consequences for the wider support-base of the Fāṭimids were absolutely catastrophic. Almost all communities which had been loyal to them in the Muslim East, now shunned any further allegiance to Cairo and, under the leadership of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, split away into the separate, Nizārī

Ismaili *da'wa*. Throughout these momentous events, however, Arwā had resolved to keep her loyalty to the caliphal centre and had confirmed her allegiance to al-Musta'li.

But the Queen's confidence in the Cairene magisterium and its administration was to ebb in the end. With hindsight, the critical blow heralding her final decision to break away, came during the reign of al-Musta'li's successor, al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh – a blow dealt in the form of the career of a certain Ibn Najīb al-Dawla. This figure, who was steeped in Ismaili learning and who, in Cairo, had been the librarian of the aforementioned wazīr al-Afdāl, was chosen by him in 513/1119 for an important mission to bring Queen Arwā's state under the direct control of the Fāṭimid court. Operating in Yemen with a troop of Armenian fighters, he quickly alienated the populace and its ruler alike – though he was officially engaged in compelling the smaller Yemeni principalities to accept Ṣulayḥid rule. But finally, in 522/1128,¹⁶¹ his true intentions became all too clear when he confronted the Ṣulayḥid queen's own position and tried to have her placed in seclusion, stripped of her powers. Next, according to the most plausible view: 'The Queen contrived to have him arrested and drowned, although she managed to conceal her responsibility for the act and continued to make a show of obeying the commands of the Fāṭimid court.'¹⁶²

Al-Sayyida's own military chiefs, for their part, emboldened her by their staunch loyalty. Al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī (d. 533/1138), in particular, played a vital protective role in her last decade of rule and barely outlived her. It is noteworthy that in his work *Ghāyat al-mawālīd*, al-Khaṭṭāb spoke strongly in favour of Arwā's claim to the rank of *ḥujja*, likening her in this regard to cases such as the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima, his first wife Khadija, and even the Virgin Mary.¹⁶³

161 The earlier date 519/1125 is cited in Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 263.

162 Abbas Hamdani, *The Precious Gift* (London 2012), p. 29. An alternative reading of the event, which exculpates the queen, is that Ibn Najīb al-Dawla was a secret Nizārī agitator. After his intrigues in Yemen against the reigning Fāṭimid, al-Āmir, were uncovered, he was arrested at the latter's own command and so Queen Arwā had sent him back, not without personal regret, by ship from Aden. The ship, however, was wrecked en route to Egypt, drowning all on board. F. Krenkow, 'Ṣulayḥī', *EII*.

163 Hamdani, *The Precious Gift*, p. 29. Also mentioned in the list of precedents are Ṣafīyya (the daughter of Muḥammad's grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib), Fāṭima bt. Asad (the mother of 'Alī), and Sarah (the daughter of Aaron). For an

Such credence in her religious mandate now combined with her own mounting suspicion of the intrigue and power-play in the far-off Fāṭimid court. The memory of the episode of Ibn Najīb al-Dawla was still fresh when the events took place that triggered her decision to withdraw her community from Cairo's influence forever.

Since the death of the Imam-caliph al-Must'ālī in 495/1101, his son al-Āmir had been ruling, to whom al-Sayyida had remained loyal now for nearly 30 years, but the unforeseeable events of 524/1130 changed everything. A *siḡill* was sent to her by al-Āmir in which he gave the auspicious news of the birth of a son, al-Ṭayyib, on 4th Rabī' II (17th March). The same document (referred to as the *siḡill al-bishāra*, 'the Annunciation Document') also designated the infant as the next imam and bade Arwā to proclaim this to all her territories, which she did. Shockingly, within a few months, further news came that al-Āmir had been murdered. In the aftermath, the late Imam's first cousin 'Abd al-Majīd became regent on behalf of the baby boy al-Ṭayyib, with the title *al-ḥāfiẓ li-dīn Allāh* ('Protector of God's Religion'), which, as Hamdani points out, 'smacks of regency – one who is preserving the imamate for someone else'.¹⁶⁴ Queen Arwā and her *dā'īs* had initially supported al-Ḥāfiẓ in his capacity as an interim 'Protector of the Muslims' Trust' (*walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*), but they were taken aback by the change in his tone when shortly later, in an official missive he instead spoke of himself as 'the Commander of the Believers' (*amīr al-mu'minīn*), at which Arwā was quoted as exclaiming: 'I am [still] the daughter of Aḥmad, whereas he was *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn* yesterday and today is *amīr al-mu'minīn*! He is entering a field that is not his and he is claiming a rank which is not his place to claim.'¹⁶⁵

exploration, prompted by the case of Arwā, of the possible recognition of female authority figures within Fāṭimid Ismaili teaching, see Karen Bauer, 'Spiritual Hierarchy and Gender Hierarchy in Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī Interpretations of the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 14: 2 (2012), pp. 29–46. The article shows in detail that al-Khaṭṭāb's arguments for Arwā's rank have deep roots in earlier Fāṭimid teachings, but his use of these theoretical teachings to defend the practical authority of 'a real woman', his historical contemporary Queen Arwā, is a remarkable development. Also see the discussion on the true extent of Arwā's religious authority in Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam*, pp. 136–138.

164 Hamdani, *The Precious Gift*, p. 31.

165 Ibid., p. 31, quoting Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn al-akhbār wa funūn*

Thus it was, that in the course of 526/1132 when 'Abd al-Majid al-Ḥāfiẓ claimed the imamate, Queen Arwā declared her support for al-Ṭayyib, initiating the independent Ṭayyibī *da'wa*, and she and the Fāṭimid centre in Cairo now parted ways. The infant al-Ṭayyib's own survival of these events was, to all appearances, unlikely, yet Ṭayyibī Ismaili belief rests on the claim that, against all odds, he did survive in concealment. Some three centuries later, the major Ṭayyibī historian, Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468) gives historical substance to this article of belief, explaining that al-Ṭayyib had been placed in the safe protection of a certain Ibn Madyan, an erstwhile confidant of the child's father, al-Āmir.¹⁶⁶ Be that as it may, the shift to this new 'cycle of concealment' (*dawr al-satr*), established Arwā's Ṭayyibī Ismailism and the local Yemeni *da'wa* hierarchy which was its vehicle, as independent of the Fāṭimid regime and as a de facto free-standing entity.

In the short term, however, the effect was to shatter whatever solidarity Yemeni Ismailism had enjoyed and to give the restless Ismaili dynasties that rivalled the Ṣulayḥids an alternate religious identity: Ḥāfiẓī loyalism. This path was eagerly adopted by the whole Hamdānī dynasty of Ṣan'ā' and the Zuray'ids of Aden, who chafed at their subordinate, feudatory, relationship with the Ṣulayḥid queen, having tried, periodically, to free themselves from it. As it turned out, the Ḥāfiẓī *da'wa* was short-lived and could not sustain itself much beyond the end of the Fāṭimid caliphate in 567/1171.¹⁶⁷ The Ṭayyibī *da'wa*, on the other hand, has survived to this day.

The Queen herself incepted the shift in strategy to which Ṭayyibī Ismailism's remarkable endurance is largely owed. While the aforementioned al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī, initially provided much

al-āthār, vol. 7, ed. Ayman F. Sayyid, with summary English trans. by Paul E. Walker and Maurice A. Pomerantz as *The Fatimids and their Successors in Yaman* (London, 2002), pp. 265–271.

166 Discussed in Abbas Hamdani, 'The Dā'i Ḥāim Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 596 H/AD 1199) and his Book *Tuhfat al-Qulūb*', *Oriens*, 23–24 (1970–1971), pp. 258–300.

167 Sulaymān Badr al-Dīn, the great-great-grandson of al-Ḥāfiẓ, died as a prisoner of the Ayyūbids in Cairo in 645/1248, without progeny. Though someone claiming to be his son emerged in Upper Egypt in 697/1298, the Ḥāfiẓī *da'wa* lost all its adherents in the course of the following 8th/14th century, with its very last believers lingering in villages in the Baqī'a mountains near the town of Ṣafad in Palestine. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 255.

needed military protection for the newly fledged Ṭayyibī *da'wa*, Arwā had the foresight to lessen the *da'wa*'s dependence on her state and its military. As well as having two surviving daughters, she had given birth to two sons who had, however, both died young. Arwā's lack of surviving sons and concern for the future of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in Yemen prompted her in her final years to put in motion a retreat from statehood. The teaching hierarchy now began taking over as the main basis for the *da'wa*'s vitality and survival. In view of the kingdom's glaring vulnerability to military vicissitudes, succession crises and other historical challenges, this policy proved crucial to the success of Ṭayyibī Ismailism in the coming centuries, allowing it to thrive in Yemen, Gujarat on the western seaboard of India, and later, even further afield, unbound to the fate of this or that state or dynasty.

Thus, beginning from the close of Queen Arwā's rule, the unfolding story of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* entirely merged with the story of its line of chief missionaries (*du'āt muṭlaqīn*). The old Fāṭimid ideal of a sacred imperium became wholly reconfigured in terms of an ecclesia (consisting of both teachers and learners). The line of chief *dā'īs* issued from within Arwā's reign, starting with Yaḥyā b. Lamak (d. 520/1126). After Yaḥyā's death came the chief *dā'ī* al-Dhu'ayb b. Mūsā, whose career straddled the seismic shift when al-Ḥāfiẓ's claim was rejected and any further answerability to the Egyptian headquarters was abandoned. Al-Dhu'ayb started in his position in 520/1126 and was occupying it at the formal inception of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in 526/1132 when the religious circumstances had so radically changed. The opening of the new *dawr al-satr* now made al-Dhu'ayb the effective hierarch of Ismailism in its Ṭayyibī form, and he is taken to be the first in its long line of *du'āt muṭlaqīn*. Incidentally, his appointment to this rank by Queen Arwā was indicative of her even higher position,¹⁶⁸ and his exercise of the sole leadership of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* can only be said to begin from the date of her death in 532/1138.

Al-Dhu'ayb appointed to the next highest position after himself, that of the chief missionary's assistant (*ma'dhūn*), a man who would be the main founder of the idiosyncratic architecture of Ṭayyibī thought. The authority in question, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī, must be counted as a significant figure of Ismaili thought and Muslim

168 Bauer, 'Spiritual Hierarchy', p. 41.

esotericism. He was to become the second *dā'i muṭlaq* on al-Dhu'ayb's death in 546/1151. In works such as his *Kanz al-walad* ('The Child's Treasure') Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī laid out the distinctive *ḥaqā'iq*-system transmitted in the Ṭayyibī tradition till today. This system takes over the earlier, plenary framework of the great Fāṭimid philosopher, Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020), whose elaborate cosmology is substantially resumed in Ṭayyibī thought. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī, however, made this authoritative cosmological model the vehicle for certain doctrines which had been hitherto left unvoiced, perhaps due to their controversy. De Smet and others have suggested that features of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī's thought recapitulate the teachings of certain Gnostic movements in late antiquity – ideas latent in the earlier Ismaili tradition and transmitted in virtual secrecy until the circumstances were ready to register them.¹⁶⁹ The retreat from the central, state-supported Fāṭimid vision of the cosmos (in addition, perhaps, to the impact of a compensatory reflex reacting to the suspended relationship with the 'Imam of the Time') let these aspects of the teachings surface and find voice in the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in Yemen, in a manner bearing comparison, *mutatis mutandis*, with the Nizārī *da'wa* tradition in the Iranian regions. The works of our commentator, Ibn al-Walīd, mainly develop the ideas of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī, who was probably his foremost teacher, and these ideas are assumed in his interpretation of the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*. Another side of this debt is found in Ibn al-Walīd's extensive use of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in the commentary, a trend also owed to Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī.

On his death in 557/1162 Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī was succeeded by his son Ḥatīm b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī. Holding his position as the third *dā'i muṭlaq* for 37 years, he was not only a prolific writer but a major figure in spreading the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in Yemen. Events would confirm the need to step back from reliance on military power, but at first he embraced this time-honoured means, engaging the Ḥāfizī Hamdānid ruler of Ṣan'ā' in three years of fierce fighting (561/1166 to 564/1169). When the war ended in decisive defeat for Ḥatīm b. Ibrāhīm, he retreated to the mountains of Ḥarāz and focused on converting its largely Ḥāfizī population to the Ṭayyibī *da'wa*.

169 De Smet, *La Quiétude de l'Intellect*, p. 249. Possible parallels with Valentinian Gnosis are further discussed below, p. 83 ff.

The strategic bankruptcy of military force was finally set beyond doubt by the arrival of Ayyūbid power in Yemen. The originally Kurdish Ayyūbid dynasty had been incepted by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb (i.e., ‘Saladin’, the gallant enemy of the Angevin king of England and Crusader, Richard the Lionheart). In addition to his wars against the Crusaders, Saladin had been responsible in 567/1171 – in the course of Ḥātim’s period of leadership of the Ṭayyibī *da’wa* in Yemen – for ending Fāṭimid rule in Egypt when he had had the official sermon (*khuṭba*) given in Cairo in the name of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Mustaḍī. Days later the last Fāṭimid ruler, al-‘Aḍīd, died, aged 21 years old. Saladin had already been busily dismantling the Fāṭimid government since 564/1169, working on this, by a grim irony, while exercising his nominal role as Fāṭimid wazīr which he had taken over that year. He would now, amongst other things, go on to destroy the priceless *Dār al-‘Ilm* library of the Fāṭimids. The fate of the Ḥāfiẓī imamate in Cairo was not bewailed in Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmīdī’s Ṭayyibī community in Yemen, who viewed it as having usurped the imamate in the first place. That said, the same events heralded the intrusion of the conquering Ayyūbids into Yemen itself for over half a century from 569/1173 until 626/1229. In this troubled period the Ayyūbids, under leaders like Saladin’s brothers Tūrānshāh b. Ayyūb and his successor Ṭuḡtakīn b. Ayyūb, went on to dismantle all the petty principalities of Yemen. Only the Zaydī imamate held out as the local bulwark against what was viewed as a foreign occupation. The Ṭayyibī *da’wa*, for its part, survived perforce as a strictly faith-based community.¹⁷⁰

Despite the Ayyūbid takeover, Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm kept up his energetic efforts to protect and even extend the Ṭayyibī *da’wa*, holding lecture sessions (*majālis*) in a cave since known as *al-kaḥf al-na’īm* (‘the Serene Grotto’) beneath the fortress of Ḥuṭayb in Ḥarāz which he used as the headquarters of his, by now, international *da’wa* organisation. Not only Yemeni *dā’īs* were in attendance at Ḥuṭayb, but also those from different regions of the Indian subcontinent (both Sindh in the north-west, and ‘Hind’, that is, primarily Gujarat, are referred to). Ḥātim had been countering the influence of the Hamdānīd dynasty, which held sway in Ṣan‘ā’ and remained Ḥāfiẓī, through his highest representative in the city, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥārithī (his designated successor

170 Hamdani, *The Precious Gift*, p. 40.

as chief *dā'ī*). But the nature of al-Ḥārithī's task changed in the aftermath of the Ayyūbid takeover which began in 569/1173. A refugee crisis developed, brought about by the exodus of the resident Ismailis from the city into Ḥarāz. When al-Ḥārithī, seemingly overwhelmed by his responsibilities,¹⁷¹ died in 584/1188, Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm replaced him in this crucial role in Ṣan'ā' with al-Ḥārithī's foremost student and assistant in the city – our own 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walid,¹⁷² who was by then already a venerable figure of around 63 years old. Al-Ḥārithī's weighty mantle now passed to Ibn al-Walid.

The situation confronting Ibn al-Walid in Ṣan'ā' was oppressive. Relations with the Ayyūbid overlords were particularly strained under Ṭughtakīn b. Ayyūb, who in 578/1183 had succeeded his brother Tūrānshāh in Yemen and had embarked on more ambitious campaigns of regional conquest than him. Ibn al-Walid evidently refers to the circumstances of Ṭughtakīn's rule in Ṣan'ā' in his poetic *dīwān*. He alludes to the afflictions to which the 'religion of God' (*dīn Allāh*) was subject, and the return of the *dīn Umayya* (the religion of the Umayyads, i.e., Sunnism). He speaks of the inability even to mention the names of the Imams in public, so that the eulogies of 'Alī's descendents are only uttered 'in our own district (*bi-ṣuq' inā*) but no other (*wa mā dhukirū bi-ṣuq' in thānī*). It is speculated that this alludes to the Ayyūbid imposition of restrictions on religious expression at the time.¹⁷³ In certain *qaṣīdas* Ibn al-Walid speaks of the Ayyūbid demolition of the community's religious infrastructure: 'And you have mosques, tombs, and shrines which they pull down (*hadamū*), so it is as though they had never been built.'¹⁷⁴ A project of dismantling the Ismaili legacy, notably in Ṣan'ā', would have extended to Yemen the same Ayyūbid policy which had been implemented in Egypt. Additional evidence that this was indeed the case

171 Ibid., p. 44.

172 His name is recorded more fully as 'Alī b. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Abī Salama, with the agnomen Ibrāhīm al-Anf b. Abī Salama. Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn, *Nuzhat al-afkār*, IIS Library (Hamdani Collection) Ms 1527, p. 112, line 17.

173 Rabab Hamiduddin, 'The Qaṣīdah of the Ṭayyibī Da'wah and the Dīwān of Syedna 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Walid (d. 612/1215)' (PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2000), p. 108. The *bayt* is quoted by Hamiduddin, who gives the reference 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walid, *Dīwān*, Ms Ḥamd., p. 9 – apparently a privately held Ms.

174 Hamiduddin, 'The Qaṣīdah of the Ṭayyibī Da'wah', p. 109. Quoted from 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walid, *Dīwān*, Ms Ḥamd., p. 107.

is found in the Zaydī historian Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. ca. 1100/1688) who mentions in his *Anbāʾ al-zamān* how Tuḡtakīn razed the shrines of *Hamdān al-Ismaʿīliyya* in Ṣanʿāʾ and built a palace for himself where they had been.¹⁷⁵

So it was that the exacting responsibility of safeguarding the Ṭayyibī community in Ṣanʿāʾ in these straightened circumstances fell to Ibn al-Walid. The relationship between Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm and Ibn al-Walid was evidently one of the deepest mutual trust and admiration. After Ḥātim had become the chief *dāʿī* in 557/1162, when Ibn al-Walid would have been around 37 years of age,¹⁷⁶ the encomia in the latter's poetic *dīwān* overwhelmingly praised Ḥātim.¹⁷⁷ The high praise that Ḥātim in turn poured on Ibn al-Walid in his *Tuḥfat al-qulūb* ('The Precious Gift of Hearts') confirms that after al-Ḥārithī's untimely demise, he had meant him to have the official designation (*naṣṣ*) as the next *dāʿī muṭlaq* in the event of his own death.¹⁷⁸ That this did not happen was largely due to Ibn al-Walid's retiring nature, it being recorded that he strongly demurred and urged Ḥātim instead to name his own son 'Alī b. Ḥātim. He had actually been delegated by Ḥātim to act as a mentor to 'Alī b. Ḥātim and tutor him in the intricacies of Ṭayyibī thought. But despite this teacher-student relationship, Ibn al-Walid now insisted in the letter in question that 'Alī b. Ḥātim, not he, should be the nominated successor (*manṣūṣ*). His pupil, he protested, was worthier as he was now fully his

175 Hamiduddin, 'The Qaṣīdah of the Ṭayyibī Da'wah', pp. 108–109.

176 On the assumption that he was born around 515/1125.

177 Hamiduddin, 'The Qaṣīdah of the Ṭayyibī Da'wah', p. 98.

178 I translate a representative passage of praise by Ḥātim that has been quoted in the sources as follows: 'The *dāʿī* Ḥātim (may God sanctify his spirit), concerning the merit [of 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walid] said: "As for glory, leadership, asceticism, governance, acquisition of the best moral qualities, bestowing liberally on the path of God, carrying out the works of the holy law, condemning repugnant, forbidden things, purity, piety, chastity, worship, devoutness, saintliness, etiquette and praiseworthy traits – such [a list] might *only* be found in him and none can compare with him!" Next he said: "Understand that when we sought the existence of these characteristics, they were only to be found in their entirety in the august and praiseworthy sheikh, 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walid (may God undertake to protect him). As for nobility of lineage, he was from the noblest of his generation in lineage, the highest of them in repute, the foremost of them in the guiding mission, and the pre-eminent of them in accomplishing gratifying works".' Arabic text as cited in Hamiduddin, 'The Qaṣīdah of the Ṭayyibī Da'wah', p. 98.

teacher's equal in learning and virtue but also had a further merit that was decisive, namely, he was Ḥātim's own son. On receipt of the letter, Ḥātim exulted in Ibn al-Walid's selflessness and his devotion to the *da'wa*.¹⁷⁹ It has been speculated that, besides his humility, his originally non-Yemenī pedigree could have contributed to the decision to forego the overall leader's role at this stage. His was a high lineage, as betokened by his title *al-anf* ('pride' or literally, 'the nose').¹⁸⁰ But, for all its aristocracy, it was traceable to none other than the Banū Umayya – the 'Alids' arch-adversaries. Perhaps there was a mutual understanding that the Yemenī community 'was not yet ready to have a Qurashī northerner as a chief *dā'ī*'.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, when 'Alī b. Ḥātim took up his position as the fourth *dā'ī muṭlaq* of the Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in 596/1199, he straightaway appointed his old teacher Ibn al-Walid as his second in command (*ma'dhūn*) and named him as his choice as the *next* chief missionary. For his part, Ibn al-Walid's encomia effused with pious feeling for his former student, now his senior in the *da'wa* hierarchy. The new chief *dā'ī* clearly relied, as much as ever, on his long-term mentor (who would have then been around 74 years old), at a time when even the continuing location of the Ṭayyibī headquarters at Ḥuṭayb was thrown into question because of internecine strife amongst the surrounding Ya'ābur tribesmen. Ibn al-Walid did what he could by counselling the tribe from afar, and in a *qaṣīda* which he addressed to them (quoted by Idrīs in his *Nuzhat al-afkār*) he remonstrates with them and speaks of the gravity of the situation. In the event, the chief *dā'ī* 'Alī b. Ḥātim decided that it would be unwise to stay in Ḥarāz, and, abandoning Ḥuṭayb, he withdrew to Ṣan'ā' where he rejoined Ibn al-Walid. It may be that 'Alī b. Ḥātim hardly expected that the saintly old figure would survive him, but it was destined to be otherwise. When 'Alī b. Ḥātim died in 605/1209, Ibn al-Walid was, indeed, finally to become

179 Ibid., p. 111.

180 Idrīs writes: 'He had the agnomen Ibrāhīm al-Anf b. Abī Salama, on account of his having precedence over his peers as the mustache (sic. *al-shārib*) precedes the face, and [on account of] his being amongst those distinguished in purpose and nature'; Idrīs, *Nuzhat al-afkār*, p. 112, line 17 – p. 113, line 1.

181 Hamdani, *The Precious Gift*, p. 44. Ibn al-Walid is stated to have been a direct descendant of al-Walid b. 'Utba of the 'Abd Shams branch of the Quraysh of Mecca. It is unclear if the ancestor in question was al-Walid b. 'Utba b. Rabi'a or al-Walid b. 'Utba b. Abi Sufyān.

the fifth *dā'ī muṭṭlaq* at around 83 years of age. The man nicknamed 'the father of all' (*wālid al-jamī'*) was by now a sagely figurehead. Though he held the post for barely seven years, dying aged over 90 in 612/1215, the rank would thereafter stay (with the exception of two individuals) in his line of descent for around three centuries, until the death of the 23rd *dā'ī muṭṭlaq* in 946/1539 – a fitting irony, given Ibn al-Walid's reluctance to put himself forward for the position.

Despite his age and characteristic modesty, Ibn al-Walid showed he was still formidable in serving the cause of the *da'wa* and its teachings. The case of the rebel *dā'ī* Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Abbād al-Aḥwarī was a noted feature of his career as chief *dā'ī*, as recorded in Idrīs's *Nuzhat al-afkār*, though its somewhat generic and euphemistic description makes a precise reconstruction difficult. Aḥwarī seems to have been a travelling missionary from the years of Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm's leadership of the *da'wa*, undertaking expeditions (*fusah*) around Yemen to spread the Ṭayyibī creed. In Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm's *Tuḥfat al-qulūb*, he is duly listed in the ranks of the meritorious on account of his 'saintliness, piety, asceticism, and worship'.¹⁸² In particular, his work for the *da'wa* in Aden and Laḥij is mentioned approvingly.¹⁸³ It was under Ḥātim's son, the fourth chief *dā'ī* 'Alī b. Ḥātim, that the first signs of trouble emerged. This is couched by Idrīs in terms of Aḥwarī's 'excess' (*ghuluww*) – a term hinting at antinomianism and a leaning to apotheosise the Imams.¹⁸⁴ Idrīs goes on to say that Aḥwarī fomented trouble in that 'he sent agitators (*ahl al-ḍaghāyin*, lit. 'people of hatreds') in amongst the tribal chiefs and he sped in amongst them as would a disloyal liar (*wa sa'ā baynahum sa'ya 'l-mā'ini 'l-khā'in*).'¹⁸⁵

Although 'Alī b. Ḥātim wanted to excommunicate Aḥwarī (*an yamḥu 'an al-da'wati ismahu*, lit. 'to blot his name from the *da'wa*'), this was not accomplished before his death and the transfer of the leadership to Ibn al-Walid, and so it fell to him to revoke the erstwhile *dā'ī*'s rank and function. Aḥwarī was, predictably, deeply aggrieved by this. At that time,

182 Ibid., p. 113.

183 Ibid., p. 119.

184 'Then [al-Aḥwarī's] inclination became apparent to the *dā'ī* 'Alī b. Ḥātim, away from the middle way on which the people of the mission of the Imams stand, towards excess': Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn, *Nuzhat al-afkār*, p. 115, line 3 ff.

185 Ibid., p. 115, line 6.

according to Idrīs, 'this Aḥwarī came to visit [Ibn al-Walīd] through vexation, rancour, being choked by his admonition and constricted with emotion. [Aḥwarī] said, "Far be it that you would revoke the pledge I had (*mā kāna lī al-'aqd*), and that you would debar me from it. People like me are not to be debarred (*fa-mithlī lā yuṣaddu*)!" So the most splendid *dā'ī* [Ibn al-Walīd] replied to him: "Do not wrangle about that or dispute with me. For I am in God's faith and am not to be deceived!"¹⁸⁶ Idrīs goes on to say that although Aḥwarī made a show of obedience after this reproof, 'when he finally reached his residence in Ḍayḥāb he declared his hypocrisy to his people openly, neither fearing nor respecting God. He maintained he was worthier of the *da'wa* [than Ibn al-Walīd]... and he claimed his rank was the leadership of the *da'wa* (*wa idda'ā marta-batahu al-qiyāmu bi'l-da'wa*).¹⁸⁷ The text records how he received a fierce rebuke (*ta'nīf*) from the Ṭayyibī dignitaries (*kubarā'u ahli'l-da'wa*) and, in particular, it quotes at length the words of remonstrance with him by the *dā'ī* 'Alī b. Ḥanzala b. Abī Sālim al-Wādi'ī, who would shortly succeed to the role of *dā'ī muṭlaq* on the death of Ibn al-Walīd. His speech opens: 'Would that I knew how it is you deceive yourself that you are worthy of being ranked at the level of your master [Ibn al-Walīd] (*annaka tastaḥiqqu 'l-tarattuba fī rutbati mawlāka*), were it not for whom you would have no understanding [at all]'.¹⁸⁸ The long list of virtues and achievements that follows, to which it would be absurd for Aḥwarī to lay claim, doubles as a eulogy to Ibn al-Walīd himself.

Ibn al-Walīd went on to replace the excommunicant with another *dā'ī*, referred to as Sheikh 'Abd Allāh.¹⁸⁹ When we read the list of places which now passed under the latter's control, and that 'most of these places had been under Aḥwarī' (*wa kāna ila 'l-Aḥwarī aktharu ḥādhihi 'l-bilād*), it emerges that not only theological excess but also thwarted ambition had brought about Aḥwarī's clash with Ibn al-Walīd.¹⁹⁰ Not only had he controlled a swathe of the Ṭayyibī community in Yemen,

186 Ibid., p. 115, lines 10–15.

187 Ibid., p. 115, lines 16–17.

188 Ibid., p. 116, line 8 ff.

189 The full name is given as al-Shaykh 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh Abi Maṣṣūr b. Abi 'l-Faṭḥ.

190 The places listed are: 'Dhakhr, Ma'āfir, Laḥij, Abyan, Zabid, Aden and its suburbs (*nawāḥihā*) and the Tihāma and what is adjacent to it': *ibid.*, p. 119, top lines.

but also viewed himself as equally worthy of the chief *dāʿī*'s position. Be that as it may, his final end was, seemingly, simply the humiliation of total obscurity: 'The trace of him was blotted out from these places, and the mention of him was obliterated – as just requital for what his hands earned.'¹⁹¹

The Aḥwārī affair seems to have been the main disturbance internal to the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* in Yemen during the years of Ibn al-Walīd's leadership. But wider Ayyūbid affairs were in tumult, with grave implications for Yemen's stability. At this point of Idrīs's annal there are two and a half pages which begin by outlining how (in 598/1202, during the *dāʿī*-ship of 'Alī b. Ḥatīm) Ṭuġtakīn's son Ismā'īl b. Ṭuġtakīn b. Ayyūb had been assassinated by his military bondsmen, or *mamlūks*, and the infant al-Nāṣir b. al-'Azīz Ṭuġtakīn, the effective inheritor of two Ayyūbid crowns, ruled in his place, under Atabeg Sunqar's regency. The boy came to take up residence in Ṣan'ā', where his fate was an unhappy one. He would end by being poisoned in 611/1214, after which, according to Idrīs's account, Yemen descended into anarchy. Ibn al-Walīd's passing away at Aghmūr, Ḥarāz, shortly after this event, is finally recorded as follows: 'The demise of the glorious *dāʿī* 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd (may God sanctify his spirit) was at midnight before the daybreak of (*fi'l-niṣfi'l-laylati 'l-musfirati 'an*) Sunday 27th of the noble month of Sha'bān of the mentioned year, 612 [= 20th December, 1215], and his age (may God sanctify his spirit) was in excess of (*qad awfā 'alā*) 90 years – he yet being in perfect health (*ṣaḥīḥ al-jawāriḥ*).'¹⁹²

Ibn al-Walīd had dedicated a whole epistle to critiquing Aḥwārī, titled *Risālat al-bayān wa mudḥīdat al-buhtān* ('The Epistle of Clarification, Invalidating the False Accusation'),¹⁹³ scrutiny of which would bring other details of the Aḥwārī affair to light. Two sides of Ibn al-Walīd's outlook and personality are indicated, on the one hand, by the number of such refutations in the list of his works, and on the other hand, by the intense eulogy of Ṭayyibī leaders and figureheads found in his poetic

191 Ibid., p. 119, line 9.

192 Ibid., p. 122, line 7 ff.

193 Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, 1977), pp. 160–161. The title given has a typographic error (*mudḥīda*: *mudkhiṣa*). Another *Risālat al-bayān* refuting Aḥwārī is attributed to a certain 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥārithī. Poonawala proposes that the *Risāla* is the same as the one by 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd, and has been erroneously ascribed.

dīwān.¹⁹⁴ In this his corpus expresses deep reflexes of wider Ismaili thought which would come to be specifically formulated in the parallel Nizārī Ismaili system as the mutual principles of opposition (*al-taḍādd*) and hierarchy (*al-tarattub*). The polemical side of his writings was partly responding to local Yemeni threats and rivalries; hence his attack on Aḥwarī and his ironically titled *Risālat tuḥfat al-murtadd* ('The Epistle of the Precious Gift to the Apostate'), which is a critique of the competing Ḥāfiẓī Ismaili *da'wa*.¹⁹⁵ Before this (because referred to in it) Ibn al-Walid had also written another polemic against the Ḥāfiẓī *da'wa*, the *Risālat al-radd 'ala 'l-māriqīn* ('The Epistle of the Refutation of the Renegades').¹⁹⁶ Much wider in its sweep was his work titled *Mukhtaṣar al-uṣūl* ('The Synopsis of Principles'), in which he criticises Sunnism, Mu'tazilism, Zaydī Shī'ism and Muslim Peripatetic philosophy.¹⁹⁷

Note on Ibn al-Walid's Critique of al-Ghazālī

Undoubtedly the best known of Ibn al-Walid's refutational works is his intricate reply, in two volumes, to the attack on Ismailism by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). A few comments are due on this noted part of his corpus. Ghazālī's critique is generally known as the *Mustaẓhirī* after the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mustaẓhir bi'llāh (d. 512/1118) who had directly commissioned him to write it, but its full title is *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhiriyya* ('The Infamies of the Esotericists and the Virtues of the Partisans of al-Mustaẓhir').¹⁹⁸ The practical motive of responding to this work should not be underestimated. The Ayyūbids stood for the same assertive Sunni neo-orthodoxy for which Ghazālī had been the figurehead under the Seljuqs – with whom the origins of the Ayyūbids had indeed been closely

194 Ibn al-Walid's 'sacred panegyric' is explored in Hamiduddin, 'The Qaṣīdah of the Ṭayyibī Da'wah', Chapter 2, pp. 50–88, also p. 116 ff.

195 Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 160.

196 Ibid., p. 161.

197 A translation and edition of this text has recently been completed. Monica Scotti, 'The *Mukhtaṣar al-Uṣūl* of 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walid. Critical Edition and English Translation' (PhD thesis, University L'Orientale of Naples, 2014).

198 For an English translation, see Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhiriyya*, tr. R.J. McCarthy as *Freedom and Fulfillment* (Boston, 1980), Appendix II, pp. 151–244.

linked.¹⁹⁹ The Ayyūbids imported into their realm a very similar religio-legal programme by inviting scholars from the east and the widescale construction of *madrasas* and Sufi *khānaqāhs*.

As an adept of *kalām* dialectic and philosophical argument, Ghazālī claimed in his book to confute Ismailism on apodeictic, rational grounds,²⁰⁰ but as a Shāfiʿī legist he also urged a religious judgement against it of the utmost severity, stating that ‘the allowability of killing [Ismailis] is not peculiar to the state of their fighting [i.e. when they actually engage in combat], but we [may] even assassinate them and shed their blood.’²⁰¹ This implacability was predictable in the climate in which the work had emerged. A dominant anxiety centring on the activities of the Fāṭimid *dāʿī* Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ had taken hold in the territories of the Seljuqs. The fortress of Alamūt in Daylam, northern Iran, south of the Caspian Sea, had been gained by him in 483/1090, signalling a momentous strategic shift in the Ismaili *daʿwa*’s activity in the region, and in 485/1092 the assassination of the famous Seljuq wazir Nizām al-Mulk took place. The deed was ascribed to the Ismailis and had a personal significance for Ghazālī who had been Nizām al-Mulk’s protégé and appointee. Against this background, Ghazālī’s polemic was framed as a defence of the rule of the new ‘Abbāsid caliph, al-Mustaẓhir, who acceded to the throne at the very time that the book seems to have been composed, early in 487/1094. The new caliph is referred to in the introduction in the highest terms as ‘the Leader of our Community... the Glory of our Religion ... the Delight of Nations, the Commander of the Faithful, obedience to whom is enjoined by the Creator of Creatures and the Lord of the Worlds.’²⁰² Ghazālī alludes here to the caliph’s commands as ‘noble, sacred’, and even ‘prophetic’. He seems to be consciously extolling al-Mustaẓhir against the Ismaili Imam’s claims. When Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ broke with Cairo in the following year, far from dwindling, the tension he occasioned only deepened. He now galvanised his movement around an unrepealable loyalism towards the allegedly concealed claimant to the Ismaili imamate, Nizār himself or, according to the later accounts, Nizār’s son, for whom he spoke as sole representative.

199 The Ayyūbids had first emerged as provincial Seljuq governors in the Irāqī city of Takrīt.

200 Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾih*, pp. 154–156.

201 Ibid., p. 229.

202 Ibid., p. 153.

It is, however, important to note that Ghazālī's polemic shortly pre-dates this Nizārī-Musta'li split itself. Ibn al-Walid was thus by no means responding to a critique which concerned Nizārī Ismailism (which he would not have wished to do), but to an assault on the, as yet, common Ismaili heritage.²⁰³ Both the arrangement of the discussion and the vehemence of the tone of Ghazālī's *Mustaẓhiri* are mirrored in Ibn al-Walid's answer, which bears the title: *Dāmigh al-bāṭil wa ḥatf al-munāḍil* ('The Refuter of the False and the Death of the Combatant'). In his reply he repays Ghazālī's pious censure in kind, repeatedly speaking of Ghazālī's straying from Islam (*murūquhu 'an al-Islām*), calling him an apostate (*mulḥid*) from the true faith, and even a man guilty of *shayṭana* or *tashayṭun* ('devilry', translated by Corbin as Satanism).²⁰⁴

In his article on the text, Corbin states that Ibn al-Walid's 'immense work, to give a pertinent response to Ghazālī, is required to take up all the major themes of Ismā'īlī gnosis',²⁰⁵ but he goes on to concede that, on closer scrutiny, many counter-arguments in *Dāmigh al-bāṭil* carefully skirt the Ṭayyibī *ḥaqā'iq*-system. As he suggests, there was a good reason for this strategy: Ibn al-Walid's reluctance to right possible distortions of Ismaili teachings or excursion on details of Ṭayyibī doctrine, and his leaning instead to ad hominem responses, are symptoms of his esoteric faith. As Corbin says: 'he has obeyed to the letter the strict rule of the esotericist: Return the opponent's attack and undermine his positions, but without betraying one's own secrets, the *sirr al-ḥikma* with which one has been entrusted. This is the way a true *bāṭinī* should behave.'²⁰⁶ Notwithstanding certain stable fundamentals, Ismaili doctrine is neither diachronically nor synchronically monolithic. It might change and develop over history, but also might vary at a single time within a single system, on the basis of an initiatory ladder or 'tiered hermeneutics'. It is,

203 The point is made by Ismail K. Poonawala, 'An Ismā'īlī Refutation of al-Ghazālī', in Graciela de la Lama, ed., *30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa 1976: Middle East 1* (Mexico City, 1982), pp. 131–134, especially p. 132.

204 Al-Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq 'Alī b. al-Walid, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil wa ḥatf al-munāḍil*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut, 1403/1982), 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 9; Henry Corbin, 'The Ismā'īlī Response to the Polemic of Ghazālī', tr. James W. Morris, in S.H. Nasr, ed., *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture* (Tehran, 1398/1977), pp. 69–98, esp. p. 72.

205 Corbin, 'Ismā'īlī Response', p. 73.

206 Ibid., pp. 78–79.

moreover, likely that Ibn al-Walīd's circumspection was heightened by his historical milieu, dominated as it was by the Ayyūbid conquerors in Yemen and their Sunni programme.

A typical case of *Dāmigh al-bāṭil*'s strategies against Ghazālī concerns his repeated charge that the Ismaili theory of time involves eternal recurrence. Ghazālī, for instance, explains the term 'Seveners' (for Ismailis) as referring to their heptadic concept of sacred history, and he adds that they believe that 'the succession of [sevenfold] cycles has no end (*inna ta'āquba 'l-adwāri lā ākhira la-hā*)'.²⁰⁷ In response, Ibn al-Walīd turns the charge of eternalism (*dahriyya*) against Ghazālī himself. This counter-allegation is based on his (in fact, pseudepigraphical) text *al-Nukat wa'l-uyūn* ('The Anecdotes and Choice Remarks'), where it is ruled that the idea of the celestial spheres ever passing out of existence is inconceivable. Ibn al-Walīd goes on to deny, categorically, that the Ṭayyibī Ismaili teaching, for its part, involves eternal recurrence: 'We declare someone who holds that doctrine to be an unbeliever (*nukaffiru qā'ila dhalika*), and we are acquitted of it. We rather say: the world below must pass away, and the hereafter must go on forever.'²⁰⁸

207 'Alī b. al-Walīd, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil*, vol. 1, p. 79. This statement is not represented in McCarthy's translation, which evidently follows somewhat expurgated Mss of Ghazālī's *Mustaḥsirī* relied on in 'A. Badawi's Cairo (1964) edition.

208 'Alī b. al-Walīd, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil*, vol. 1, p. 79. The reposte here is alluded to in Corbin, 'Ismā'īlī Response', pp. 76–77. The vehemence of Ibn al-Walīd's repudiation shows the need to interpret any formulations of the Ṭayyibī theory of time which outwardly appear eternalist, firmly in the light of a cardinal belief in 'the return' (*al-ma'ād*), i.e., the eschatological culmination of the created universe. An example is when Ḥāmidī speaks of seven periods of 50,000 years' length associated with each of the seven planets – from Saturn to the Moon. In speaking of the final passing of all seven 'days', within this overall 'week' of 350,000 years, he says: 'Creation passes away. Clouds and ice mount up and the deluge overwhelms. So after the completion of seven 'days' the affair is as it was to begin with, since each planet constitutes a 'day' and has a cycle of 50 millennia – and it goes on like that eternally and forever': Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī, *Kitāb kanz al-walad*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut, 1979), p. 148, as referred to by Madelung, 'Cosmogony and Cosmology in Ismā'īlism', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. VI, pp. 322–326, esp. pp. 324–325. Also see Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 272–273, where a vast, but ultimately finite, timescale is presented for the 'grand cycle' (*al-kawr al-a'zam*) according to some Ṭayyibī accounts, namely, 150 billion years.

Ibn al-Walīd is eager to quash another charge which Ghazālī repeats often in the *Mustazhirī* – that of antinomianism. Ghazālī states that the Ismailis *inter alia* justify this through their claim to have knowledge of the esoteric, spiritual interpretation of the sacred law (hence their common designation as the *Bāṭiniyya* or ‘Esotericists’): ‘For he who rises to the knowledge of the inner meaning is relieved of prescription and freed from its encumbrances; these are the ones meant by the Most High’s saying “and who removes from them their burden and the fetters which were upon them” [Q 7:157].’²⁰⁹ Another verse that Ghazālī alleges that they quote to excuse suspending the law through grasping its spiritual hermeneutics, is ‘And a wall shall be set up between them having a door in the interior (*bāṭinuhu*) of which is Mercy, and facing its exterior (*ẓāhiruhu*) is Torment’ [Q. 57:13]. In other words: whereas the esoteric (*bāṭin*) is the sphere of mercy, the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) is the sphere of pain and toil. Thus according to Ghazālī: ‘Their ultimate goal is to destroy revealed laws.’ But the Ṭayyibī *dāʿī* answers without hesitation: ‘The statement of this renegade, concerning what he quoted from [the Ismailis] in this section is an allegation without any evidence behind it, to be counted as part of the sum of his raving – and if quoted accurately, it is patent unbelief!’²¹⁰ The point reverts on several occasions in the text. Ghazālī, for instance, equates the Ismailis with the Mazdakite dualist movement of the Khurramiyya, accused by some of libertinism, and he declares that the Ismaili teaching is, likewise, ‘to render men free to follow all their pleasures and passions’. But Ibn al-Walīd retorts: ‘We swear by God that we have nothing at all to do with anyone who would perform the sort of actions that this heretic has been told about.’²¹¹ He quotes letters of the Fāṭimid Imams which stress the strict necessity to *combine* the outer law with its higher interpretations.²¹² Ibn al-Walīd’s protest of orthopraxy here is accurate. Although his Ṭayyibī teaching developed many esoteric virtualities within earlier Ismaili cosmology, it

209 Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾih*, p. 157. Discussed in Corbin, ‘Ismāʿīlī Response’, pp. 79–80.

210 ‘Alī b. al-Walīd, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil*, vol. 1, p. 65.

211 *Wa naḥnu ila ‘Llāhi taʾālā minhum wa mimman yafʿalu shayʿan mim mā ḥakāhu min afʿālihīm burāʾ*. ‘Alī b. al-Walīd, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil*, vol. 1, p. 67. Corbin, ‘Ismāʿīlī Response’, p. 86.

212 ‘Alī b. al-Walīd, *Dāmigh al-bāṭil*, vol. 1, p. 70 ff. Referred to by Corbin, *ibid.*, p. 88.

nevertheless prolonged the older Fāṭimid ethos by staying firmly within its legal parameters.²¹³

Content of Ibn al-Walīd's *al-Risāla al-mufīda*

The present discussion is supplementary to an earlier article by Wilferd Madelung, which explored the text's ideas in detail and which interested readers are advised to consult.²¹⁴ The following analysis should also be co-ordinated with the text of Ibn al-Walīd's commentary, which follows the Introduction.

One motive suggested by our Ṭayyibī exegete for the symbolic way in which the noted philosopher has couched his message in the *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs* involves a pedagogy based on 'remembrance' – an important theme presented above in my own discussion of the poem. The challenge of working out the poem's meanings makes it function as a 'reminder' (*tadhkār*) or anamnestic tool. The test of decrypting its sense makes it serve as 'an awakening from the slumber of forgetfulness' (*īqāz min sinati 'l-ghaḥḥa*). This explanation of its enigmatic style fits in with the poem's own hinted Platonic epistemic framework, insofar as the poem presents the dawn of a philosophical orientation in life on earth as the bird of the soul summoning back to mind what it had once known – thus, a reorientation rather than an orientation. But our exegete also proposes that Ibn Sīnā had a contrary aim: not to coax readers towards his intended meaning but to push them away from it. Ibn al-Walīd thus states (without sensing any contradiction) that, additionally, a simple concern for secrecy had prompted Ibn Sīnā to speak in a pervasively tropological way in his *Qaṣīdat al-naḥs*.

Our commentator refers to the famous philosopher in terms of great respect as *al-ra'īs* ('the Chief', echoing his customary title *al-shaykh al-ra'īs*, 'the Chief Master'), and tellingly, he follows his name with the laudatory formula 'may God sanctify his spirit'.²¹⁵ Implicitly viewing

213 Corbin concludes: 'Our Yemeni *dā'ī*, 'Alī b. Muḥammad represents in its complete and authentic form what is usually called the *dā'wa qadīma*, the ancient *dā'wa*, which continued the Fāṭimid *dā'wa* in the Yemen after the actual disappearance of the Fāṭimid Caliphate'. Corbin, 'Ismā'īlī Response', p. 91.

214 Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Naḥs*'.

215 See note 139 for De Smet's comment on this.

him, in this way, as a fellow adept and religious *insider*, Ibn al-Walid states confidently that Ibn Sīnā concealed his poem's meanings as they were rooted in 'secrets pertaining to realities' (*asrār ḥaqīqiyya*). In the fifth *dā'i mutlaq*'s technical vocabulary, the phrase must betoken the *ḥaqā'iq*-system resumed in Ṭayyibī Ismailism. He indeed says that a reader is only equipped to understand the poem by already knowing its obscure subtle sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ghāmiḍa al-laṭīfa*) through having been lucky enough to take them 'by direct dictation from the authorities in them' (*al-istimlā' la-hā min arbābihā*); in other words, he should be a person to whom God has sent gracious aid 'by way of the Keepers of the Houses of Wisdoms' (*sic, min khuzzān buyūt al-ḥikam*). Such phrases in this context surely mean the imamate and its high representatives.²¹⁶ On the other hand, religious outsiders who are 'amongst the parties of the demons and devils, pretenders to degrees to which they have no right', are kept from fathoming Ibn Sīnā's allusions. The claim is thus that *only* a ranking Ismaili initiate can truly grasp Ibn Sīnā's drift. The commentary's *mise-en-scène* is also relevant here. Ibn al-Walid says: 'one of the learned brethren' (presumably a fellow Ṭayyibī missionary) has come across the poem and begged him to explain its enigmas. Fulfilling the anonym's request is a duty, on the basis of the Prophetic ruling that it is as reprehensible *not* to share wisdom with those qualified for it as to share it with the unqualified.²¹⁷ This original exchange from which the commentary grew predetermines its elaborate, highly defined, interpretation. It imposes the character of our commentator's distinctive 'hermeneutic circle'.

Ibn al-Walid thus discovers the semantics of the text at one remove from its more obvious sense. The key given in the title, 'The Poem on the Soul', unlocks the obvious sense of this extended *metaphor in absentia*: the ash grey dove is simply the individual soul which has come down into our world, and forgotten whence she came, so compounding her entrapment here. She then remembers, and so is freed again to live on happily in her erstwhile home above. Finding this message within the poem,

216 As suggested by Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', pp. 157–158.

217 'Do not bestow wisdom on those unworthy of it and thus mistreat it, neither withhold it from those worthy of it and thus mistreat them.' Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut, 1403/1983), vol. 74, p. 179. Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', p. 158.

given its title, is no great task of unriddling; finding meanings, as does our exegete, based on the elaborate Ṭayyibī *ḥaqāʾiq*-system is more of an interpretive feat and is even, arguably, a case of ‘radical interpretation’.²¹⁸ The claimed decipherment does not view the poem as a straightforward symbolisation of the individual soul’s fall into matter, but as alluding to the whole complex of Ṭayyibī cosmology, with its evocation of the, originally, Gnostic teaching that the entire material universe has resulted from a ‘fall’ on a cosmic scale – the fall of the individual soul being but a metonymy of this cosmic fall. Thus the commentary *needs* a commentary and its own cosmological references and idiom need to be explained. Ibn al-Walid is aware of this and warns the reader about it. He says that, in his commentary, he has adopted ‘the method of allusion close to explicit expression’ (*ṭarīq al-ishārati al-qarībati min al-ʿibāra*). We are told, in other words, to expect an element of encryption in his decryption: *obscura per obscuriorem* (explaining the obscure by the more obscure). This proves to be true in more than one way. For example, a given hemistich may be commented on by quoting an allegory at length. In this, Ibn al-Walid is effectively explaining one allegory through another: an image in interpretation of an image in interpretation of a reality. The parable of the island of apes will be discussed shortly.

That said, there is little cryptic about the Ismaili Shīʿī allegiance itself that forms the context of *al-Risāla al-mufīda*, which Ibn al-Walid declares in his doxology. In its opening lines he celebrates the privilege of being numbered amongst the followers of the Prophet’s Folk (*atbāʿ āl Muḥammad*) and one of their partisans (*ashyāʾuhum*). The illumination of the minds of the Shīʿa is said to flow straight from one of the great secrets of the universe (*asrār al-khilqa*), namely, the benefic substances (*mawādd raḥīmiyya*) of the Imams.²¹⁹ Blessing is heaped on ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as the Prophet’s legatee, whose hermeneutics vivify the holy law as the breath of life does an inanimate body. Faṭīma al-Zahrāʾ,

218 On radical interpretation in hermeneutics, see Gerald L. Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* (New Haven and London, 1992), Chapter 4, ‘Allegory as Radical Interpretation’, pp. 83–103. The term is borrowed from Donald Davidson, who in turn adapted it from W.V.O. Quine’s ‘radical translation’. Radical interpretation is defined as ‘the redescription, in one’s own language, of sentences from an alien system of concepts and beliefs’: *ibid.*, p. 83.

219 This expression might also be rendered with the less cryptic phrase ‘benevolent services’, but both meanings are evoked by the term *mawādd*.

the Prophet's daughter and spouse of 'Alī, is hailed as the progenitrix of the imamate, a 'high tree of many imamite branches (*dawḥat al-aghṣān al-imāmiyya*) and the abode of the Islamic élites.²²⁰ The descendents of her son al-Ḥusayn are hailed as the 'houses of the lights of the Almighty'. The Imam of the Time is declared to be al-Ṭayyib Abū 'l-Qāsim, the eponym and *raison d'être* of Ṭayyibī Ismailism, who was believed to have lived on since his disappearance many decades earlier in 526/1132. It is evidently al-Ṭayyib's help that is invoked with God's, when Ibn al-Walid presently launches his explanation of the poem: 'We say, with God's aid (Exalted is He) and His guidance, and with the help of His sainted friend on His earth (God's blessings upon him) and *his* intimation'. The claim is thus that Ibn al-Walid's commentary is guaranteed through the help (*mādda*) and intimation (*ifāda*) of the Imam of the Time himself. The same authority is implicitly asserted at the end of the commentary when the author invokes blessings on al-Ṭayyib, whose 'various kinds of learning' (*ulūmuḥu*) preserve his elect followers from 'the harm of specious arguments' (*al-shubuhāt*).

We may conjecture about the exact nature of the dependence on al-Ṭayyib that our commentator is claiming. That it involves no suggestion of a literal, physical link becomes clear when he praises the Imam in his doxology as 'the Seal of the Cycle of Witnesses and the Inaugurator of the Cycle of Substitutes' (*khātam dawr al-ashhād wa muftataḥ dawr al-abdāl*). The idea of a hierarchy of substituted saints (*abdāl*) is more familiar from Sufism²²¹; in the fifth *dā'ir* *muṭlaq*'s lexicon the sense of *abdāl* is not the same. The two cycles to which he refers are respectively synonymous with the 'cycle of unveiling' (*dawr al-kashf*) and the 'cycle of veiling' (*dawr al-satr*) in Ṭayyibī hierohistory.²²² Al-Ṭayyib's disap-

220 *Dawḥa* also means 'genealogical table'. The idea seems to be that the imamate's entire genealogy is metonymically identified through Fāṭima, its ancestress. Hence the *niṣba* *Fāṭimī*.

221 The Sufi teaching in question was that the continuous presence of a community of hidden saints in the world was vital to its existence, as certain divine functions were carried out by them. The belief was based on prophetic *ḥadīths*, e.g., Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 1.112.

222 The terminology of *satr* and *kashf* is also central in Nizārī Ismailism, but with an augmented sense. It does not only betoken the veiling and unveiling of the Imam but also the veiling and unveiling of the *ḥaqīqa* ('reality'), respectively signified by the practice and suspension of the exoteric law: Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 238–239 and 380–381.

pearance from history marks the momentous shift from the time when the Imam was openly available to his partisans, who accessed him through direct witnesses (*ashhād*), to the time when the Imam is veiled from them and his authority is instead expressed solely through the Ṭayyibī *da'wa*, whose hierarchic placements are ever filled by substituted functionaries (*abdāl*). This seems to be the sense of the epithets given here to al-Ṭayyib by Ibn al-Walīd.

Besides our commentator's Ismaili Shī'ī identity being openly signalled in his doxology, its principles also inform it at a deeper level. Ismaili premises, for instance, underlie the manner in which Ibn al-Walīd praises God in opening his commentary. He stresses God's transcendence of human praise – a paradox rooted in the radical apophaticism of Ismaili theology. He writes:

We bear witness that there is 'no god but God', who has veiled intellects – those that are high of them as well as those that are low – from characterizing Him, so they bow down in obedience, confessing perplexity and inadequacy, and who has debarred minds from qualifying Him, so they strain their necks, acknowledging their incapacity to get what they sought and their weak-sightedness.

Ibn al-Walīd states that our inability to praise God reflects a fundamental metaphysical asymmetry: 'how might what is incepted and made encompass Him who incepted it and made it, or how might what is created and is originated *ex nihilo* find *any* way to the attribute of Him who created it and who originated it *ex nihilo*?' The antinomy that true praise of God is acknowledging that one is incapable of praising God, seems typical of Ismaili theology, which takes God's transcendence to its furthest conclusions.

Another glimpse of buried traits from the Ismaili worldview comes at the close of the introductory section, just before the *Qaṣīda* is quoted *in toto*. In explaining his use of the aforementioned 'method close to explicit expression', Ibn al-Walīd voices the fear that his commentary, consisting of 'the secrets of the friends of God', might be found out and misunderstood by hostile outsiders. The latter are put down in rhyming prose as 'the ignorant rabble (*al-ra'ā' al-juhḥāl*) ... the undeserving from amongst the wicked, with their pigheadedness and error (*dhawī 'l-'inād wa'l-ḍalāl*)'. In contrast with this scornful tone is Ibn al-Walīd's next,

parting statement, which is an expression of deep humility: whatever is wrong in the commentary that follows is due to the 'dullness of my intelligence and the inadequacy of my formation', whereas whatever is right is due to 'the blessings of my benefactors and the means of my guidance'. It was noted earlier that the same counterpoint informs the whole of our author's oeuvre, with its overarching themes of polemic and eulogy, traceable to twin reflexes of medieval Ismaili thought.

Ibn al-Walid's line-by-line glosses use technical terminology *en passant*, rooted in the Ṭayyibī system of cosmology. The prime interest of the commentary is how its author has ingeniously construed the whole symbolic scenario of Ibn Sīnā's *qaṣīda* in terms of his own esoteric cosmological architecture. The Ṭayyibī doctrines assumed in interpreting the poem may find themselves supported with Qur'anic quotations, put forward, however, with unexpected meanings. The ashen bird which is the poem's only protagonist, remains the symbol of a 'lost soul' but not that of any human individual in particular. It is instead understood to refer to the Third Intellect (known as the 'second emanation', *al-munba'ith al-thānī*) of the pleroma of intellects which collectively precede the material universe.

In Ṭayyibī hermeneutics any fall (*hubūt*) tends to signify this archetypal fall in the intelligential pleroma. In our commentator's understanding, the fall of Ibn Sīnā's dove closely parallels the prime scriptural symbol, the Edenic Fall, in signifying this archetypal event. Just as the Edenic Fall incepts the hierohistory of the human race, the pleromatic fall incepts the time of the material cosmos. In commenting on the crisis in the pleroma, Ibn al-Walid quotes God's order to Adam and Eve during their expulsion from the Garden of Eden: 'Go down, one of you an enemy to the other, and there will be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time' (Q. 2:36). Not only the emergence of time but also of space, in consequence of the pleromatic fall, as a precondition for all bodily existence, is likewise glossed through the Qur'an: 'Depart you to a shade with three branches – no relief nor shelter from the flame!' (Q. 77:30–1). According to their outward sense, these words are addressed by God to the 'rejecters of the truth' (*mukadhdhibūn*) on the Day of Resurrection, but Ibn al-Walid applies them here to the entity whose departure from the intelligential pleroma brings about the cosmos. He takes the Qur'an's mysterious mention of an infernal 'shade with three branches' to mean the three spatial dimensions of breadth, height and depth, which constitute the 'essence of bodies' (*al-ab'ādu al-muqawwimatu li-dhawāti 'l-ajsām*).

Tridimensional space, as a precondition for all corporeity, is viewed as a direct consequence of the entity's fall, as is also the case with time.²²³

The Ṭayyibī cosmological system is thus assumed from the first line onwards of the commentary on Ibn Sīnā's poem. The *Qaṣīda* states that the dove has come down here 'from the highest place'. Ibn al-Walīd takes this summit to refer to the 'world of origination' (*ʿālam al-ibdāʿ*). *Ibdāʿ* connotes the process by which the first effect comes about in eternity from God and from nothing else. The realm of origination at the cosmological summit signifies the primordial situation in the immediate proximity of the Creator. It is as yet 'prelapsarian' in the sense that it is the state of affairs before the fall from which our material and time-bound world has come about.

In the same line, Ibn Sīnā describes the bird originally inhabiting this high-altitude realm as 'endowed with pride and defiance'. This is taken to refer to how the Third Intellect was subject to the wilful impostures which brought about its catastrophic fall. These failings are said to include laxity (*futūr*), lagging behind or retardation (*takhalluf*), 'readiness to turn away' (*nukūṣ*) after being forgiven' and coarsening or densening (*takatthuf*). Time and matter, the fundamental facts of our existence, can ultimately be traced to aspects of this list – respectively, the Third Intellect's lagging behind and coarsening. Ibn al-Walīd never explicitly names the Third Intellect here and refers only to 'the one lax in responsiveness (*man fatara ʿan qabūl al-ijāba*) in the world of origination'. But the distinctive phraseology he uses for its failings clearly evokes the central Ṭayyibī cosmological myth, dubbed 'le drame dans le ciel' (the drama in heaven) by Corbin.²²⁴ According to this hub of the *ḥaqāʾiq*-system, the three entities topping the cosmic hierarchy beneath God, are: (1) the First Intellect, known as the first originated being (*al-mubdaʿ al-awwal*), which results from the process of *creatio ex nihilo*; (2) the Second Intellect, known as the first emanated being (*al-munbaʿith al-awwal*), which emerges from the former by a process of emanation rather than creation; and (3) the Third Intellect, known as the second emanated being (*al-munbaʿith al-thānī*), which also emerges from the First Intellect by a process of direct emanation.

223 Compare Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Risālat jāmiʿat al-jāmiʿa*, ed. ʿArif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1959), p. 185.

224 Henri Corbin, *Trilogie ismaélienne: textes édités avec traduction françaises et commentaires* (Tehran and Paris, 1961), pp. 135–136.

A key to this cosmology is that it explains the position of a given entity through its own willed behaviour and the just desert for it. The ranks are not really based on a natural causal sequence and there is no objective hierarchy separable here from the subjective intent of the beings which constitute it. In this may be glimpsed a deeper function of the Ṭayyibī cosmological myth, namely, to find an ultimate archetype for the dynamics of the earthly *da'wa* – to locate the latter's basis in the very mysteries from which the cosmos supposedly arises. In line with this emphasis, it is even proposed that the first originated being (*al-mubda' al-awwal*), which is the highest in the sequence of intellects, is actually co-originated with them; it is not the case that their existence presupposes its prior existence. The intelligential pleroma in reality enters existence as a synthetic unity.²²⁵ Why, then, is the 'first originated' so designated at all? This is said to be because it is the intellect foremost in recognising its divine Originator (*al-mubdi'*).²²⁶ Its depth of humility makes it the highest entity and the closest to God, through a basic spiritual principle of inverse proportionality between inner effacement and outer rank: in such matters 'less is more', and incommensurably so.²²⁷ Similarly the Second and Third Intellects are both intrinsically capable of being second in rank after the first originated being, and the texts speak of the 'rivalry of the two emanants' (*tasābuq al-munba'ithayn*).²²⁸ The drama of their rivalry unfolds through their dissimilar reactions. The Second Intellect, through the sheer speed and energy of its self-submission in acknowledging what is above it – the divine Originator and the first originated being – duly attains its place beneath the latter. It expresses the same 'simultaneity of obedience and prerogative'²²⁹ in which the first originated being leads.

225 'The existence of origination was all at once' (*wujūd al-ibdā'i kāna duf'atan wāhidatan*). Ḥāmidī, *Kanz al-walad*, p. 78.

226 Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 269–270.

227 This principle of ontological transparency is also expressed in terms of 'vectorial simplicity'. The simpler an entity is the closer it is to God. The First Intellect, for its part, has maximal simplicity. This is enshrined in Kirmānī's formula *kullu man kāna ila'l-wāḥidi aqraba fa-huwa absaṭ* ('Whatever is nearer to the One is simpler'), in his *Rāḥat al-'aql*, ed. M. Kāmil Ḥusayn and M. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī (Cairo, 1953), p. 261.

228 Ḥāmidī, *Kanz al-walad*, p. 78.

229 Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, tr. Ralph Manheim and James W. Morris (London, 1983), p. 39.

But the Third Intellect's reaction is confused and all problematic or negative aspects of existence may ultimately be traced to its confusion. Through *hubris*, the Third Intellect refuses to accept its subordination and only acknowledges the precedence of God, the Originator. In this state of 'stupor' (*sahw*) it falls from its position. On coming to its senses it finds that it has lost its rank in the intelligential pleroma and now lies subordinate to seven further intellects which have ensued in their proper positions lower down, each having duly responded to the first originated being's summons (*da'wa*). These seven interjacent minds correspond with the seven planetary spheres – from Saturn down to the Moon. A full restoration can now only come about by the fallen Third Intellect slowly climbing back through these seven stages in between. This great endpoint, or apocatastasis, is gradually being converged on over the course of 'sacred time', which thus gains its sevenfold periodisation in the Ṭayyibī Ismaili teaching. Each planet determines the character of a given era (*dawr*) of hierohistory. Time is seen here as a hiatus between two eternities – one lost and one to come. In this theory, time is viewed as a sevenfold process through which the prelapsarian condition of timelessness is being retrieved – hence Corbin's designation of the doctrine as 'retarded eternity'.²³⁰

Meanwhile, the fallen Third Intellect is ranked as the lowest intellect of the tenfold hierarchy, its fall engendering the world of nature.²³¹ It is thus positioned at the upper bound of the entire physical cosmos, which reaches from the highest celestial sphere down to our own earthly domain in the lowest depths of the physical realm. It presides over this whole world, acting as its demiurge or 'controller' (*mudabbir*). This distinctly echoes the defining idea of various pre-Islamic Gnostic cosmologies, that our world is produced by a fallen or errant power which has been exiled from the divine pleroma. In particular, the descended Third Intellect has been likened to the fallen aeon Sophia Achamoth in Valentinian Gnosis.²³²

230 Ibid., pp. 30, 39–41.

231 Daniel De Smet, *La Quiétude de l'intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose Ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (Xe/XIe s)* (Louvain, 1995), p. 249.

232 Ibid., p. 249. Heinz Halm has also proposed a link with Valentinian Gnosis. Although Corbin does make reference in his discussion to Valentinianism, he prefers to attribute this body of teachings to the influence

This was one of the most long-lived Gnostic schools, and Valentinian strains are attested in the Near East as late as the 7th century CE.²³³ Valentinianism claimed to enshrine secret teachings from St Paul, whose direct disciple Theudas had supposedly taught Valentinus, the sect's founder and eponym. The latter's brilliance and charisma were such that he is even said to have nearly become Bishop of Rome, losing the papal election by the narrowest margin.²³⁴ Within a Christian framework, loosely defined, the school advanced one of the most radical and elaborate versions of Gnosticism.²³⁵ The basic focus for the school's contemplations was an aeonic hierarchy of demanding complexity. It consisted of a pleroma of 30 aeons, no less, arranged into an Ogdoad, Decad and Dodecad. The aeons within these groupings are characteristically arranged in male-female pairs. The phenomenal world, however, is not born directly from these sexual polarities in the noumenal realm, but from a crisis brought about by the lowest aeon. This is the extratemporal transgression (*paraptôma*) of the aeon Sophia ('Wisdom').²³⁶

Valentinianism, like other Gnostic systems, is known for the manifold and variable character of its formulations. However, one of the several ways that the school framed Sophia's transgression seems of note in the present context: she is said to have proudly wished to know, without mediation, the absolutely transcendental 'Primal Father' himself (termed *Buthos*, 'Depth' or 'Abyss').²³⁷ In her resulting fall she is said to have been aided and redeemed by her 'bridegroom', the aeon called *Sôtêr*

of Zervanism. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, pp. 178, 180. Baffioni has additionally suggested Valentinian echoes in some teachings of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, *On the Natural Sciences*, note 118, p. 68.

233 The *Quinisexta* of the Penthekte Synod of 692 CE reflects the presence of neo-Valentinian groups in Asia Minor, extending into the Muslim era. See the appended patristic sources for the study of Valentinianism after Irenaeus, in M. Krause, ed., *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1981).

234 Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 45.

235 For a classic presentation of the details of Valentinianism, see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston, 1963), chapter 8: 'The Valentinian Speculation', pp. 174–205.

236 See J. Zandee, 'Gnostic Ideas on the Fall and Salvation', in *Numen*, vol. 11, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1964), pp. 13–74, especially pp. 23–27.

237 Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*), 1:2: 2–3.

(‘Saviour’) whose identity, naturally, is related to Jesus of Nazareth.²³⁸ It is as if the ‘Christic’ truth on earth echoes the same truth within the pleroma, where disregard for it was implicated in the pre-cosmic fall.²³⁹ A similar co-ordination is a fundamental message of the Ṭayyibī myth: an ultimate archetype of the denial of the *da’wa* is seen as having caused the pre-cosmic fall, and by implication, the cosmic restoration is aided by faithful involvement with the *da’wa* on earth.²⁴⁰

Broader parallels of this kind link Valentinianism and other Gnostic schools with the Ṭayyibī conceptual system, though a definite transfer of teachings is undemonstrable and ultimately, fundamentally speculative. The parallels, for all that, remain intriguing – not least the shared, core teaching that the world as we know it results from the prideful fall of a mind in the higher world. In Valentinianism, while the aeon Sophia’s original form, known as ‘the Undescended Sophia’ or ‘the Higher Sophia’ (*hê anô Sophia*), remains in the pleroma, her fallen form, known as Sophia Achamoth or ‘the Lower Sophia’ (*hê katô Sophia*), is exiled and bears ultimate responsibility for our world.²⁴¹ Ṭayyibism like-

238 The significance to the Valentinian system of the link between the aeon *Sôtêr* and Jesus of Nazareth has been long noted in scholarship on the sect, e.g.: ‘With this celestial Soter of the Valentinians and the redemption of Sophia through him is connected, in a way which is now not quite intelligible to us, the figure of Jesus of Nazareth and the historical redemption connected with his name. The Soter, the bridegroom of Sophia, and the earthly Jesus answer to each other as in some way identical.’ ‘Valentinus’, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911 edition).

239 A valuable recent study notes how some versions of the Valentinian myth attributed Sophia’s fall to her neglecting the vital role of her consort, ‘the Saviour’: ‘In keeping with the traditional myth, it is told that Wisdom caused a rupture in the divine realm because she acted on her own, without her consort ... According to [one] version, she wanted to understand the Father’s greatness’: Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York, 2008), p. 98.

240 On the fundamental Ṭayyibī notion of the double *da’wa* (insofar as it is both in heaven and on earth), see Daftary, *The Ismā’īlīs*, p. 271, and Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, p. 39 (referring to Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn, *Zahr al-ma’ānī*, Chapter 8). Closely linked with the same notion is the parallelism between the degrees of celestial intellects and the degrees of functionary in the Ismaili organisation. See e.g., Corbin, *Cyclical Time*, p. 89.

241 In line with the trend of Valentinianism to think of a given aeon’s function as its separate product rather than integral to its identity, even Sophia Achamoth does not *directly* engender the world. Instead, it is declared to come

wise frames the fallen second emanation's identity as bi-form: outside time it is the third in the hierarchy, but inside time it is the tenth and bears responsibility for our world. Both systems view cosmic time as under the control of the seven planets, as represented in scripture by the seven days of creation.²⁴² Both doctrines see the course of time, imposed by these planetary influences, as inexorable. Valentinianism's 'metaphysical alienation' and anti-cosmic impulse took the imposed patterns more negatively, as *heimarmenê* (allotted destiny, fate), to be escaped only by *gnôsis*; Ṭayyibism instead viewed the fixed heptad of sacred history as providential (indeed, salvific) in intent. The intellects presiding over the relentless cycles of the Ṭayyibī cosmos are, unlike Gnostic archons, fundamentally benefic, and the world, for all its fall-
 enness, remains an essentially benign mechanism to bring about final restoration. As Ibn al-Walid's commentary states: 'the only deliverance for [the world-soul] from the malady that clings to its essences [*sic*] was through the sequence of times, the motions of the heavens and the mixture of elements.' Juxtaposing Ṭayyibī and Valentinian teachings thus reveals some common motifs but these shared motifs may be given quite different interpretations by the two systems.²⁴³

Contrastingly, the Ṭayyibī 'drama in heaven' and wider *ḥaqā'iq*-system have a direct, well-founded pedigree closer to hand, in certain teachings of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (mainly as presented in the synoptic *Risālat al-jāmi'a*) and the thought of the Fāṭimid *dā'ī* and philosopher Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020). The tenfold pleroma is drawn from Kirmānī who was looked back to as a prime authority by the Ṭayyibī tradition from its beginnings. Kirmānī marked a decisive turning point in Ismaili cosmology. Prompted by the definitive Ismaili ideal of merging the twin wisdoms of religion and philosophy, he reformulated Ismaili cosmology in terms of the most recent developments in Graeco-Arabic philosophy – specifically, the cosmological trends started

about through her product, the demiurge Jaldabaoth, the God of the Old Testament.

242 Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*, 1:5:2.

243 A study of the possible links of Gnosticism with these and other aspects of Ismaili thought is Heinz Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismā'īliya. Eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis* (Wiesbaden, 1978). For allusions to Valentinianism and its possible influence, see pp. 21, 24, 49, 78, 90, 108 and 123.

by the great Muslim Aristotelian Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). It was Fārābī who, in Islamic thought, first framed a rounded cosmological system based on Ptolemaic astronomy, as encapsulated in Claudius Ptolemy's famous work, the *Almagest*. Fārābī had proposed that each of the eight planetary spheres,²⁴⁴ known from this authoritative tradition of observational astronomy, is governed by a given immaterial substance or 'intellect' (*aql*), and that each intellect emanates from the next one above. Furthermore, he added a starless Sphere of Spheres (*ḥalak al-aflāk*) above the rest, following through on a hypothesis proposed by Ptolemy himself.²⁴⁵ The intellect of this invisible, encompassing sphere is the highest in the series, and is the first effect of the Godhead.

Kirmānī took over this basic scheme but modified it in ways which Fārābī would have found hard to recognise. Fārābī calculated the number of celestial intellects on the basis of the apparent structure of the physical heavens (since he assumed that each sphere must be the responsibility of a given intellect), but other concerns weighed on Kirmānī than the need to tie the intellects to brute astronomical facts such as the motions of the spheres. To Fārābī's nine intelligences descending from the starless Sphere of Spheres to the sphere of the Moon, Kirmānī adds a tenth. In his scheme, the First Intellect is *above* the intellect governing the starless, uppermost sphere, which is in fact co-ordinate with the Second Intellect.²⁴⁶ Kirmānī's First Intellect is thus raised outside the whole intelligential architecture and mediates between God and it. It corresponds with the ultimate hypostasis known in wider Ismaili thought as *al-amr*, 'the Command' of God. Kirmānī goes further. Though he continues to ascribe the chain of intellects with the responsibility for the nested spheres of the Ptolemaic cosmos, he yet insists – against Fārābī's model – that all these intellects be removed from the whole domain of matter.²⁴⁷ They are declared by him to exist in a completely transcen-

244 The Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the Zodiac.

245 Ptolemy hypothesised it in Book II of *De hypothesibus planetarum*, which has only survived in an Arabic translation. Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Opera astronomica minora*, ed. J.L. Heiberg (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 123–125. The Arabic fragment is translated into German by L. Nix.

246 Paul E. Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London, 1999), p. 97.

247 De Smet, *La Quiétude de l'Intellect*, p. 283: 'En d'autres termes, les dix

dental realm as a hierarchic pleroma in their own right, not in tandem with the planetary spheres known from observational astronomy, as if they themselves, rather than their effective power, penetrated down into the spatio-physical universe.²⁴⁸ The shift from Fārābī's scheme establishes the idea of a community of aeons, or an interrelationship of minds, wholly outside the material cosmos.

This aeonic community provided Ṭayyibī thinkers with the context for the mythologem that is the central mystery of their system – the 'drama in heaven'. De Smet holds that the 'drama in heaven' is, in fact, itself also extrapolated from Kirmānī's cosmological thought, in which it is already virtually present. Kirmānī alludes to the underlying identity of the Tenth and Third Intellect. Though high in the chain of intellects, the Third Intellect is the ultimate bound of ontic potentiality, which is analysed in terms of matter-form composition. It is thus, in some rarefied sense, a matter-form composite presiding over the whole universe of matter and form that stretches *beneath* the other intellects.²⁴⁹ In certain formulations, Kirmānī explicitly speaks of this key intellect as having to climb from the world of nature through a process of acquisition by action and knowledge, back up to its proper position parallel to the Second Intellect.²⁵⁰

Intelligences de Kirmānī forment un monde à part entière; elles existent en soi et pour soi et peuvent être dissociées des sphères.'

248 Kirmānī's theory of how the intellects generate the spheres insists on the mediatory, demiurgic role of the lowest, Tenth Intellect, which receives the spheres' forms from the intellects above it: 'les Intelligences en acte confèrent au demiurge les Formes qui lui permettent de façonner l'univers sensible': De Smet, *La Quiétude*, p. 274. This is a wholly different theory of intellectual agency from the Fārābian theory, which postulates that the intellect accompanying each celestial sphere brings it about as a by-product of its self-contemplation.

249 De Smet, *La Quiétude*, p. 240 ff.

250 *Huwa 'l-aql al-murtaqī min 'ālam al-ṭabī'a bi'l-iktisāb 'amalan wa 'ilman ilā muwāzātī 'l-inbi'āthi 'l-awwal*. Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-riyāḍ*, ed. 'Arif Tāmir (Beirut, 1960), pp. 158–159. My thanks to Maria De Cillis for pointing out this reference. Some scholars even trace this motif of the cosmological fall in Ismaili thought to the writings of Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), around a century before Kirmānī. Although the latter's great *Kitāb al-maḥṣūl* is lost, the writings of his student, Sijistānī, are argued to contain this motif – notably his *Kitāb al-yanābī'* and quotations from his non-extant *Kitāb al-nuṣra* (in which he defended Nasafī's teachings). Sijistānī conveys the teaching that the Universal Soul inclines downwards on one side to obscurity,

This mytho-cosmology frames Ibn al-Walid's whole discussion which he actually begins with one of his most direct allusions to 'the drama in heaven' when Ibn Sīnā's first hemistich speaks of the dove as 'endowed with pride and defiance'. The words are stated to refer to 'what had taken place earlier, consisting of being too proud to submit to whoever came earlier than them [*sic*] in its response, and their defiance in obeying Him whom they had been commanded to obey'. Commenting on the later line 'So for what reason was she made to fall from the lofty and sublime to the lowest depth of the foot of the mountain?' Ibn al-Walīd likewise states: 'that is due to her backwardness (or 'retardation', *takhalluf*) in adhering to the rank of the one elevated over her, and her lagging (*ta'akhkhur*) in maintaining obedience to the one to whom obedience is enjoined and assigned to her.' In the next gloss, the commentary mentions the loving aid of all the other intellects in the cosmic project of her restoration. Their role is decisive in the fallen world-soul's rescue, and Ibn al-Walid speaks of 'the tender sympathy of the intellects of the world of origination and their empathy with [the lapsed soul], through affectionate feeling and the outflow of noble sentiments of love to it, to give it the perfection that eluded it'.

But for the most part our commentator is constrained by the poem's clear focus on the human soul's origin, terrestrial exile and final liberation. His prime concern is with narrower questions of 'psychogenesis' and salvation. In other words: how does the soul come about in embodied human beings, and how is it freed? Ibn al-Walid's commentary largely tackles these matters through quotations from earlier sources such as Kirmānī's *magnum opus*, *Rāḥat al-'aql*, and the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. He routinely attributes the latter to an anonym, 'the noble individual, author of the Epistles (the peace of God be upon him)'. From this laudation formula we take it that the reference is to an Ismaili Imam. The Imam in question can be identified as Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh (the grandfather of the founder of the Fāṭimid caliphate, 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī). Ṭayyibī thinkers commonly ascribed the authorship of the *Rasā'il* to

leading to a fall in which she forgets her origin and loses herself in matter. Her fate corresponds with that of individual human souls which constitute actual parts (*ajzā'*) of the Universal Soul, and not merely her traces (*āthār*). Halm, *Kosmologie*, p. 112. Also see W. Madelung, 'Kawn al-Ālam: the Cosmology of the Ismā'īlī *dā'ī* Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī', pp. 23–24.

this authority from the early 3rd/mid-9th century.²⁵¹ In this way, the individuality of Ibn al-Walid's exegesis is muted, and he depersonalises and dignifies it through the prime sources of his Ṭayyibī tradition. He has picked these quotations with deep attention to their relevance to his own readings of the poem's hidden meanings. In some cases the relevance is not immediately obvious, and requires reflection.

Synopsis of Ibn al-Walid's Glosses

The exegesis of the poem will now be broken down into six movements of very different length: (I) on psychogenesis (commenting on lines 1 and 2 of the poem); (II) on the ambivalence of the soul's embodied state (commenting on line 3); (III) on a Platonic diagnosis and therapeutics for embodiment, in terms of the soul's amnesia and recollection of its original habitat (lines 4 to 9); (IV) on the soul's felicity, once freed from embodiment (lines 10 to 14); (V) on why the soul's fall was providential – a theodicy of embodiment (lines 15 to 18); (VI) on the soul's transit from the bodily state and evanescence within it (lines 19 and 20).

(I) The first discussion begins by broaching the top-down structure of the physical world, as expressed successively in the ranking of the elements, the celestial spheres and the 'kingdoms of nature'. After stating that Ibn Sīnā's words 'a dove endowed with pride and defiance' allude, in the first place, to the pride and defiance of the entity responsible for the cosmic fall, Ibn al-Walid ingeniously traces the hierarchy of physical elements to different responses to this primordial fall. He states that the poem's words refer to the elements' 'division in that regard, into: (1) one who is remorseful and seeks forgiveness after its inability; (2) one complaining and bewildered, which in actual fact is these three elements; and (3) one who is stubborn and haughty, which is the division of the earth, upon which is the centre-point and place'. Evidently, the uppermost, 'remorseful' element is ether;²⁵² the three intermediate, 'bewildered' elements are air, fire and water; and the lowest, 'haughty'

251 Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 100. The Nizārī tradition has instead attributed the *Rasā'il* to other 'hidden' Imams, namely Muḥammad b. Ismā'il and 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad. Yves Marquet, *La Philosophie de Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'* (Algiers, 1975), p. 8.

252 Also called the 'fifth nature' (*al-ṭabī'a al-khāmisa*). See Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *On the Natural Sciences*, pp. 162–163.

element is earth.²⁵³ Ibn al-Walid goes on to say: '[The words also allude to] what is from the All-Arranger (exalted is He) who ordained it through fixing every division of these three [= each mentioned level, 1, 2 and 3, of the elements] in the position it deserves in line with justice, when He examined it prior to their intentions...' Our commentator sees no real clash between the view that the elements get their ranks through their different reactions and that they get them through divine regulation, as he takes it that God's wisdom dictates each element's rank through its own intent. The mentioned Ṭayyibī trend is again seen here, to explain hierarchic order through the subjective intent of its members. 'Intent' implies a kind of consciousness in the physical elements – a panpsychism basic to Ibn al-Walid's whole commentary in which he will presently state: 'no part of the macrocosm and its natural kingdoms is free of life, nor is anything amongst corporeal existents devoid of it.'

The ranks of the spheres of the macrocosm are next differentiated on separate grounds, analysed in terms of the form-matter distinction. The more that form (the subtler, superior aspect of the two) predominates, the higher the sphere's degree. The more that matter (the grosser, inferior aspect of the two) predominates, the lower the sphere's degree. For instance, the Sphere of Spheres is almost spiritual, and as the 'purest and noblest of what fell down, the closest in correspondence with what is above it... its matter is virtually at one with its form'; the earth is instead the furthest sphere from the intelligential pleroma, for 'its form is virtually the same as its matter'. It is on earth, finally, that the successive kingdoms of nature emerge from the bottom up: the mineral, the vegetal and the animal kingdoms. These are produced by the interaction of the two kinds of entity just mentioned – the elements and the planetary spheres. In a pointedly sexual metaphor, the kingdoms of

253 This differs, however, from the identification based on al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walid, *Risālat al-mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*. According to this view the highest is ether, the middle three are air, water and earth, and the lowest is rock (*ṣakhra*) at the centre of the earth (Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', note 7, p. 167). Note that the general trend to explain fundamental features of the cosmos through the fallen entity's emotions also typified earlier Gnostic cosmologies. Valentinianism, notably, traced the corporeal foundations of the world back to the distress of Sophia, and traced the origins of hylic substance to her passion and of psychic substance to her conversion. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, pp. 100–102.

nature (literally 'offspring', *mawālīd*) are said to be engendered by the planetary 'fathers' on the elemental 'mothers'. The entire teleology of these processes is to produce the 'perfect son', namely the 'true human' (*al-insān al-ḥaqīqī*), who is evidently held to transcend the animal kingdom since our commentator declares him to constitute, in his own right, the culminating kingdom of nature.

Ibn al-Walīd puts forward a key teaching from the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* that particular souls are to be identified with a 'power (or faculty, *quwwa*) spread forth from the Universal Soul'. He refers more than once to this deep linkage of the particular with the universal,²⁵⁴ as it is the foundation of his deeper view of what the individual human soul's liberation signifies: it is ultimately *inseparable* from the world-soul's liberation.²⁵⁵ The individual soul is, as it were, in a synecdochic relationship with the Universal Soul: *pars pro toto*. This deeper animic identity-relationship yields a distinct view of the motives of religious praxis. The individual's participation in the terrestrial *da'wa*, or in the terms which the commentator quotes here, 'the responsibility of offering worship [and] the rigour of exercising obedience through the bodily instrument', is inseparable from the repentance of 'soul' *tout court*. Our individual acts of piety are thus an aspect of the repentance of the world-soul itself,

254 E.g., The same linkage is mentioned in glossing line 12 of the poem, which speaks of bodily death as the time when '[the soul] comes to leave behind her everyone staying on as the ally of the earth, not given the last rites.' Ibn al-Walīd says that when the body returns to its place, 'the soul [too] returns to her place and *the particulars of her go back to the universal of her*.'

255 There seems to be a formal problem here which is not addressed in the commentary. The problem has been noted in passing by Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', p. 160. Namely, in the Ṭayyibī cosmology adopted from Kirmānī, the Universal Soul is, strictly speaking, identified with the *undescended* first emanation (= the Second Intellect). The First Intellect is identified with the Universal Intellect, while the fallen second emanation (= the Third Intellect), for its part, is identified with Universal Nature. Let us take it then, that Universal Nature is the entity which is actually susceptible to descent and scission into incarnate individuals, while the Universal Soul stays above. It is Universal Nature which is, in effect, the world-soul, not the Universal Soul. It is to be noted that, in the formulation quoted here from the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, particular souls are attributed to a *faculty* of, or power from, the Universal Soul, not the Universal Soul itself. Presumably our commentator identifies this distinct 'power' with Universal Nature, the fallen Third Intellect.

through which it makes good its error and reverts to its proper position amongst the entities arrayed in God's presence. Conversely, the individual's impious rejection of the *da'wa* is, at bottom, inseparable from the world-soul's original imposture and compounds its material fallenness.

Thus, in the words quoted here by Ibn al-Walid from a discussion in *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a* on the fact that the cosmos is a 'great man',²⁵⁶ the referent at first seems to be the individual soul, but is in fact the world-soul: 'If it repents and turns in regret, it reverts to "rest and refreshment" and a Lord who is not wrathful. But if it is defiant, scornful, recalcitrant and haughty, playing truant from those who give warning, if it is reminded yet does not remember, and if it is made to see yet does not see, [then] it gets confused and is cut off as though by the flood that goes down from the mountain peak into the confines of the earth, and it comes to be in the dark shadows of the "lowest of the low".'²⁵⁷ In reality, this passage's referent can simultaneously be taken to be the individual soul *and* the world-soul. The two are aspects of one reality: the *micro-cosmos* and the *macro-anthropos*.

Another, cognate esoteric tradition likewise put forward this highly distinct idea that the earthbound human being could contribute to the solemn project of countering the exile of the lowest entity within the divine pleroma and upraising it. The tradition in question was

256 *Al-Risāla al-jāmi'a* ('The Comprehensive Epistle') exists in two versions and was historically misattributed to Maslama b. Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī (d. 398/1007), the mathematician and astronomer. Some scholars have dated it to the time of the main corpus of the *Rasā'il* on stylistic grounds. See Yves Marquet, *La Philosophie de Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*, pp. 16–17; also see I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Iḥwān al-Ṣafā')* (London, 1982), pp. 2–3. It seems likely that *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a* was by Maslama al-Majrīṭī's namesake, compatriot and older contemporary, the traditionist, alchemist and theorist of magic Abu 'l-Qāsim Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964). See Maribel Fierro, 'Bāṭinism in al-Andalus. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), Author of the *Rutbat al-Ḥakīm* and the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* (Picatrix)', *Studia Islamica*, 84, 1996, pp. 87–112, esp. pp. 107–108. Also see Wilferd Madelung, 'Maslama al-Qurṭubī's Contribution to the Shaping of the Encyclopedia of the *Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'*', in *Festschrift for Carmela Baffioni*, ed. Antonella Straface et al. (forthcoming). Also see Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabī and the Ismā'īlī Tradition* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), pp. 29–30 and 45–46.

257 [Maslama b. Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī], *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, ed. J. Saliba (Damascus, 1368/1949), vol. 2, pp. 38–39.

the Kabbalah, and the resonances are striking. The sefirothic tree of the Kabbalists and the intelligential pleroma of the Ṭayyibīs are both tenfold. In both doctrines our world ensues from a crisis in the realm of these higher entitites.²⁵⁸ In Kabbalist teaching the lowest of the sefirot, *Malkuth*, suffers from exile (*galuth*), just as the lowest of the intellects of Ṭayyibi Ismailism. In the case of both doctrines there was some trend to link this grand metaphysical exile with transmigrations of the terrestrial soul.²⁵⁹ In the Kabbalah the metaphysical exile is specifically understood in terms of the disunion of *Malkuth* ('Kingdom' = female, equated with the *Shekhinah*) and *Tif'eret* ('Foundation' = male) at four positions higher in the sefirothic tree. Most importantly, the task of restitution (*tikkun*) – that is, raising *Malkuth* and restoring her to her 'husband' *Tif'eret* – is a mystical goal of carrying out the religious commandments.²⁶⁰ In a teaching at one with the Ṭayyibī view just outlined, even the tiniest act performed with the right intent can aid the project of 'world-restoration' (*tikkun ha-olam*). The Kabbalah, of course, also read the scriptural account of the Edenic Fall as deeply relating to the crisis

258 Corbin, *en passant*, draws attention to this parallel. He compares the Ṭayyibī 'drama in heaven' to the Sefirothic crisis as specifically framed in Lurianic Kabbalah, in which it is designated 'the breaking of the vessels' (*shevirat hakelim*): Corbin, 'Ismā'īlī, p. 78.

259 Speaking of the doctrine of metempsychosis (*gilgul*) in Lurianic Kabbalah, Scholem states: 'all transmigrations of souls are in the last resort only migrations of the one soul whose exile atones for its fall. In addition, every individual provides, by his behavior, countless occasions for ever renewed exile': Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1995), p. 282.

260 'Mystical devotion during prayer and fulfilment of the commandments (*mišvot*), accompanied by the appropriate contemplative kabbalistic intentions, rigorous ascetic behaviour, and ethical deeds, would lift the *Shekhinah* out of Her exile and restore the divine realm to its original state': Lawrence Fine, tr., *Safed Spirituality* (New York, Ramsey and Toronto, 1984), translator's introduction, p. 9. Scholem, in discussing the teaching of Isaac Luria (d. 1572 CE) and his school, refers to the negative implication of this same teaching: '[We,] in the last resort are ourselves responsible for the continuation of the *Galuth* [= exile of *Malkuth*]: Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 274. These teachings predate Lurianic Kabbalah, and are already found in the *Zohar* and the system of Kabbalah which emerged in 13th-century Spain through the influence of Moses de Leon (d. 1305 CE). For the history of the concept of *tikkun*, see Gilbert Rosenthal, 'Tikkun ha-Olam: The Metamorphosis of a Concept', *The Journal of Religion*, 85: 2 (April, 2005), pp. 214–240.

in the sefirothic world. Ibn al-Walīd, for his part, presently quotes from a Ṭayyibī version of the *Jāmiʿat al-jāmiʿa* (the ‘Epitome of the Epitome’ of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*) to the effect that the story of the genesis of Adam and Eve, the Devil, the Forbidden Tree and the ‘act of disobedience which happens in the realm of the soul’, applies equally on the universal, cosmological level and on the particular, human level. There is no difference, substantially, in purport, since ‘difference and disparity are only found in the implications that appear within estimative faculties and imaginations’.

The main issue of this first broad discussion of the six making up Ibn al-Walīd’s commentary (concerning how the soul comes to be materially embodied on earth) is dealt with through an extended quotation from Kirmānī’s *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*. The proper subject of the passage (from the first *mashraʿ* of the fifth *sūr*) is in fact ‘life in actuality, emitted from the world of the holy’. This ‘life’, however, subsumes the various subtypes of soul and is what underlies the soul in all its forms. It explains automotion in the broadest sense, and so explains natural phenomena as diverse as the spherical movement of the celestial spheres, the upward movement of fire, the downward movement of water, the growth in plants, the pleasure-seeking drive of animals and the intellectual drive in human beings. Kirmānī gives a typical account of the ‘great chain of being’, starting with minerals, then plants, then crawling animals, then humanity, ascending finally to the ‘possessioners of divine support’, that is, prophets and imams, who even attain contact with angels. The lifeforce ascends through all of these creaturely levels. In the lowest, mineral realm, life remains as yet latent. But even here it can supposedly be witnessed in certain phenomena such as the force of magnetism and the force of ‘aversion between lead and diamond’. This last relates to the medieval belief that the only substance capable of breaking diamond was lead, notwithstanding its malleability amongst the metals.²⁶¹ Between the mineral and plant realm, Kirmānī places coral ‘which in respect of its body is a mineral but in respect of its generation in the sea is a plant’.

Next, when life rises to the level of plants its activity is much more obvious than in minerals. The augmentative soul which functions in the

261 E.g. Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *On the Natural Sciences*, pp. 255 (English) and pp. 308–309 (Arabic); also p. 275 (English) and p. 339 (Arabic).

vegetal kingdom has gained seven faculties: the attractive, the adhesive, the digestive, the propulsive, the alimantal, the accretive and the formative faculty. Plants have their own hierarchy, which is said to culminate in the palm tree, 'which from the viewpoint of its form is a plant, but from the viewpoint of its properties and products is comparable with an animal'. The palm tree, for instance, is found as either male or female, and 'only bears fruit through the impregnation of its females by its males'. Ascending from here to the level of crawling animals, 'life' or the soul gains the five senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch. Again, the animal hierarchy culminates in one animal species which forms a link with the next stage in the zoic chain, which is humanity. The linking species is said to be the horse 'which from the viewpoint of its corporeal constitution is amongst the sum of animals but from the viewpoint of its natural characteristics resembles humanity'. In human beings, 'life' or the soul finally attains the upright stature and gains a set of new faculties which transcend those of animals: imagination, memory, ratiocination, and so forth.²⁶²

Life thus ascends within the natural world as a great chain or hierarchic ladder in which there are no gaps. This highly graduated, developmental process ends with the emergence of the human being, through whom it at last has the opportunity to revert fully to its pleromatic origins. Inevitably, the question arises whether Kirmānī's notion here of the upward graduation of life implies a temporal, phylogenetic process, that is, an evolutionary model. Certainly, the whole passage frames the unfolding of the soul within the cosmos as 'the emergence of this latent life from potentiality to actuality', and the ascending stages are explicitly presented using temporal locutions such as '*when (idhā)* this life ascends' from such and such a level to such and such a level. However, this patently evolutionary model is nevertheless premised on a prior *devolution* of life from the pleroma beyond the physical cosmos, and to this extent, seems at odds with evolutionist theory in the conventional Darwinian sense. Though life ascends gradually from the mineral realm in its cosmic manifestation, it only does so insofar as it has already descended into the cosmos from the higher spiritual world, which remains its proper abode.

262 See Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', pp. 160–161.

(II) The second movement of Ibn al-Walid's commentary, broadly concerning the ambiguity of the soul's embodied state, takes its cue from line 3 of the poem: 'She reached you under compulsion, yet perhaps she is loath to be separated from you, having experienced distress.' This refers to the paradox that though the body imprisons the soul, the soul clings to it. The long comment on this line begins with the 'compulsion' spoken of in the hemistich. Ibn al-Walid refers afresh to the idea of the drama in heaven (pertaining to the Third Intellect) by which 'life' was compelled to leave the pleroma ('that noble luminous world, that holy spiritual abode') and to descend into this world. Here it is subjected to space-time and natural determinism. Thus Ibn al-Walid says 'the glooms of the three dimensions [of space] encompassed it' and also 'the sequence of times'. The natural world that it now inhabits is arranged 'in its degrees as passive and active, that being the manner of compulsion and coercion whereby [life] has no free disposal in any of it by its own will and choice'. These constraints, however, are imposed through wisdom and are purely remedial in intention. The soul's subjugation by nature and the removal of its choice is a hiatus occurring for the duration of cosmic time: a moment of imprisonment in an eternity of liberty. Two apocatastases flank the soul's state of subjection, on either side – Corbin's 'retarded eternity'. Hence Ibn al-Walid states here: 'In reality it is a compulsion between two choices [= states of free will] and a hardship between two [states of] ease, and none understands it except those who know ... [God] put compulsion between the two of them since He considered it in regard to wisdom as more fitting.'

The commentator's main discussion here concerns the specific words, 'perhaps [the dove] is loath to be separated from you'. He explores the paradox that, despite having been forced into constraint by the body, the soul actively resists being freed from it by death. This holds true for *all* embodied human souls. Ignorant souls are in a state of amnesia about the higher world and sceptical of the reality of the afterlife. They thus fear their lives ending here below and instead 'opt to hold fast to these rotting bodies'. Awakened souls are instead well aware of the reality of the 'place of return' but, to that end, want to 'acquire good deeds by means of this body as long as they are in this place of acquisition'. Therefore, both ignorant and awakened souls are averse to dying.

Our commentator quotes at length on this theme from the *Majālis al-tanazzuf* ('The Sessions on Purification') in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, evidently attributed, as before, to Imam Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh.

The text in question is not extant.²⁶³ The quoted passage can be summarised as follows. The rational soul, which sets humans apart, is endowed with faculties of speech, deliberation and preferential choice. Through these faculties it gains access to guidance, religion and self-improvement, and in turn bestows these on the less perfect. A pedagogic order between teacher and taught is therefore implied. The *Majālis al-tanazzuf* proceeds to present a great creaturely hierarchy of ten members in all, if we include its reference to angels. The first to be mentioned are prophets who mediate between the Creator and creatures, souls 'divinely protected from destructive faults', 'expounder[s] of the enigmas of [God's] scriptures', etc. The text presently states that *above* this echelon, 'the most receptive [souls of all] are the "angels brought nigh"'. On the other hand, below the prophets are ranked 'the righteous caliphs and the rightly guided imams'. The first of these expressions normally designates the first four caliphs of Islam, and *prima facie* fits a Sunnī, not Shi'ī context – a reference here, perhaps, to the Fātimid 'caliphs'. Next come the great religious scholars and sages, followed in succession by the learned in general, the human commonalty, four-legged animals, other animals, plants and, finally, inanimate species. Souls within the mentioned hierarchy greatly vary in their ability to receive the light with which God is to be identified. The author continues, highly evocatively, that 'all existents come into being, safeguarded, intelligible, luminous, shining through the conveying of His guidance [which is] pervasive, circulating, superabundant and streaming in the world of sublimity and of the nadir, the great and the small.'

In a richly analytical presentation, the upward, perfective dynamics of the levels within this hierarchy are explained through the Aristotelian form-matter duality. Entities on each level are subject to God's administration (*siyāsat Allāh*) which has three aspects: wisdom, generosity and determination. God's wisdom guides the entity to benefits through its form; God's generosity transfers the entity from potentiality to actuality through its matter; and God's determination underlies the entity's drive to endure through its individualised composite of form *and* matter. In being a link within the hierarchy, each entity acts on what is below through its form, is receptive through its matter to what is above, and perfects its own essential identity through its individual form-matter

263 Ibid., p. 161.

composite. It is thus an intermediate reality, between two sides, neither simply active nor passive.

Ibn al-Walīd then gives the reason that the good, just as the bad, shrink from losing their bodies, as follows. Human souls in general are stimulated by the divine light in creation to cleave to the functions specific to them, some of which are enacted through the soul itself and in isolation from the body, but many of which are *only* carried out through the body. The 'friends of God' who 'set out on the right side' are dedicated to good deeds and they thus view the soul's link with the body as precious capital, and 'transact by it'. Clearly, the paradigmatic good deed in the author's mind here is teaching and providing spiritual instruction, such as to 'bring the dead to life, liberate bodies from the bondage of passions, the fetter of fallacies and the snares of sins'. Likewise, he speaks of their aim 'to summon [human beings] to God and guide them to the revelation which leads to Him and the sign [presumably the Imam] which points to Him'. In short, the virtuous cleave to the body to engage, above all, in the *da'wa*.

In contrast, the 'enemies of God' who 'set out on the left side' are quite 'blind to the parameters of insight'. Whereas God's friends cleave to the body, in a sense, *because* of their belief in the afterlife, this broad group cleaves to it through disbelief in the afterlife. Insofar as they see life as under the control of an absolutely blind force (*al-dahr*, 'time' or 'fate'), they view death as sheer annihilation, and so fear it. The author differentiates four sub-groups here: atheistic sceptics, hypocrites who verbally affirm the afterlife while inwardly disbelieving, mindless 'imitators' without any grasp of the true meaning of the resurrection, and finally, hedonists addicted to bodily pleasure. All these categories spurn death. The passage goes on to state that animals in general shrink from death due to their 'survival instinct' and the pain which usually accompanies the dying process, and it ends by observing that the fear of death is truer of the common people than the elect. The elect are assured of their posthumous state and their joys in the afterlife, and so their natural fear of dying is much diminished.²⁶⁴

(III) The commentary's next discursive movement diagnoses the embodied soul's state in terms of it forgetting its origin in the intelligible world. This idea is developed in discussing Ibn Sīnā's line: 'She was

264 Ibid., p. 161.

disdainful, unaccustomed, but when she continued she got used to ruin and the wasteland.' The section consists, almost entirely, of an allegory quoted by Ibn al-Walid from *al-Risāla fī bayān i'tiqād Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa madhhab al-rabbāniyyīn* ('Epistle on the Exposition of the Belief of the Brethren of Purity') in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*.²⁶⁵ Thus, as already pointed out, this is an allegory explaining an allegory.

The brief tale begins on a paradisiac island where a city stands on the summit of a mountain. Its inhabitants are blessed with a climatically ideal environment, and live in perfect plenty and co-operation. For some unstated reason, a group of them take it into their heads to set out to sea. But they are shipwrecked and washed up on an island, very different from theirs: wild, dank, and inhabited by apes. The apes' lives are dominated by a monstrous bird of prey which regularly attacks and picks them off in ones and twos. The castaways try to survive on the island as best they can, subsisting on its unsatisfying fruits and foetid water, and pathetically gathering leaves from the woods to use as rough clothing. Some mate with the female apes and so a mixed progeny begins. Utterly forgetting their origins, the castaways now simply want to live permanently on the savage island. They begin hoarding its fruits and competing for the attentions of the female apes, so that wars take place.

But one night, one of the castaways has a vivid dream that he is being welcomed back with great joy to the paradisaic city from which the unfortunate band had set out long before. The amazed and joyous inhabitants wash him, give him fresh garments and concernedly cross-question him about the others left behind. The dreaming man is overwhelmed by a feeling of relief, thinking how God has rescued him from the harsh island and the fellowship of apes. He is therefore absolutely dismayed to stir from sleep, only to find himself right back there. An ultimate lucidity has paradoxically come through a dream: the dream *within* the 'dream' of his amnesiac state has served to awaken him from it. He confides his dream to a brother and they privately decide to build a boat to try to return to their original homeland. When they launch a

265 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khillān al-wafā'*, (Beirut, 1957), vol. 4, pp. 37–40, loosely translated by Eric van Reijn, *The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren* (London, 1995), pp. 32–34. Also see Madelung, 'An Ismā'ili Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', pp. 162–163.

campaign to remind the others of their forgotten origins, bringing them back to their senses about the reality of their present condition, many more join their bid to escape. At this point the monstrous bird decides to strike. It snatches a man (we presume, the very castaway who has had the dream) and carries him off. But in its flight it notices after a while that it has caught a human, not an ape. So instead of eating him, it flies to the paradisaic island and leaves him on the roof of his old home in the city there. The parable states lastly that though the companions left behind mourn him deeply, if they only knew their brother's true fate they would long for it to befall them too.

A key to the symbolism is given at the end of the quotation: the strange, harsh island is this lower world, the apes are its folk, the monstrous bird is death, the castaways are God's friends within this world, the paradise-island is the spiritual world hereafter. In a recent study of the allegory, the cross-bred, human-simian offspring have been interpreted as follows: 'The mating of some of the survivors with female apes and the warlike offspring resulting from this unnatural union should be conceived of as symbolizing, with an awe-inspiring metaphor, the ever-growing degeneration of souls originally pure when they are linked to the perishable bodies of this world.'²⁶⁶ The details of the symbolism demand to be taken yet further: the castaway who has the dream seems to represent a prophet, his 'true dream' represents divine revelation, the brother in whom he confides represents his legatee or imam, the grand project of building the ship to escape represents the community co-operating in the interest of shared salvational goals, and the campaign to awaken the other, still oblivious, survivors to the reality of their circumstances and the memory of their true home, represents the *da'wa*.²⁶⁷

266 Godefroid de Callatāy, 'The Two Islands Allegory in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*', in Yanis Eshots, ed., *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook*, no. 4 (2013), pp. 71–81, esp. p. 75.

267 De Callatāy equates this aspect of the story's symbolism with the covert propaganda carried on by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* themselves. He asks: 'Had the objective been the salvation of all those living on the island, would there need be of a stratagem or a pact between only a handful of people? The secrecy of these preparations and the careful selection of companions in the story reflect the Brethren's own concern about targeting their propaganda on only those whom they deem worthy of it' (ibid., pp. 78–79). It is probably significant that the allegory, in its original position in the *Rasā'il*, comes immediately before the beginning of Epistle 45, 'On the modalities of the relations of the

The parable could be seen as putting forward a Platonic epistemic alternative of amnesia and *anamnêsis* – a reading confirmed by the two, much shorter, comments which follow it.²⁶⁸ The first gloss takes up line 5 of the poem, ‘I think she forgot her aeons in the sanctuary and her stations...’ Ibn al-Walid links this line straight back to the ape-island allegory and ‘the forgetfulness of those people whom the ship was wrecked with, who alighted at that island [and] forgot their city which they had left...’ The hemistich thus ‘underlines what we have mentioned, namely, [souls] being bound to the world of bodies and their forgetfulness of the subtle world (*nisyānuhum li’l-‘ālam al-laṭīf*)’. Skipping the lines which present the soul’s fall into material embodiment through letter symbolism (on which the commentary sheds little light), line 8 then announces the great turning point when the dove again begins to recall her homeland – a trope for the soul’s anamnestic conversion. Ibn Sinā, significantly, presents this awakening in terms of the dove’s nostalgia: ‘She weeps when she recalls her aeons in the sanctuary, with tear-ducts flowing’. The commentator states here that through this inward remorse experienced by the soul, ‘her climbing of the stairway of ascension takes place’. The soul’s nostalgia thus empowers it to traverse the pathway back to the higher, spiritual world – namely the pathway of the *da’wa*, consisting of ‘her cleaving to those giving guidance, who are the Imams and the dignitaries [of the religious hierarchy]’. This notion of an indispensable ‘soteriological energy’ featured in Ṭayyibī Ismaili teaching. The tradition sometimes framed it as a specifically feminine energy: insofar as the fallen director of the material world was identified as the ‘spiritual Adam’, the effective power without which he could not ascend to his lost place in the pleroma was identified as his consort, the ‘eternal Eve’. The latter was viewed as personifying his nostalgia, without which, he is spiritually powerless.²⁶⁹

Brethren of Purity’. A French translation of the whole Epistle 45 is found in C. Bonmariage, ‘De l’amitié et des frères: l’Épître 45 des Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’’, *Bulletin d’Etudes Orientales*, 58 (2009), pp. 315–350.

268 All Ibn al-Walid’s glosses shrink from line 5 of the poem onwards.

269 ‘Here we have a magnificent symbol. The repentance and nostalgia of the [fallen] Angel are conceived as an energy penetrating the entire universe: the spheres, the elements, and the adepts – that is to say, the human beings of the posterity of the spiritual Adam. This energy is the leaven of the original existention (*al-khamīra al-ibdā’iyya*); it is the eternal Eve of the Angel of

(IV) The commentary's fourth movement concerns the freed soul's state of felicity. This passage starts, fittingly, from its current state of captivity, as encapsulated in Ibn Sīnā's trope here of the body as caging the bird of the soul, keeping it back from its home on 'the high, vast peak'. According to Ibn al-Walīd, the 'tenebrous frame' of the body, which must be left behind as a corpse by the soul, is what is meant by Ibn Sīnā's words, 'the ally of the earth, not given the last rites'.²⁷⁰ The rest of his comment exemplifies the circumscribed, high-definition character of his interpretation – his commitment to a Ṭayyibī hermeneutic circle. The poem's reference to the time 'when the sanctuary draws near and the departure for the widest expanse approaches' is not interpreted expectedly. If Ibn Sīnā seems to be speaking of the soul's joy when freed from the body by death, his commentator instead takes him to speak of the soul's joy while still in the body, thanks to its membership of the *da'wa*. He takes the line to allude to the culmination of the soul's gradual ascent through many lower forms of material embodiment up to the human state where it can at last participate in the *da'wa*. The soul's slow climb has thus ended in it gaining 'the upright stature (*al-qāmat al-bashariyya*) and the human form', its primary perfection, whence it is placed to mount 'the stairway of salvation' (*sullam al-najāt*), evidently a reference to the *da'wa* hierarchy. If further given God's aid, it may ascend through 'the gates of felicity' and attain its secondary perfection, intellectual actualisation. Ibn Sīnā's reference to the soul's 'departure for the widest expanse' is taken by Ibn al-Walīd to mean 'the ability to travel in the vast, holy, spiritual expanse', as a *da'wa*-adept. The idea of the *da'wa* as a salvational Jacob's Ladder is underlined in the next comment, which speaks of how the soul emerges 'into the sphere of existence through subjecting herself to obedience to the Imams of right guidance, and she ascends the psychic stairways (*al-marāqī al-naṣṣāniyya*), mounting the degrees of the corporeal dignitaries [on earth] and the holy spiritual dignitaries [in heaven]'.

The 13th line commented on here, involves the image of a veil 'drawn back so [the soul] beholds what no slumbering eyes have perceived'.

mankind. It is at the same time his nostalgia and his return to Paradise': Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, p. 42; also see p. 83 note 61, and p. 183.

²⁷⁰ The commentary here also quotes an unnamed Ismaili authority who likens the soul within the body to a pearl in an oyster shell.

Ibn al-Walīd brings forward quotations which have this same trope of veiling and unveiling in common. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's saying is quoted according to which, 'If the veil were drawn aside I would not increase in certainty.' An excerpt is quoted from a *qaṣīda* by 'the most glorious sultan' al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan, which also contains this imagery.²⁷¹ It evocatively addresses the poet's earthly self as his own ghost which holds him back from his real aims (*yā shabaḥī al-ʿawwāq lī ʿan maʿāribī*), and it continues: 'I associated with you since there was a covering over my eye. So when it was removed, I emptied my vessel of you.' Another reference to a veil or covering in the verses quoted here from the poem is: 'I know through knowledge, not by opinion, what it is that I return to at the time that my veil is lifted.' These statements from Imam 'Alī and Sultan al-Khaṭṭāb indicate that an antemortem unveiling heralds the postmortem unveiling. They hint at a possibility of liberation through contemplative certainty and inward alignment with the higher world, even while embodied. This notion is supported by the next line 14 of Ibn Sīnā's poem which states: '... she warbles in the morning above a lofty peak, and *knowledge elevates the rank of the one who was not elevated*.' In his gloss, Ibn al-Walīd refers to knowledge as the 'greatest magnet' which 'attaches [souls] to the shining bright lights of the higher world'. In this perspective knowledge is already incipient or virtual salvation, as confirmed by what our commentator quotes here from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: 'God does not give someone knowledge without Him someday giving him deliverance through it.'²⁷²

The gloss on this same, last line 14 of the poem confirms the point that the apex to which the soul rises when freed from the body, is prefigured in its apical state *within* the body. According to our commentator, what is really referred to in this line is inclusion in the hidden ecclesia of the *da'wa*, assuring the soul of its postmortem elevation, not the post-mortem state itself. The lofty peak on which she sings is thus, supposedly,

271 See I.K. Poonawala, *al-Sulṭān al-Khaṭṭāb: ḥayātuhu wa shi'ruhu* (Beirut, 1999), pp. 212–221, especially pp. 215–216. Sultan al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī al-Ḥajūrī (d. 533/1138) has already been mentioned in this Introduction as a major supporter of Queen Arwā bt. Aḥmad. He was a tribal chief of Banū Hamdān, as well as holding the rank of *ma'dhūn* (the 'authorised' second in command) in the *da'wa* hierarchy.

272 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ (Beirut, 1967/1387), *ḥikma* 407, p. 548, with some difference of wording.

the blessed state of human embodiment on earth, and her warbling is her giving expression to the esoteric sciences to which she has gained access, along with her yearning for fellowship with other votaries, who are quite separate from 'the rebellious adversaries of religion' (i.e., Islam's majoritarian representatives). She thence climbs through the *da'wa*'s ranks and initiations or, as the commentary has it, 'progresses by steps through the degrees of the dignitaries, and ascends on her stairway consisting of the stations of ascent'. In step with Ṭayyibī notions, the votary's ultimate aspiration is 'the epiphany in the supreme luminous station and the most excellent *kāfūrī* ('camphoric') apparition'. The 'Kāfūrī apparition' (*shabaḥ kāfūrī*) or 'Kāfūrī body' (*jism kāfūrī*) refers to a docetic doctrine current in Ṭayyibī Ismailism, according to which the Imams have special, subtle bodies which they have assumed at will. Virtuous souls pass into more and more luminous subtle bodies and, on reaching salvation and escaping the process of transmigration they gain their own camphoric body similar to that of the Prophets and Imams.²⁷³ Attainment of the camphoric body is the summit of the votary's hopes and Ibn al-Walīd expresses the event in patently mystical terms: 'at that time, the light of light (*nūr al-nūr*) breaks forth from her, and the Truth (*al-Haqq*) is manifest through her at the moment of epiphany.'

(V) The commentary's penultimate discussion concerns why the cosmic fall is good – reflecting the content of lines 15–18 of the poem. Ibn al-Walīd's gloss stresses that the harsh experience of subjection to the cosmos, and incarnation in it, are constructive and fundamentally loving. The experience is to educate the pleromatic entity which has erred: 'to raise up what has turned away in it, to give it the perfection that eluded it, through which the completion takes place of its substance, and by which it fully registers what its earlier slip and monstrous disavowal veiled it from'. As Ibn Sīnā's poem states here, '[the dove's] fall, no doubt, was a necessary blow for her to become attentive again to what she was inattentive to.'²⁷⁴ The commentator envisions a path of salva-

273 See Daniel De Smet, *La philosophie ismaélienne: un ésoterisme chiite entre néoplatonisme et gnose* (Paris, 2012), pp. 133–134, and p. 145.

274 As noted by Madelung, these lines in the version of Ibn Sīnā's text confronting Ibn al-Walīd contain two variants distinct from other versions. This shifts the meaning from a more tentative, conditional statement, to a categorical statement, which in turn imposes the commentator's categorical interpretation. The version of the line found in other Mss may be translated: 'If her

tion through esoteric knowledge; thus the poem's next words 'for her to become knowing again of every mystery in the two worlds' are read to mean the 'well-guarded, treasured-up kinds of wisdom through which is the perfection of her substance'. The two worlds referred to in the hemistich here are the physical cosmos and the pleroma, 'the world of density (*'ālam al-kathāfa*) and the world of limpidity (*'ālam al-ṣafā*)'. It is through her becoming acquainted with the mysteries of these two worlds (*iṭṭilā'uhā min asrār al-'ālamayn*) that her ignorance is set right and her bondage undone (*yu'taqu bi'l-iṭṭilā'i 'alayhi riqquhā*).

(VI) The final discussion is on the speed of the soul's passage from its embodied state. The gloss starts with the mysterious statement in line 19 that the soul sets at the same place that it dawned. To restate the point made earlier, the commentator was faced by a variant with the words *bi-'ayni 'l-maṭla'* ('[she sets] at the very place of dawning') instead of *bi-ghayri'l-maṭla'* ('[she sets] somewhere other than the place of dawning'). He thus takes the line to mean that the soul, having descended from the intelligential realm, enters this lowest cosmological realm, the earth, through its own lowest levels of entity. As the discussion of psychogenesis explained, there is, supposedly, already some kind of life that stirs on earth in minerals and metals, observable in forces like magnetism. The soul dawns from this point on earth because it was the end-point of its cosmological fall. As Ibn al-Walid states: 'the rank of the mineral in it, which is the first degree... is the place of setting *and* the very point of rising.'²⁷⁵

fall was (*in kāna*) a necessary blow for her to become attentive again to what she was inattentive to/And for her to become knowing again of every mystery in the two worlds, then (*fa-*) – her tear is [as yet] un-mended.' The line as quoted in *al-Risāla al-mufīda* is instead: 'her fall, no doubt (*lā shakka*) was a necessary blow for her to become attentive again to what she was inattentive to,/And for her to become knowing again of every mystery in the two worlds, her tear [as yet] being (*wa- = wāw ḥāliyya*) un-mended.' In the first version the poet observes, questioningly and in an agnostic tone, that if the aim of the soul's fall was to correct it, it seems to have remained uncorrected so far. In the second version used by our commentator, the poet simply asserts that the soul's fall was indeed to correct it when it as yet remained in its uncorrected state. Madelung, 'An Ismā'īlī Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', p. 165.

275 Ibn al-Walid here schematises this descending and ascending path, drawing on a work (= *Risālat al-dīl*) by his uncle, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Walid (d. 554/1159). The figure is of a triangle, with descent taking place from the apex,

Line 20 lastly likens the dove in her speedy departure, to 'lightning flashing in the sanctuary'. The 'sanctuary' has been mentioned three times earlier in the poem and taken to refer to the *pleroma* on high. But this final reference to the sanctuary is instead read in terms of the soul's present, embodied existence, not its beatific future existence. Ibn al-Walid interprets the sanctuary here to mean the human body ('the Adamic shape'). The soul makes her appearance within the matrix of the latter (*ẓaharat bi'l-qālab al-basharī*), like a fulgurating light, shining all too briefly while the period of life runs its course. The trope thus gives expression to the instability of the earthly body and the speed of its dissolution. According to the commentator, the real intent of this metaphor is not descriptive but hortative: Ibn Sīnā is urgently 'directing the foremost to get provision for the Day of Return', that is, he is encouraging God's partisans to make full use of their life on earth while they still have it. They must energetically engage in the 'greater holy war' which is fighting against themselves and the 'irascible soul' within. They should adopt God-consciousness, which our orthoprax Ṭayyibī commentator stresses is a 'combination of the two kinds of worship, the one involving deeds and the one involving knowledge' (*al-jam' bayn al-'ibādatayn al-'amaliyya wa 'l-'ilmiyya*) – the classic Fāṭimid Ismaili formulation to maintain the balance between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of faith. He seals the specificity of his interpretation by adding that Ibn Sīnā's allusion to life's transience is a summons 'to follow God's sainted friends and their [hierarchy of] dignitaries who are the best of creation', in other words, to submit oneself to the structures of the *da'wa*.

down the right side, through material 'essences'. The base of the triangle reached by this descending path is the kingdoms of nature. Ascent then begins from these kingdoms up the left side of the triangle, through forms (that is, grades of soul). A further detail is added on the authority of 'our master Ḥamid al-Dīn Abū 'Alī', according to whom the material aspect of reality ('[material] essences without form') is subject to determinism, while the formal aspect of reality ('forms without [material] essences') – identifiable with the soul in its levels of manifestation – is subject to free will. All entities which combine matter *and* form fall somewhere between these two realms, the world subject to necessitation (*ālam al-majbūr*) and the world subject to free will (*ālam al-mukhtār*). The second of the works cited here (= *Risālat al-dhāt wa 'l-ṣūra*) is not extant. On its author's possible identity, see Madelung, 'An Ismā'īli Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', p. 168, note 19.

The commentary thus ends as it began, as a thoroughgoing application of Ismaili ideas and especially the Ṭayyibī *ḥaqā'iq*-system. The highly compressed psychological teachings of the poem are caught and refracted through this hermeneutical prism. Each minutia is expanded as if the famous allegorical poem were a compact witness to the entire system. The premise that the philosopher-poet had been an authority in doctrines which later came to characterise Ibn al-Walid's own esoteric school, is of course questionable; yet Ibn al-Walid's assumption has led him to a hermeneutic feat. A paradox, however, marks the real relation of the commentary to the poem. The latter's Platonising references to the soul's pre-existence, fall into material embodiment, recollection of the intelligible world and, dove-like, its final 'homing', typify the discourse of the Chief Sheikh's allegories. His glosses on the *Uthūlūjīyā* show precisely how he meant such formulations to be reconciled with the *denial* of the individual soul's pre-existence that in some ways defined his own Aristotelian psychology. In place of this minimalist reading, Ibn al-Walid's is maximalist. For him, the pre-existence and fall referred to in the poem are meant neither figuratively nor to be restricted to the level of individual souls. They ultimately refer to the objective pre-existence and primordial fall to which the world-soul itself was subject. The metaphor at the heart of the poem was, thus, arguably intended and interpreted in wholly antithetical ways: the intention was Aristotelian but the interpretation was Gnostic – if not in its immediate sources, then, at least, in spirit.

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Note on the Arabic Edition

Professor Wilferd Madelung's edition of the Arabic text of *al-Risāla al-mufīda* is based on three manuscripts in possession of The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. They are:

1. Ms. 140, described in A. Gacek, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies*, vol. 1, London 1984, p. 98. This manuscript is identified in the annotation by the letter ب.
2. Ms. 673, described also in Gacek, *Catalogue*, p. 98. This manuscript is identified in the annotation by the letter ت.
3. Ms. 875, described in D. Cortese, *Ismaili and Other Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies*, London 2000, p. 78. This manuscript is identified in the annotation by the letter ث.

Among these manuscripts, Ms. 673 (ب) generally offers the least corrupt text and has been chosen as the basis text for the edition.

‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd

Al-Risāla al-mufīda fī idāḥ mulghaz al-qaṣīda

The Epistle Useful in Elucidating What is
Enigmatic in the *Qaṣīda*

English Translation

The Epistle Useful in Elucidating What is Enigmatic in the *Qaṣīda*

By our lord ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [b. al-Walīd] – may God exalt his sanctity and bestow his intercession and his intimate friendship upon us.

In the Name of God, the Infinitely Merciful, the Compassionate.

[1] Praise be to God who, with the light of right guidance, illumines the interior vision of the partisans of Muḥammad’s family (peace be upon them); who informs them through the latter’s benefic substances¹ – amongst the great secrets of creation – about what is hidden from those too proud amongst creatures to be obedient to [Muḥammad’s family], which was revealed concerning [Muḥammad’s family] and their ancestor, the Chosen One (God’s blessings be upon them all): ‘*You [Muḥammad] are but a warner and a guide for every people*’ [Q. 13:7]. We praise Him since He bestowed benefit on us by way of adherence to them, and we thank Him in that He made us amongst their partisans, with the praise of whoever knows the proper grounds of praise and thanks, and so praises and gives thanks, and who is made to suffer in love for them, and so is content anticipating his reward and is steadfast.

We bear witness that there is ‘no god but God’, [He] who has veiled intellects – those that are high of them as well as those that are low – from characterising Him, so that they bow down in obedience, confessing perplexity and inadequacy, and who has debarred minds from qualifying Him, so that they strain their necks, acknowledging their incapacity to get what they sought and their weak-sightedness. And how might what is incepted and made encompass Him who incepted it and

1 *Bi-mawāddihim al-raḥīmiyya. Mādda*, in addition to meaning ‘matter’ (here translated as ‘substance’), can mean ‘mystic aid from a saint (*walī*)’ (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 2697). This may be an additional intended sense evoked here.

made it, or what is created and originated *ex nihilo* find any way to the attribute of Him who created it and originated it *ex nihilo*? Majestic is His laudation and exalted is He above that very greatly!

And we bear witness that Muḥammad is the most excellent of those elected, chosen by Him to convey His message, and the most noble of those sent, sent by Him to guide His creation; the divine Mercy appearing in human shape for the faculties of sight; the holder, among the degrees of divine support, of the holy station. May God bless him and his legatee (*waṣī*), the son of his paternal uncle, the one who settled his debt² and removed his anxiety, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who breathes the spirit of life into the body of His purified, holy law by explaining its hidden sense, who makes plain the noble meanings veiled within the content of revelation, and who guides whoever follows him as an example amongst the Muslim community to the goal of the way. [May God also bless] his dark-eyed consort Fāṭima the Radiant, the high tree of many imamite branches and the abode of the Islamic élites. [May He also bless] her two sons, the virtuous Imams and good, perfect grandchildren, the depository (*mustawda'*) of the secret of the imamate and its resting place (*mustaqarr*),³ the holders of the rod of its glory⁴ through the nobility of prophethood and executorship. [May He also bless] the Imams amongst the progeny of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, the guides of creatures and the houses of the lights of the Almighty, the Creator, the travellers with their partisans on the noblest of roads and the clearest of paths. [May He also bless] him, ahead of whom glad tidings and annunciation came, prior to his becoming an individual, the butter from which are churned the nights and the days, our liege lord and our master, the Imam of our time, the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū 'l-Qāsim,⁵ the Commander

2 The epithet refers to the event, heralding the flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, when the Prophet delegated 'Alī to return, on his behalf, whatever things had been entrusted to him to their owners and to pay his debts fully. See al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, tr. I.K.A. Howard (Horsham and London, 1981), p. 33.

3 In the Ismaili genealogy of the Imams, the *mustawda'* is al-Ḥasan and the *mustaqarr* is al-Ḥusayn.

4 *Qaṣab fakhrihā*. See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 2529, column 2.

5 The 21st and last Imam of the Ṭayyibī Ismailis, al-Ṭayyib was either murdered in his infancy following the assassination of his father al-Āmir in 524/1130 or, according to Ṭayyibī tradition, he survived and went into concealment (*satr*). See Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 261–262.

of the Faithful, the Seal of the Cycle of Witnesses and the Inaugurator of the Cycle of Substitutes;⁶ and [may He also bless] the Imams from his pure, glorious progeny – and may He give [all these listed above] peace.

[2] As for what follows: One of the learned brethren – may God (Exalted is He) multiply them and advance them, may He protect them from calamities in their faith and in their worldly affairs, and may He safeguard them – stumbled on a *qaṣida* poem attributed to ‘the chief’⁷ Abū ‘Alī b. Sinā (may God sanctify his spirit), whose meanings he obscured and whose foundations he based on real secrets at which he hinted. [Ibn Sinā did this] so that none may extract its hidden treasures, nor dive for its precious pearls, nor be guided to the noble meanings and obscure, subtle sciences that he included in it, except someone whom God has favoured with taking them by direct dictation from the authorities in them, and someone to whom He has sent subtle grace via the Keepers of the Houses of Wisdom,⁸ by virtue of that person’s aiming for [those subtle sciences] through their proper gateways. [Ibn Sinā also obscured the poem’s meanings] so that no-one whom a wretched fate had overtaken would get acquainted with them, [persons] from amongst the parties of the demons and devils,⁹ pretenders to degrees to which they have no right, clambering up to brawl over ephemeral vanities and mutual rivalry. [He also obscured the poem’s meanings] so that the symbols it contained would, for the discerning, be an awakening from the slumber of forgetfulness, so that they might inquire into its hidden secrets, and [the symbols would be] a reminder for those who possess high-mindedness, so that they should rise to peruse its riddles and concealed meanings.

6 On the interpretation of the expressions ‘the cycle of witnesses’ and ‘the cycle of substitutes’, see Introduction, pp. 78–9.

7 The reference is evidently to Ibn Sinā’s traditional title, ‘The Chief Master’ (*al-shaykh al-ra’īs*).

8 The phrase ‘the Keepers (or Treasurers) of the Houses of Wisdom (lit. wisdoms)’ (*khuzzān buyūt al-ḥikam*) evidently refers to the Imams and their representatives. Various Shi’i *ḥadīths* refer to the Imams with phrases such as ‘the treasurers of God’s knowledge’ (*khuzzān ‘ilm Allāh*), e.g., al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *‘Uyūn akhbār al-Ridā*, ed. M.H. Lājevardī (Tehran, 1398/1978), vol. 1, chapters 19–20. Also see note 216 above.

9 The expression ‘the parties of the demons and devils’ apparently refers to the imamate’s antagonists.

[That learned brother] asked me to explain the subtle secrets that [Ibn Sīnā] put down in [the poem] and spoke about in riddles, the noble truths that he hinted at in its contents and of which he spoke symbolically. So the duty of answering him was binding on me, in compliance with his hope and in response to his invitation, through longing for God's reward for spreading wisdom amongst those who seek it from its own people, [and] for conveying it to those who yearn for it and, recognising its merit, lay claim to it – in view of the statement of the Prophet (may God bless him and his family): 'Do not bestow wisdom on those unworthy of it and thus mistreat it, neither withhold it from those worthy of it and thus mistreat them.'¹⁰ So I put that into this epistle and named it 'The Useful in Elucidating what is Enigmatic in the *Qaṣīda*'; and from God I seek aid and in Him place my confidence. Help for what I thereby turn to do is drawn from His blessing, whose circuit contains me and whose celestial sphere encompasses me – and reliance is on Him.

[3] In what I mention I will not go beyond the method of 'allusion close to explicit expression', so as to safeguard wisdom lest it fall into the hand of someone not entitled to it from amongst the ignorant rabble, and so as to protect the secrets of the friends of God lest the undeserving from amongst the wicked, with their stubbornness and error, get hold of them. Whatever unintentional mistake or inadvertent slip that it contains is attributable to the dullness of my intelligence and the inadequacy of my formation, and whatever is correct is from the blessings of my benefactors and the means of my guidance. I take refuge in God (Exalted is He) and in their blessings, from error and slipping up. I ask divine aid for guidance as to what is correct in speech and deed, and there is no power and no strength save in God, the Exalted, the Mighty.

[4] [Ibn Sīnā's] Poem

There came down to you from the highest place an ash-grey dove,
 endowed with pride and defiance, [1]
 Veiled from every staring eye – she being the one who bared her face and
 wore no veil. [2]
 She reached you under compulsion, yet perhaps she is loath to be separated
 from you, having experienced distress. [3]

10 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 74, p. 179.

She was disdainful, unaccustomed, but when she continued she got used to ruin and the wasteland. [4]

I think she forgot her aeons in the sanctuary and her [high] stations – yet she was unhappy with her separation, [5]

So that when by the *hā'* of her *hubūt* ('falling down') from the *mīm* of her *markaz* ('central position') she arrived at the wide plain, [6]

The *thā'* of the *thaqīl* ('heavy') was joined to her, and she came to her senses between landmarks and the lowly traces of the camp. [7]

She weeps when she recalls her aeons in the sanctuary with tear ducts flowing, and when she pecks up [8]

And goes on cooing among the ruins which are effaced by the recurrence of the four winds. [9]

And then dense form hindered her and impeded her, a cage against the high, vast peak, [10]

So that when the journey to the sanctuary draws near and the departure for the widest expanse approaches, [11]

And she comes to leave behind her everyone staying on as the ally of the earth, not given the last rites, [12]

She coos, and the veil has been drawn back, so she beholds what no slumbering eyes have perceived. [13]

And she warbles in the morning above a lofty peak, and knowledge elevates the rank of the one who was not elevated. [14]

So for what reason was she made to fall from the lofty and sublime to the lowest depth of the foot of the mountain? [15]

If it was the deity who made her fall due to some wisdom concealed even from the singular, the understanding, the most pious, [16]

Then her fall, no doubt, was a necessary blow for her to become attentive again to what she was inattentive to, [17]

And for her to become knowing again of every mystery in the two worlds, her tear [as yet] being un-mended. [18]

She was the one whose way time severed so that she has set at the very place of dawning. [19]

It is as though she were lightning flashing in the sanctuary, then it disappeared as if it had not lit up. [20]

[5] Section

We say, with God's aid (Exalted is He) and His guidance, and with the help of His sainted friend on His earth (God's blessings upon him) and *his* intimation:

[6] By his statement, 'There came down to you an ash-grey dove from the highest place, endowed with pride and defiance' [line 1], [Ibn Sinā] means the laxity (*futūr*) that took place, of the one [who was] lax in responding in the world of origination, and its falling behind, its readiness to turn away after being forgiven, and its coarsening;¹¹ and [Ibn Sinā also means] the fact that, when it climbed down and retreated, it was addressed by the True One (glory be to Him) with His statement (Exalted is He): '*Depart you to a shade with three branches – no relief nor shelter from the flame!*' [Q. 77:30–31] – they being the three dimensions constituting the essence of bodies,¹² with which [the soul] goes down to the lowest levels of inferiority from the ranks of perfection and completeness. [It was also addressed at that time] with His statement (glory be to Him): '*Go down, one of you an enemy to the other. On earth you will have a habitation and provision for a while*' [Q. 2:36 and 7:24] – [that is], go down from the world of subtlety to the locus of grossness, and from the vastness of the exalted lights to the locus of decaying bodies and the captivity of nature, the ocean of matter with its clashing waves, the darkness of the world of coming to be and passing away, and the realm of intermixture.

[7] His statement, 'a dove, endowed with pride and defiance', alludes to what had taken place earlier,¹³ namely, being too proud to submit to whoever preceded them¹⁴ in its response and their defiance in obeying him whom they had been commanded to obey. [It also alludes to] their division in that regard – into one that is remorseful and seeks forgiveness after its inability; one complaining and bewildered, which in actual fact is these three elements; and into one that is stubborn and haughty – which is the division of the earth, upon which is the centre-point and

11 Coarsening, i.e., becoming corporeal.

12 The reference is to the three spatial dimensions of breadth, height and depth, as noted in the Introduction.

13 'What had taken place earlier' (*mā kāna sabaqa*) refers to the events preceding the fall, occurring in the World of Origination.

14 The third person plural pronoun '*-hum*' recurs in the text here despite the reference being to the Third Intellect in its fall. Ibn al-Walid's use of the plural is perhaps in view of his belief that the multiple souls of the cosmos are intimately linked to this fallen Third Intellect.

place.¹⁵ [It also alludes to] what is from the All-Arranger (Exalted is He) who ordained [the world] through fixing every division of these three [divergently reacting kinds of element] in the position it deserves in line with justice, when He examined it prior to their intentions, and the hierarchy of everything of that in the place it merits. Since [God] knows, from inside their whorls,¹⁶ heavens and stars which are the fathers, and elements which are the mothers, so that the result may be the realms of nature,¹⁷ the first of which is minerals and the last of which is the true human being who is the ultimate objective.¹⁸ And reliance is upon him, the beginning of thought and the conclusion of action, the perfect son who attains what transcends [even] the degree of perfection and completeness, the lieutenant of the One who made him exist in his position and his place, and of the One who directs what is devoted to him, consisting in the heavens of the world and its elements.

So [it was, that] the All-Arranger (mighty is His power) made the parts of the macrocosm ordered, one of them upon the horizon of another. [He did this] so that, through the coming together of correspondence, resemblance, similarity and likeness, the union might come about of one opposite with another one contradicting it, and that through the union of one with another the objective might result, aimed at by the one entrusted with His command and His work. So the highest bound of it, which is the encompassing sphere, is the purest and noblest of what fell down (*hābiṭ*), the closest in correspondence with what is above it and the subtlest, and its matter is virtually at one with its form because of its subtlety and because of its being in the utmost readiness for what comes about through it, owing to its simplicity and its translucence. [On the other hand] the earth, which is at the lowest bound of the universe, is

15 A possible identification of these elements was suggested in the Introduction: the highest, 'remorseful' one is ether; the middle, 'bewildered' ones are air, fire and water; and the lowest, 'haughty' one is earth.

16 Arabic, *min bāṭini ṭawīyyātihim*. The image of the whorls, rolls or folds of the heavens is perhaps in reference to Q. 21:104, where God is said to roll up heaven, at the end of time, like a scroll (*naṭwī 'l-samā'a ka-ṭayyi 'l-sijill*).

17 'Realms of nature' = *al-mawālīd*, sing. *mawlūd*. The three realms of nature (*al-mawālīd al-thalātha*) are animals, plants and minerals. Note that *mawālīd* also means 'babies', extending the metaphor of the stars functioning as fathers and the elements as mothers.

18 The 'true human' which Ibn al-Walid speaks of here and in the following lines is understood to be a prophet or imam.

the most gross of its parts, the most intense in darkness, the most remote from that noble world and the least receptive to what is meant to emerge through it, by virtue of justice and wisdom, so that its form is virtually the same as its matter due to the remoteness of its link – in its resemblance – with the world of lights and [due to] the fallenness of its degree. Whatever lies between these two extremities, consisting in the orbicular heavens and the moving spheres – the nearer it is to the highest bound the more subtle and noble it is, its form being more predominant than its matter, and the closer it is to the lowest bound the more deficient and gross it is, its form being similar to its matter and closer to it. ‘*That is the ordainment of the Mighty, the Knowing*’ [Q. 6:96 and 36:38] – ‘*and your Lord is not tyrannical towards [His] servants*’ [Q. 41:46].

[8] The noble individual, the author of the *Rasā’il*, has mentioned that in many of his honoured epistles.¹⁹ Some of it he hints indirectly and some of it he declares quite explicitly, amongst which is his statement in *al-Risāla al-jāmi’a* (the ‘Comprehensive Epistle’),²⁰ in his discussion in the epistle [entitled] ‘The World is a Great Man’. Namely: ‘When the philosophers say “particular souls” what they mean thereby is the *power* spread forth from the Universal Soul, falling down into the low lying centre, carried away to the world of nature, holding back from receiving intellectual effusion – which [power] was overtaken in the locus of lights by laziness in praising and glorifying, so it was cast down to the depth of the centre, to the responsibility of offering worship, the rigour of exercising obedience through the bodily instrument, and as natural individuals. [The fallen soul once] belonged to a species to which it no longer belongs, and it will return to it when it repents of its offence and apologises for its slip. On account of that, the Universal (*al-kull*) will take pity on it and be kind to it. He sent prophets who gave warning and assisted them with “*angels brought nigh*” [Q. 4:172]. So if it repents and turns back in regret, it reverts to “*rest and refreshment*” [Q. 56:89] and a Lord who is not wrathful. But if it is defiant, scornful, recalcitrant and haughty, playing truant from those who give warning, if it is reminded yet does not remember, and if it is made to see yet does not look, [then]

19 As noted in the Introduction, Ibn al-Walīd, as not uncommon in the Ṭayyibī tradition, maintained that the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* had been composed by one of the Ismaili Imams.

20 See note 256 of the Introduction.

it gets confused and is cut off as though by the flood that goes down from the mountain peak into the confines of the earth, and it comes to be in the dark shadows of the “*lowest of the low*” [Q. 95:5]. Sometimes it sinks down through corruption (*fasād*), sometimes it rises up through generation (*kawn*) to the locus of bodies, and sometimes time and the variation of days act unrestrictedly on it, [so] it is spread in the horizons – and the nations are divided up!”²¹

[9] Next is what is mentioned by him (peace be upon him)²² in the *Jāmi‘at al-jāmi‘a* (Epitome of the Epitome),²³ when he mentions the ‘universal Adam’, his [universal] spouse, the ‘universal Devil’ and the Forbidden Tree, namely [in] his statement: ‘What one comes across in the Command²⁴ on that subject, about genesis, about the act of disobedience which happens in the realm of the Soul, how the Command is carried through and the power of the soul (*al-quwwa al-naḥsāniyya*) is diffused in the first human individual, namely the Adamic form, he being the “particular Adam” who is disobedient and through whom the order not to eat from the vegetal tree comes about – the explanation of [all] that lies in his genesis in the state of primary, simple elements up to the time of his manifestation in the microcosm, since what appeared only potentially in the simple elements, appeared in the world of composition *actually*.’ Upto his statement, peace be upon him, in this section: ‘Since there is no difference in the substantive reality (*jawhariyya*) of [this] genesis, relative to the origination nature (*al-khilqa al-ibdā‘iyya*) – difference and disparity only being found in the implications that appear within estimative faculties and imaginations.’ This is his statement (peace be upon him). If we wanted to quote at greater length on

21 ‘And the nations are divided up’ is an allusion to Q. 7:160 and 7:168. The passage is quoted from [Majrīṭī], *al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*, ed. J. Ṣalībā, vol. 2, pp. 38–39. Also see ‘Arif Tāmīr, ed., *Risālat jāmi‘at al-jāmi‘a* (Beirut, 1959), pp. 80–81.

22 See note 19 above.

23 The *Jāmi‘at al-jāmi‘a* is an epitome of the epitome (i.e., of *al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a*) of the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’*. See Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (New York and London, 2004), p. 167. The text quoted by Ibn al-Walid evidently differs from the *Risālat jāmi‘at al-jāmi‘a*, edited by ‘Arif Tāmīr. See Madelung, ‘An Ismaili Interpretation of Ibn Sīnā’s *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*’, note 9, p. 167.

24 I.e., in holy scripture.

that subject from the noble epistles, from other pronouncements of our masters (may God bless them and give them peace) and the works by their dignitaries (may God exalt their sanctity and their ranks), that would go beyond the scope of the basis of this epistle. Just a little of that [in practice] suffices the person who seeks a lot of it.

Our master, the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (God's blessings upon him) has hinted something of that in passages of his discussion in *Nahj al-balāgha* and other pronouncements. Amongst that is his statement: 'Let each one of you consider whether he is wandering or returning, for he reached here from the Hereafter and he will return to it.'²⁵ What we quoted [above] from His Word (glory be to Him) is sufficient in that respect: '*Depart to a shade with three branches – no relief nor shelter from the flame!*' [Q. 77:30–1] and His statement (Exalted is He): '*Go down, one of you an enemy to the other. On earth you will have a habitation and a provision for a while...*' [Q. 2:36 and 7:23]. Then He said (glory be to Him): '*O soul at peace! Return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing*' [Q. 89:27]. It may be understood from [common] speech that no-one is told to return to such and such a place unless he has already been there. In [just] a little of this there are riches for someone whom God aids in His gnosis and whom He guides to conceive of His reality. May God place us amongst those granted success in accepting the truth, the ones rightly guided, and may He not place us amongst those subject to divine wrath, nor those who go astray – through His grace and His bounty.

[10] Section

By [Ibn Sīnā's] statement, 'Veiled from every staring eye – she being the one who bared her face and wore no veil' [line 2], he means this fallen life, which has already been mentioned. Since the billows of confusion enveloped [this life] and it got clothed in bodies, the canopies of doubts encompassed it and it fell into the dark nights of gloom, it being expressed allusively sometimes as nature, sometimes as pervasive life, and sometimes as the creational nucleus, of which God (Exalted is He) said: '*He it is who brings out what is hidden in the heavens and the earth*' [Q. 27:25]. So no part of the macrocosm and its natural kingdoms is free of [life], nor is anything amongst corporeal existents devoid of it – and

25 Compare 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 154, pp. 215–216.

how would it be free of it, [life] being the substance bearing its accidents, thereby eventually winding up at the most excellent of [the macro-cosm's] states and the most perfect of its ends? It is as our lord Ḥamīd al-Dīn [al-Kirmānī] (may God exalt his sanctity) said about it in the first chapter²⁶ of the fifth part²⁷ of the book *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* ('Quietude of the Intellect') when he mentions the two parts which are matter (*al-hayūlā*) and form (*al-ṣūra*) – the explanation of it being that nature is the nobler part of the two, metonymically expressed as 'form': 'We say of [form] that it is life in actuality, emitted from the world of the holy, not independent in its existence in itself, nor free from another upon which its existence is conditional',²⁸ namely, the matter which is its bearer.

[11] Then [Kirmānī] said: '[Life] pervades the world of the body [and] the heavens and the earth have been filled by it, so nothing is free of it, nor is anything distant from it which it acts upon. It bestows on everything its first perfection, which pertains to [the thing's] becoming existent. So when [this life] has come into relation with the existents whose existence is through it *in general*, proceeding by way of encompassing [existence's] act, it is then a mover of everything in respect of which it is a perfection for its existence; and *in particular* which is, commensurate with [existence's] acts, in every single bit, so when it moves the celestial bodies in a circle it is a sphere, when it moves fire and air up high it is a lightness of weight, when it moves water and something heavy down low it is gravity, when it moves plants due to growth it is an augmentative soul, when it moves animals to seek pleasures it is a sensorial soul, and when it moves humanity to comprehend existents it is a rational soul. And the universal, in being an agent, is a single nature, and through its acts by way of the disparate matters on which [life] acts, is multiple [natures]' ... to the end of what he mentioned (may God exalt his sanctity).²⁹

[12] Next we say: Because of the emergence of this latent life from potentiality to actuality, the heavens are set in motion, fortunes are assigned, mothers go into labour, the mineral and the plant emerges, the

26 Literally, *mashra'* denotes a 'watering place'.

27 Literally, *sūr* denotes an 'enclosure'.

28 Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*, p. 149.

29 Ibid., pp. 149–150.

horizontal animal appears,³⁰ and the endpoint is reached in the existence of the human individual which is the intended objective. That is insofar as the first of the natural kingdoms to appear was the mineral and this life was entirely latent in it, unmanifest [as yet] in its products, except for the properties witnessed in [the mineral kingdom] – such as magnetite, iron, diamond, gold, the mineral known as ‘hatred of vinegar’,³¹ and the aversion between lead and diamond such that anything other than [lead] cannot break it despite [lead’s] weakness and softness, and diamond’s power and strength, and so on by way of what experts know about stones’ special properties. Thus this life goes on developing upwards in species of minerals till it ends up at the highest of them such as coral, which in respect of its body is a mineral and in respect of its generation in the sea is a plant.

[13] When this life appears in the body of plants, it becomes more obvious there in activity and more effective. It acquires the seven faculties of the augmentative soul, namely the attractive faculty, the adhesive faculty, the digestive faculty, the propulsive faculty, the alimantal faculty, the accretive faculty and the formative faculty. So by the attractive one it attracts the subtlety of the mineral, and it adheres to it by the adhesive one; then it digests it so that it is agreeable to its body and it becomes fit for mixture through the digestive faculty; it propels it to the places appropriate for it by the propulsive faculty; it is fed thereby by the alimantal faculty; its limbs and branches grow through the accretive faculty; and it forms what it needs consisting of leaves, seeds, berries, and so on, by the formative faculty. Through this life at this [vegetal] level a consciousness comes about in order to find nutriment from the places in which there is moisture and to swerve away from hard places.

30 Literally, ‘the prostrated animal’ (*al-ḥayawān al-makbūb*). Cf. Q. 67:22.

31 *Al-ḥajar al-musammā [bi-]baghāḍat al-khall*. Also sometimes called *bughḍ al-khall* and *bāghīḍ al-khall*. This mineral was reputed to move away from vinegar if placed in contact with it and was cited, along with magnetism, in medieval mineralogical texts and texts on ‘wonders’ (*‘ajā’ib*) as symptomatic of life in minerals. According to Ṭūsī, who admits to having never seen it himself, it is found in Egypt. (Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Tansūkh-nāma-i Ilkhānī* (Tehran, 1348 Sh), vol. 1, p. 143.) The description of the mineral’s reaction closely corresponds with that of calcium carbonate which, because of its alkalinity reacts against an acid (such as acetic acid, contained in vinegar).

So it goes on being graduated in species of plants till it culminates in an objective like the palm tree, which from the viewpoint of its form has come to be a plant, but from the viewpoint of its properties and its products is comparable with an animal. That is insofar as it only bears fruit through the impregnation of its females by its males, and when their 'heads' are cut down [palm trees] become dry and wither; and its plant form is on the basis of a trunk comparable with the upright stature.

[14] Then when this life ascends from this level to the level of the horizontal animal, it climbs up in the levels of its species, grade by grade, and acquires the five senses, namely hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch – sense by sense. The sense of pain comes about for it and the means of propulsion – either by way of fleeing or self-defence – and the faculty of transferring from one place to another by choice and free will. So it goes on advancing in the species [of horizontal animal] till it reaches the noblest and highest of it, such as the horse which, from the viewpoint of its corporeal constitution, is amongst the sum of animals, but from the viewpoint of its natural characteristics resembles humanity. So when this life appears with the upright stature [of human beings] it gets other things, nobler than the degrees which it gained that preceded, and of loftier value than the previous faculties which it owned and gained, namely the faculty of imagination, memory, ratiocination, recollection, intelligence, artisanal skill, discrimination and deliberation. So its modality goes on culminating in the [various] ranks of the species of humanity till it attains the endpoint of [humanity's] final objective and mounts up '*from level to level*' [Q. 84:19] till it reaches its limit, namely the ranks of the 'possessors of divine support'³² who are in contact with the angels brought nigh, through their subtle souls and not through their dense bodies. That is the final objective [which life] reaches and gets to, if divine assistance for that joins with it. The worker stops working and the last unites with the first.

Thus the meaning of what [Ibn Sīnā] mentions in the verse of poetry, about [the dove's] veiling, is what we have mentioned consisting in [life's] gradual progress in these stages, from the lowest of them to the highest of them, and its rising up in the course of its stairway till it reaches its

32 'The possessors of divine support' (*dhawū al-ta'yīd*), refers in Ismaili doctrine to the prophets and imams, p 97.

endpoint. Understanding that is hard and instruction in it obscure save for whomever God (Exalted is He) inspires to learn it from his masters, the guides of the community and the gateways of mercy.

[15] As for his statement, 'she being the one who bared her face and wore no veil', it means what we explained consisting of the appearance of [life's] products, of which bodies [per se] are incapable – [as is known] upon carrying out research and clarification. It is only through [life] that [bodies] can produce any of them, based on what is directly perceptible, free of the need to establish any argument or proof. So understand that!

[16] By his statement, 'She reached you under compulsion, yet perhaps she is loath to be separated from you, having experienced distress' [line 3], what he means is the aforementioned falling down of [the soul] into this world forcibly, not by choice, its descent being compulsory [and] by virtue of coercion. That is [due to] the fact that, when the thing that we determined came about through her, consisting in [her] playing truant, persistence in evasion and self-conceit, then the glooms of the three dimensions encompassed her and the divine wisdom deemed dismissing and exiling her to be necessary; and the one commissioned with [the divine wisdom's] command knew that there was no place for her in that noble luminous world, that holy spiritual abode, and that the only deliverance for her from the malady that clings to her substances (*min dā'ihā al-mulāzim li-dhawātihā*) was through the sequence of times, the motions of the heavens and the mixture of elements. So [the one commissioned] made one part of her to be a means for another part of her and arranged her in her degrees as passive – in conformity with justice – and active, that being the manner of compulsion and coercion whereby [the soul] has no free disposal in any of it by her own will and choice, being driven in it through to the first corporeal perfection which is the individual with the human mould. That is the meaning of his statement 'she reached you under compulsion'. In reality it is a compulsion between two options and a hardship between two [kinds of] ease,³³ and none understands it except those who know. So glory be to Him who originated His creation, giving it choice (*bi-l-takhyīr*) in conformity with justice, and

33 Cf. Q. 94:5–6. On the possible interpretation of Ibn al-Walid's meaning here, see the Introduction, p. 97.

who repeated it. He put compulsion between the two of them since He considered it in regard to wisdom as more fitting and more binding – and there is no god except Him, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

[17] The meaning of his statement, ‘yet perhaps she is loath to be separated from you, having experienced distress’ [line 3], is that all good and bad souls are loath to die. As for the bad souls, since they are on intimate terms with the natural, animal world, are steeped in the ocean of tenebrous matter, have forgotten the noble spiritual world that they have withdrawn from, their circumstances being hidden from them, and their origin and final end veiled from them, they [in consequence] desire the enjoyment of this transient worldly life. They opt to hold fast to these rotting bodies and are loath to die through ignorance on their part, because of what they imagine of [death], and through fear for what they are venturing upon. As for the good souls, since the friends of God are sure about the tribulation they have fallen into, have understood what the slip and the mistake was which entailed that offence, and regret what happened and transpired in their affairs, they [in consequence] take refuge in the place of return, and they get to acquire good deeds by means of this body as long as they are in the place of acquisition, and it is because of *that* they are loath to die.

[18] The noble individual, author of the *Rasā’il* (the peace of God be upon him) has explained that fully, saying in the *Majālis al-tanazzuf* (‘The Sessions on Becoming Clean’),³⁴ on the purity of souls, a statement which we quote here in its entirety because of what it comprises by way of subtle meanings and recondite, deep items of wisdom, in regard to which the sharp-witted become bewildered and from within whose expressions the splendour of lights flashes forth on the powers of understanding, namely:

‘Know (may God assist you and us by a spirit from Him) that death is loathsome for most human beings – for everyone hates it arriving and its advent grieves him – not just for one reason but for various reasons. The reason for which the friends of God are averse to dying is not the reason for which the enemies of God are averse to dying.

³⁴ As was mentioned in the Introduction, the *Majālis al-tanazzuf* has not survived. It is now quoted at length by Ibn al-Walid, to paragraph 30 below.

[19] 'Before speaking about the explanation of that, let us set forth an introduction which will be a briefing and preparation for what we present. So we say: The rational soul in the human being is endowed with three functions amongst the [various] subtle, goodly, noble functions: (a) one kind of which the soul carries out in association with the body, namely speech that is apparent to sense perception – I mean the expression of the rational subject's speech and allusion by talk flowing on the tongue from the talk conceived in the heart, and in general the outward articulation of [what is in] the mind and the communication of the things hidden in the heart;³⁵ (b) another kind of which [the soul] carries out by the faculty of thought, summoning up memory, and the application of reflection and deliberation in order to deduce hidden things by analogy with external, manifest things, and the discovery of fine, veiled ideas; and (c) another kind of which [the soul] carries out by the faculty of opinion, planning, studying things and estimating, it being to prefer the optimal of what is in the manner of contingency and to choose the best of what is within the bound of possibility. So you understand hereby that [the soul's] essence, though characterised by unity, is nevertheless multiple from the viewpoint of its faculties, and that the most general of its faculties is outward speech, that is, expression by talking, diction by the tongue and the articulation of the mind; and the noblest and most specific of its faculties is to choose the optimal of what is within the bound of possibility – to prefer the best of what is in the manner of contingency.

[20] 'By this last faculty the soul comes to know itself, to be exposed by it to the concepts of what purifies it, to be set apart by the excellence of its choices, to get what it has acquired for itself, to be elevated by it to the noblest sincerity, and to turn by it to salvation and deliverance. Next, by this [same] faculty it comes to give imperfect souls direction, to bestow on them knowledge and wisdom, to draw them by gradual education, elevation, training and preparation to the noblest virtue and the reality of the means.³⁶

35 'Things hidden in the heart' = *dhāt al-ṣudūr*. Cf. e.g. Q. 3:119.

36 *Ḥaḳīqat al-wasīla*. Presumably, the realisation of the means of salvation.

‘The most excellent degree of [the soul] and the highest rank of it is prophecy, the degree of messengerhood, the reception of revelation and conversance with the mysteries of the unseen, which is the last rank attained by mortal souls and human individuals, it being proximity to the reality of God and mediation between the Creator and creation. When some soul is fortunate enough to reach it – and some individual [even] goes beyond it –³⁷ in that case it is designated a *translucent* soul, a sanctified spirit, a messenger, a prophet, an ambassador, a trustee, a speaker, an inspired man, a saint, a bosom friend [of God], a veracious one, a witness, a seer, one divinely aided in a preference for salvific, praiseworthy deeds and divinely protected from destructive faults; and he comes to be a summoner unto God (Exalted is He) and unto His good pleasure, one who announces His scriptures and messages, who informs about the mysteries of His unseen realm, an expounder of the enigmas of His scriptures, who stands between God (Exalted is He) and His creatures, who strives for God with fitting effort, publicly and privately, secretly and openly, one who warns and announces to people what comes down to them, who acquaints them with what their duty is. As He said (Glorious is He who speaks): ‘*We dispatch no messenger except with his people’s language, so as to explain [matters] to them*’ [Q. 14:4], and He said (Exalted is He): ‘*We sent down to you the Remembrance for you to announce to humanity what is sent down to them, and perhaps they will reflect*’ [Q. 16:44].

[21] ‘Next, after them are the deputies who follow the right way³⁸ and the rightly guided Imams who give judgment by the truth and do justice through it. Next, after them are the scholars of the religious communities, the guardians of the denominations, the pious friends of God, the

37 It is difficult to see what Ibn al-Walid means by the class of individual that goes beyond the paramount station of prophethood and messengership – perhaps angels?

38 *Al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*. In Sunnī texts the expression (generally translated as the ‘righteous caliphs’) refers to the first four leaders of Islam after the Prophet, but in the Ṭayyibī Ismailī context of this work it appears to refer either to the Fāṭimid caliph-imams (i.e., an Ismailī Imam who was in power and wielded actual political authority), or else it refers to the direct deputies (*khulafā’*) who represent an Imam who is not openly accessible.

substitutes,³⁹ the virtuous, the theologian-sages and philosophers of the Lord (*al-falāsifa al-rabbāniyyūn*). Next are the learned⁴⁰ who are acquitted and the people of intellect who are purified. Next are the commonalty of humanity and the masses. Next are the four-legged beasts, then the [other] animals, then the trees and plants, and then the [inert] bodies and inanimate objects, and so on to the last of the existents, distinguished on account of [the soul] through the variation in its forms, the disparity in its kinds and its movements. [God] it is who ties its degrees to the properties of its ranks, as He said (glorious is His majesty), '*God is the light of the heavens and the earth*' [Q. 24:35], and like His statement, '*It is God who upholds the heavens and the earth, lest they cease*' [Q. 35:41]. For souls vary in receptivity to this light, the most receptive ones being the 'angels brought nigh', next the prophets sent as messengers, next the imams, saints, substitutes, sages, the virtuous and the scholars, next the exemplary, and more exemplary, the nearer and nearest. So all existents come into being, safeguarded, intelligible, luminous, shining through the conveying of His guidance [which is] pervasive, circulating, superabundant and streaming in the world of sublimity and of the nadir, the great and the small.

[22] 'He goes further in guiding creation, insofar as He makes all substances exist in a state of readiness for the benefits set up for them, trying to last for as long as all that the possibility of each of them involves, bringing out whatever lies in its potential into actuality, that is, everything casts light through *this* light and through it sees whatever is better for it. [He goes further in guiding creation] also insofar as [guidance] takes the place of life for substances which have the faculty of sense perception, and insofar as [guidance] secures for the substances the benefit of rational souls, repose and confidence in their cognitions, and likewise a longing for consciousness and perception, such that it fulfils the human capacity [even] in the state of sleep, *a fortiori* of waking.

39 Substitutes = *abdāl*. In line with prophetic *ḥadīths*, these were generally believed to be a hidden hierarchy of saints necessary for the maintenance of the world. Ibn al-Walid, who also uses this designation in his doxology (para. 1), clearly has in mind a meaning specific to his Ṭayyibī tradition. See the Introduction, pp. 78-9.

40 *Al-fuḍalā'* may also simply mean 'the excellent', but the association of this group with the following 'people of intellect' ('*uqalā'*') suggests that it must be rendered as 'the learned'.

[23] ‘As for the faculty of bringing the act out, the sages have designated it “God’s generosity”; as for its trying to last, the sages have designated it “God’s determination”; as for being guided to benefits, the sages have designated it “God’s wisdom”; and these three as a whole are designated “God’s administration” (*siyāsat Allāh*). The world is safeguarded and intelligible in its subsisting and its arrangement, through the perfectness of His administration, that is, through His “generosity”, His “determination” and His “wisdom”. So every single one of all the existents functions by itself through this illuminative guidance, which is (a) being guided to benefits, (b) the transfer of what is potential to actuality, and (c) trying to endure – three activities the first of which comes down to its form, the second to its matter and the third to the perfecting of itself and its individual identity which is compounded from [matter and form] – so that it acts by its form on what is below it, it receives through its matter the activity of what is above it, and it perfects itself through its individual identity. I mean it perfects itself *and* its individual identity through both [its matter and form], since it is what comes about between two extremes, and is the middle between two borders, taking a share from each of the two – so it is neither simply passive nor is it simply active, rather both together.

[24] ‘Then if this is established, we say: These divine things, which in general illumine all creation, in particular fill human souls with longing to get the functions specific to them which we explained above. They come down to two divisions: either they carry them out in association with the body, or they carry them out themselves, in isolation and separate from the body. So what [souls] carry out in isolation is permanently theirs and does not escape them at all since there is no cause for that other than themselves and the particularity of their attributes, for they have no need in that for other than themselves, and nothing comes between the function and them as long as they stay free of any trammel and clear of uncleanness. The associated ones are not like that, which they gain by means of the body. For they seek to capture that, avail themselves of it, and desire a long postponement [of death] so that by means of [the body] they might gain their deeds and might procure the advantages that come about on account of it for as long as the body is their companion, knowing that they will be unable to do that when separated from it, and will remain in possession of what they gained.

[25] 'This, then, is the reason why the friends of God are averse to dying, which is the separation of soul from body, and why they love life, by which the association is brought about between the two of them. Very great, through that [association], is their application to good deeds whose slipping away they fear – that being what keeps them back from the good deeds whose slipping away they *don't* fear, I mean those they enact through their own souls. They are quite right to be averse to dying on these grounds because they find a capability from this body and an opportunity from its being alive, to set out on the 'right hand side'⁴¹ through it, believing that it will convey them to security and shelter, and to 'rest and refreshment' [Q. 56:89], and that this soul of the body is, as it were, their capital and they see in it much profit for them and valuable benefit. When they transact by it, they safeguard it, so are averse to separation from it, fearing lest the expected profit and the anticipated benefit in it might escape them – in that the friends of God view this body and the instruments of its constitution as [being like] the interpreter mediating between [on the one hand] the Speech of God (Exalted is He) and the symbol of His mysteries, consisting of His truthful, speaking verses (*āyātuḥu 'l-nāṭiqā*), and [on the other] the languages of human beings, the variety of their tongues and the disparity of their expressions, so as to summon them to God and guide them to the revelation which leads to Him and the sign which points to Him. As long as the instruments of this body remain with them, [the friends of God] can put off their passing, 'bring the dead to life',⁴² liberate bodies from the bondage of passions, the fetter of fallacies and the snares of sins, and become the masters – thus belong to the successful 'party of God' and His righteous servants – of the kingdom of the hereafter and of everlasting sovereignty. There are their deputies who take their place, follow their custom, bring their souls alive with knowledge and [God's] remembrance, and suchlike things to which the soul may lead through its association with the body. Thus prolonging their lifespans amounts to increasing their good deeds, as [the Prophet] said (peace be upon him): "Glad tidings are for whoever has long life and does good."⁴³ On

41 The imagery evidently refers to the Qur'anic contrast between the Companions of the Left (*aṣḥāb al-shimāl*) and the Companions of the Right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*), e.g., Q. 56:41 and 56:27.

42 Compare Q. 2:73 etc.

43 According to some transmissions, this prophetic *ḥadīth* was addressed

that account the friends of God are averse to dying, and love life and length of days.

[26] ‘God’s enemies hate dying contrariwise, that [in contrast] being because when they find power over this body and the prolonging of their lifespan, they set out on the ‘left hand side’ through it – for they are blind to the path leading to truths and the parameters of insight. They believe that death is a passing away and perishing for them and that the status of humanity is the same as that of plants and animals, in that they contemplate their affairs and ponder, and find that the plant enters existence, springs up and attains its object and the beginning of its end; next, it withers, decays, vanishes and passes away and a new one like it enters existence. The case of the animal is similar to that. When [God’s enemies] see that, as we describe, they view it as analogous to the predicament of the human being. So they say: “We spring up, mature, die and live, and nothing destroys us save time (*al-dahr*).” But God (Exalted is He) says: “*They have no knowledge of that*” [Q. 45:24], “... *Only following opinion and what their souls desire*” [Q. 53:23], and God (Exalted is He) says “*Opinion is of no avail against the truth*” [Q. 53:28 and 10:36]. On account of that they hate dying, since they believe that it conveys them to non-being which has no existence accompanying it, nor life [to be found] beside it. And some of them acknowledge resurrection verbally while disbelieving in its reality, “*saying with their mouths what is not in their hearts*” [Q. 3:167], despairing of God’s mercy since they set out on the left hand path. Thus they were ousted from the signs of God and came to be veiled from God’s gateway, comprehending nothing but the life of this world, so hating to be separated from it and viewing death as conveying them to annihilation. Amongst them are those who affirm the resurrection with their tongues without their conceiving of it in their hearts, nor understanding its reality in their minds. So their acknowledgment is [mere] faith in, and assent to, the speech of the prophets (upon them be peace) and an unquestioning imitation (*taqlīd*) of them in what they say, and they thus waver between power and potential (*bayna ’l-ḥawl wa ’l-quwwa*), despair and hope, not knowing what the upshot of their affair will be, nor the conclusion of their span of life. So they are

to ‘Alī in person. See al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh* ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Qum, 1404/1984), vol. 4, p. 355.

averse to dying due to their being unconvinced of what things will be met with and what state they will be changed into. [Finally], amongst them is someone placing confidence in this world and inclining to the externals of its affairs, misled by the vanities of its illusion, and addicted to the passions of this body and its pleasures arising for them via the senses. They hate dying because of the separation from [their senses], the discontinuation of their pleasures and the passing away of their passions that it involves.

[27] 'In sum, the friend and the enemy [of God] are both averse to dying, both steer clear of passing away, and both are in distress and torment on account of separation from this body. As for the friend, he sees by its separation the passing away of the profits and benefits which arise for him by means of the body and the good deeds which come to his hands through association with it; and the enemy sees the loss of life, the onset of his demise, the constant refrain of his regret and distress for what was lost to him and what he failed to act on thoroughly.

[28] 'Know – may God (Exalted is He) support you and us with a spirit from Him – that all kinds of animal hate to die and yearn to survive, on account of what we specified at the beginning of this section and what we will also mention at the end of it. That is because there are two causes for the love of creatures for life and their aversion to death: the first of them is the pains and sufferings that overtake their souls, and the tribulation and decay [that overtake] their bodies at the time of dying; the second cause is the yearning for survival and fleeing whatever conveys them to extinction, which is found in the natures of existents and the instincts of their substances, as we have explained above. That is the prevenient guidance of God, effective in all existents.

[29] 'Know that the cause for these two states existing in the natural disposition of creatures and in the instinct of their substance – I mean the yearning to survive and aversion to passing away – is because when the Creator (majestic is the praise of Him) came to be the inceptor of existents and the cause of beings, making them endure and perfecting them whereas He Himself is eternal, everlasting and necessary in existence, He put into the innate disposition of their constitution the yearning to endure, which is existence, and aversion to passing away, which is non-existence. So they naturally gravitate towards surviving

through longing, and away from extinction through fleeing. And since their reception of existence is some sort of motion through which they emerge from non-existence into existence, by His profound wisdom He [also] makes a sort of motion the cause of their survival – I mean the thing through which [their] seeking to survive and fleeing from extinction takes place. For this love and hate induce souls to seek the materials, the causes and the factors through which their survival is brought about, and which make them reach the most perfect of objectives and most advanced of ends.

[30] ‘Know that common people have a stronger aversion to dying than others. That is because many people do not realise the fact of their final destiny and their ultimate abode, the manner of their resurrection and final resting place. They do not understand the outcome of their affair and the conclusion of their span of life, nor what their coming destination is to be. So they have a fiercer aversion to dying than others.’

This is his statement (may God exalt his sanctity)⁴⁴ and it is sufficient to explain [Ibn Sinā’s] statement: ‘yet perhaps she is loath to be separated from you, having experienced distress’. And praise be to God who bestowed on us the guidance of His friends, and protected us from falling into His enemies’ snares – with copious praise!

[31] Section

The meaning of his statement, ‘She was disdainful, unaccustomed, but when she continued she got used to ruin and the wasteland’ [line 4], is what has already been commented on in the section prior to this chapter, namely, [the soul’s] getting used to the world of bodies, after being proud, and her inclining to the swindles of nature, so ruinous for her. The author of the *Rasā’il* (the peace of God be upon him) has produced a metaphor for that, by which he makes allusion to the separation that took place of souls from the abode of spiritual simplexes and their becoming joined up with compound bodily frames, their getting used to them after [their initial] disgust and alienation, and their amorous desire for them after confusion and alarm at the time of falling into them. We mention it here

44 I.e., this concludes the long quotation from the *Majālis al-tanaẓẓuf*, which Ibn al-Walid assumes was composed by the Ismaili Imam Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh – hence the laudation formula ‘may God exalt his sanctity’.

in summary for the salutary counsel it contains, the lucid and abundant wisdom, the clear allusions to the concept of the *mabda'* and the *ma'ād* (the Origin and the Return), and the skillful reminders for anyone with uprightness and soundness. It is his statement (peace be upon him) in the *Risālat bayān i'tiqād Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* ('Epistle on the Exposition of the Belief of the Brethren of Purity'):

[32] 'They say there was a city on a mountain peak on one of the islands in the sea – very fertile and with many blessings, relaxing, excellent in climate, with sweet waters, rich soil, many trees, delicious fruits, and many kinds of animal in proportion to what the soil, climate and waters of that island entailed. Its people were siblings and cousins from the progeny of a single man, their way of life being most wholesome. The amity, love, affection and gentleness between them was ever new – with no antagonism, nor envy, nor any enmity and the different kinds of evil to be found amongst folk in cities that are unjust, opposed in their natures, clashing in their energies, divergent in opinions, vile in deeds and wicked in their characters – they used, instead, to be upright in [their] characters. But then a group of them sailed across the ocean and the ship was wrecked with them, the waves casting them onto another island on which there was a wild mountain. There were high trees on it, on which there were tiny fruits and low-lying springs with turbid waters, and there were dark caves on it and ferocious beasts of prey. The common folk of that island were apes. Now on some other island in the ocean there was a bird of huge stature and extreme strength, which had been given power over them. Every day and night it would swoop down on them and seize a number of those apes. Next, the group that had escaped the ship dispersed on that island, and in the mountain valleys searched for fruits from it for them to eat, due to the hunger and thirst that overtook them. They drank from the water of those springs, covered themselves with the leaves of the trees and, at night, took refuge in those caves, protecting themselves in them from the cold and heat.

[33] 'Those apes befriended them and they befriended *them*, so the female apes felt desire for them, and whoever of them harboured lust for the female apes desired them in turn. So they got pregnant by them, reproduced, multiplied and proliferated. Time went on, and they became acclimatised to the island. They took refuge in that mountain, became habituated to those conditions and forgot their original country,

the comfort they had had, and their own people. They set about building houses from the stones of the mountain, were intent on collecting those fruits and hoarded them. They competed with each other over the female apes and envied whoever had a share of them. They wanted to stay there permanently. Enmity and hatred broke out between them, and the fires of war flared up amongst them. Then a man amongst them in his sleep had a dream that he had returned to his city from which he had come. When the people of his country heard of his arrival they came out rejoicing and received him outside the city. They saw him transformed by the journey and exile, and were loath for him to enter in that condition. At the gate of the city there was a spring of water, so they bathed him, shaved off his hair, trimmed his nails, clothed him in new garments and put perfume on him. They mounted him on a horse and entered the town with him. They began cross-questioning him about his companions and their journey, and what had become of them. They gathered around him, amazed at him and at his return after giving up all hope, and he rejoiced at them and because God (Exalted is He) had saved him from exile and being drowned, from the companionship of those apes and that harsh way of life. He thought he was seeing all that while awake, [but] when he actually woke up, lo and behold, he was amongst those apes! So he became utterly depressed and broken-hearted, refusing to have anything to do with the place, grieving, pensive and yearning to go back to his country. Then he told his dream to one of his brethren and that brother was reminded of the circumstances of their country, their respective families and the comfort they lived in, which time had made him forget. So they consulted one another on the matter at hand, weighing it up thoroughly and asking: what is the way to get back and be saved? Then the right expedient came to their mind – that they should help one another, gather up some of the wood of the island, construct a ship in the ocean and return to their country.

[34] ‘So between them they made a deal and an agreement that they would not slacken but would struggle together as one man. And when they made up their mind that if they had a third [person] he would help them in that, and the more their number grew, the more effective it would be for reaching their intended aim and objective, they then set about reminding their brethren whose country they had come out from, awakening in them a desire to return and arousing a revulsion in them for staying, such that a group of the people gathered round them.

So when a group of the people agreed to build the ship, sail in it and return to their country, while they were struggling away in that task, cutting down trees and carving out the wood for the construction of the ship, the bird came which was forcibly snatching the apes, and it snatched a man from amongst them and flew with him into the air to gobble him up. While it was busy flying, it looked carefully at him, and lo and behold, it was a human being, not one of the apes which it was in the habit of eating. So it went on flying till it got back to the island from which he came, flung him down on the roof of his house and left him. When he took in the location, he was back in his native country and his own house. So he began to wish, "If only that bird each day would snatch one after the other of my brethren and bring him back to his country, as it has done with me."

[35] 'As for those people [themselves], after it snatched him they began weeping over him and lamenting, remaining grief-stricken at his separation [from them], as they did not know what that bird had done with him. If they had known that, they would have wished for what *he* wished for! What the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* believe regarding anyone whose death has taken place prior to his companion, ought to be just the same as that, since this world is like that island, its people are like those apes, death is comparable to that bird, God's friends are comparable to the people with whom the ship was wrecked, and the hereafter is comparable to that island where their home country and families were located.⁴⁵

This is his statement (may God's blessings be upon him) whereby the content of the aforementioned verse has been explained. So understand that!

[36] Section

As for his statement (may God exalt his sanctity) in the next line, 'I think she forgot her aeons in the sanctuary and her [high] stations – yet she was unhappy with her separation' [line 5], it underlines what we have mentioned, namely, [the soul] being bound to the world of bodies and her forgetfulness of the subtle world, the locus of the chosen elect consisting of the noble angels, as already mentioned in the story quoted

45 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khillān al-wafā'*, vol. 4, pp. 37–40, under the title *al-Risāla fī bayān i'tiqād Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa madhhab al-rabbāniyyīn*.

in the section before this; [thus also] the forgetfulness of those people whom the ship was wrecked with, who alighted at that island, forgot their city which they had left, having lived in, and the perfect blessings and comprehensive ease they had enjoyed there. And in a little of that there is enough regarding this idea.

[37] Section

As for his statement, ‘So that when by the *hā*’ of her *hubūt* (‘falling down’) from the *mīm* of her *markaz* (‘central position’) she arrived at the wide plain,/The *thā*’ of the *thaqīl* (‘heavy’) was joined to her, and she came to her senses between landmarks and the lowly traces of the camp’ [lines 6–7], what it means is the subject repeatedly commented on [here], namely, what results from the fall [of the soul] and from connection with the body that is figuratively expressed by the *thā*’ of *al-thaqīl* (‘the heavy’), at the time of dropping down and reaching the ‘centre’ which is the earth, with its expansion and contraction. So understand that!

[38] Section

His statement, ‘She weeps when she recalls her aeons in the sanctuary with tear ducts flowing, and when she pecks up/And goes on cooing among the ruins which are effaced by the recurrence of the four winds’ [lines 8–9], is a metaphor for the remorse and regret that overtook [the soul] for the reality of existence which had slipped from her when she found herself in the realm of non-existence. Through this remorse which arises with her, her climbing takes place on the stairway of ascension, her clinging to the long rope of life and her cleaving to those giving guidance, who are the Imams and the dignitaries (*al-ḥudūd*).

[39] Section

His statement, ‘And then dense form hindered her and impeded her, a cage against the high, vast peak ...⁴⁶/And she comes to leave behind her everyone staying on as the ally of the earth, not given the last rites’ [lines 10–12], alludes to the dense, tenebrous body to which [the soul] was joined, and the tenebrous frame with which she was entangled, thus

⁴⁶ Line 11 is omitted here from Ibn al-Walid’s quotation: ‘So that when the journey to the sanctuary draws near and the departure for the widest expanse approaches’. He returns to quote it and deal with its meaning in his comment in the next section.

indwelt, such that it hindered her from returning to her noble world and from going back to her proper place – both luminous and subtle – from which she had become separated. His statement, ‘the ally of the earth, not given the last rites’, means [the body’s] return to the earth, in which it was [originally], upon which it came into being and from which it derived its nourishment, when the soul returned to *her* place and the particulars of her went back to the universal of her, achieving security, emerging in the abode of permanence. As one of the dignitaries (may God sanctify his spirit) said:

‘Since each kind joins [its own] kind, consisting of an outer shell (*min šadafin*) that will stay in the abode of sense perception,
And a jewel that will join the Holy Spirit ...’

May God join *us* to our purified masters! May He gather us in their troop, and may He not deprive us of what He accepts of their intercession, nor from being in their group, by His bounty, His largesse, His generosity and His mercy!

[40] Section

By his statement, ‘So that when the journey to the sanctuary draws near and the departure for the widest expanse approaches’ [line 11], he intends the arrival of this material life [i.e., the soul fallen into matter] at the upright stature and the human form – which is the end point of essential existence and the starting point of formal existence⁴⁷ – after it has passed beyond the reverse path and the crooked deviating path, and has come to stand on the ‘*straight path*’ [Q. 1:6] in a state of preparedness. If divine aid joins forces with it for it to enter through the gates of the gardens of felicity and to mount the stairway of salvation, it gains the second perfection, attaining the ability to travel in the vast, holy, spiritual expanse. So understand that!

[41] Section

His statement ‘She coos, and the veil has been drawn back, so she beholds what no slumbering eyes have perceived’ [line 13], means that *at the time*

⁴⁷ The distinction seems to be between corporeal and ideal existence. By ‘essential existence’ Ibn al-Walid apparently means the physical realm and by ‘formal existence’ the intelligible realm.

when the journey is completed by her to this level, which is the last of the gates of the world of generation and corruption, and [the soul] emerges into the sphere of existence through subjecting herself to obedience to the Imams of right guidance, and she ascends the psychic stairways, mounts the degrees of the corporeal dignitaries and the holy spiritual dignitaries,⁴⁸ her essence coming to be inscribed by the sciences, and whatever of that mystery is concealed from others becomes clear to her in proportion to her rank, the veil being drawn aside from what is hidden of the mysteries, and enigma disappears for her, so that she regards what was covered up of them with the eyes of insight – at that time she awakens from the sleep of forgetfulness. She seizes the chance to gain gnostic cognitions in moments of leisure, and speaks with the tongue of wisdom and contemplation, expressing what is concealed in her inmost core, yearning for contact with the righteous in their [own] outward forms and via their brethren, as the poet says: ‘Longing went beyond bounds one day, when the abodes drew close to the abodes.’ And as the Commander of the Believers, ‘Alī b. Abi Ṭālib (God’s blessings be upon him), said: ‘If the veil were drawn aside, I would not increase in certainty.’⁴⁹ He also said at the time of the fatal sword blow, on account of his consciousness of the great favour and close relationship, the high rank and exalted degree that God had for him: ‘I have triumphed, by the Lord of the Ka’bal’⁵⁰ As one of them – I mean the most glorious sultan al-Khaṭṭāb b. al-Ḥasan (may God exalt his sanctity) – said within the totality of a poem by him:⁵¹

48 The phrase ‘the corporeal dignitaries’ (*al-ḥudūd al-jismāniyya*) evidently refers to the ranks of the Ismaili *da’wa*, and ‘the spiritual dignitaries’ (*al-ḥudūd al-rūḥāniyya*) probably refers to the hierarchy of intellects through which the fallen Third Intellect must ascend to retrieve its original heavenly status.

49 Quoted in Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 223.

50 According to some accounts, these are ‘Alī’s words at the time of being fatally wounded by Ibn Muljam al-Murādī’s sword blow while he was at the dawn prayer in the mosque at Kūfa. He died some days later on Ramadan 21, 40/January 31, 661. Muḥammad al-Rishahrī, ed., *Mawsū‘at al-imām ‘Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib fi ‘l-kitāb wa ‘l-sunna wa ‘l-tārīkh* (Beirut, 1421/2000), vol. 7, p. 240.

51 On this figure of major importance in the historical emergence of Ṭayyibī Ismailism in Yemen, see the Introduction, p. 58 and p. 60.

'In the course of living I got weary of the abode of sense-perception, my imprisonment, my punishment thereby and my languishment ...⁵²
 So this long journey of mine – it might be that the One who decreed you decrees my return and my fulfilment.
 And you ghost of me, hindering me from my aims – wherever you may be amongst my accompanying spirits I am rid of you!
 I kept company with you since there was a covering over my eye. So when it was removed, I emptied my vessel of you.
 Do you want some disunion that severs us with the parting of a sharp, weighty [sword] and a great distance?
 Each kind of us joins its own kind and what resembles it, consisting of earth and heaven,
 And verily I hope for that, and God is the guarantor of my expectations and the attainment of my hope.
 I know through knowledge, not by opinion, to what it is that I return at the time that my veil is lifted,
 And when I wish to describe the bliss I will meet, my thought and my intelligence are incapable.
 I see death as a bridge with my dear friends beyond it, and he who crosses over it is one of the most joyous of people...'

To the end of what he mentioned of this poem. This, then, is the meaning of what [Ibn Sīnā] mentioned in the verse. So understand that!

[42] Section

As for his statement in the following verse, 'And she warbles in the morning above a lofty peak, and knowledge elevates the rank of the one who was not elevated' [line 14], we say: The explanation of this verse has already come in the one before it, namely, what is signified by her warbling and her cooing, and the fact that that is her giving expression to the sciences she studies which pertain to the Lord and the inscrutable secrets and spiritual realities whose gnosis she attains, and her yearning for contact with devotees like herself and her people who are separate from the rebellious adversaries of religion. By 'lofty peak' he means the

52 In Poonawala's edition, this is the very first line of the *qaṣīda* from which the other lines have been quoted. Ibn al-Walid evidently cites it as the title of the poem. I.K. Poonawala, *al-Sulṭān al-Khaṭṭāb: ḥayātuhu wa shi'ruhu* (Beirut, 1999), p. 212.

upright stature [the soul] ultimately gets to, similar to the first essences, relating to origination,⁵³ she progressing by steps through the degrees of the dignitaries, and ascending on her stairway via of the stations of ascent. So she gets to be in the exalted summit, coming into possession of both the essential and the formal perfections, longing for the epiphany in the supreme luminous station and for the most excellent 'Kāfūrī' apparition.⁵⁴ So at that time, the light of light (*nūr al-nūr*) breaks forth from her, and the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) is manifest through her at the moment of epiphany.

As for his statement, 'and knowledge elevates the rank of the one who was not elevated' – how would that not be so, it being the greatest magnet (*al-maghnaṭīs al-akbar*) which attracts noble souls to the abode of return and protects their essences from ruin and corruption? [Knowledge] colours them with the beautiful, radiant dye of God, attaching them to the shining bright lights of the higher world. It strips them of vile habits and animal characteristics. It imparts pleasing, angelic dispositions to them. It makes their essences substantial after they were numbered amongst accidents. It decrees for them the perpetuity of bliss and the attainment of goals. It raises them to the neighbourhood of the Omnipotent King, and causes them to attain the garden of repose, safe from downfall and loss, perpetuating them through the passing of the aeons and ages. [Knowledge is] the firm '*rope of God*' [Q. 3:103 and 112], to which whoever clings triumphs and is saved, and it is His '*firmest bond*' [Q. 2:256], to which whoever cleaves emerges into the glow of the lights from the shades of gloom. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (God's blessings be upon him) said: 'When God humiliates someone, He debars him from knowledge.'⁵⁵ He also said (may God bless him and give him peace): 'God does not give someone knowledge

53 Origination (*ibdā'*), i.e., God's direct creation of effects from nothingness. The 'primordial origination essences' (*al-dhawāt al-ūlā al-ibdā'iyya*) are the intellects beyond the material universe, which the commentary repeatedly refers to as 'the World of Origination'.

54 *Al-shabaḥ al-aḡḡal al-kāfūrī*. Kāfūr is mentioned in the Qur'an as a spring of Paradise. A possible interpretation of this phrase has been mentioned in the Introduction, p. 105.

55 The saying is usually found with the word *ardhala* ('disowns') not *adhalla* ('humiliates'). Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Māzandarānī, ed., *Sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfi* (Beirut, 1421/2000), vol. 2, p. 205; also see Jurj Jurdāq (George Jordac), ed., *Rawā'i' nahj al-balāgha* (Beirut, 1417/1997), p. 230.

without Him some day giving him deliverance through it.⁵⁶ Those who came before, in ancient times, surpassed in it, and through its blessing (*baraka*) those who come later emerge into existence from the domain of non-existence. It is the greatest elixir and the noblest, brightest standard. The description of those who describe it does not encompass its rank, and the imaginations of gnostics do not reach up to the extent of its excellence. So understand that!

[43] Section

As for his statement (may God exalt his sanctity) in the following verse, 'So for what reason was she made to fall from the lofty and sublime to the lowest depth of the foot of the mountain?' [line 15] we say: We have made clear the cause of [the soul's] fall in the discussion above, and her becoming encompassed by the strictures of the world of bodies, and the fact that that is due to her backwardness (*takhalluf*) in adhering to the rank of the one elevated over her, and her lagging (*ta'akhkhur*) in maintaining obedience to the one to whom obedience is enjoined and is assigned to her. So that veiled her from contact with what she was allotted, consisting in the second perfection,⁵⁷ and it entailed her departure to the ephemeral, transient world. There is no need to repeat what has already been said about that.

[44] Section

Concerning his statement, 'If it was the deity who made her fall due to some wisdom concealed even from the singular, the understanding, the most pious' [line 16], we, for our part, say: The statement has been repeated on what the cause was that brought about the fall of what came down from the high locus, on its decline through cleaving to the dense decaying world of the body, and what resulted from the tender

56 The corresponding statement, as found in *Nahj al-balāgha*, is: 'God does not entrust a man with an intellect without Him some day giving him deliverance through it' (*mā 'stawda'a 'Llāhu imra'an 'aqlan illā 'stanqadhahu bihi yawman*). 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, *ḥikma* 407, p. 548.

57 The distinction of the first and second perfections is traceable to *Book Delta* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The first perfection is the integral completeness of the substance in question ('when in respect of its proper kind of excellence it lacks no part'), whereas the second perfection is when it truly serves its purpose. Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton, 1984), vol. 2, p. 1613.

sympathy of the intelligences of the world of origination and their empathy with it, through affectionate feeling and the outflow of noble sentiments of love to it, in order to perfect what is deficient in it, to raise up what has turned away in it, to give it the perfection that eluded it, through which the completion takes place of its substance, and by which it fully registers what its earlier slip and monstrous disavowal veiled it from – in line with what [Ibn Sīnā] mentions in the verses following this one. None attains to this wisdom which is concealed from people's hearts, except by the tongues of God's friends and those possessed of veracity. None understands [this wisdom] except whoever they confer it on amongst those that are worthy, and none drinks the pure water of its wellspring except whoever amongst their honest friends they guide. So understand that!

[45] Section

As for his statement, 'Then her fall, no doubt, was a necessary blow for her to become attentive again to what she was inattentive to,/And for her to become knowing again of every mystery in the two worlds, her tear [as yet] being unmended' [lines 17–18], it is as if [Ibn Sīnā] intends by that the aforementioned concealed sciences connected to [the soul's] essence. [That is, he means] the well-guarded, treasured-up kinds of wisdom through which comes about the perfection of her substance, the ennobling of her breed and her cognisance of the mysteries of the two worlds, the world of density and the world of limpidity. [All this is] in contrast with what she had [previously] within the border of concealment and hiddenness, prior to her torn state being mended through reaching it, and her bondage being undone through [her] becoming informed about it. So understand that!

[46] Section

By his statement, 'She was the one whose way time severed so that she has set at the very place of dawning' [line 19], he means that when [the soul] came under the imperatives of time, the motions of the spheres and the mixture of elements (*arkān*), she was united with the potential of the material substances (*'anāṣir*) and the 'mothers', and she was joined through mixing and mixture to the first of the kingdoms of nature, that being the level of the mineral, which [is what] he alludes to figuratively as the places of dawning and setting because of it being the last thing she reaches on descending and going down, and from it

her 'dawning' takes place, going back to the correspondence with first principles. That is what [Ibn Sīnā] meant in saying 'so that she has set at the very place of dawning'. Our master Ḥamid al-Dīn [al-Kirmānī] (may God exalt his sanctity) has mentioned that in his book *Ma'ālim al-dīn* ('The Lineaments of the Faith'),⁵⁸ when he described the first of the degrees of the mineral which is gypsum, saying: 'That is when nature appears through inversion, reverting to correspondence with the First.' The most illustrious sheikh 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Walīd (may God exalt his sanctity)⁵⁹ based his epistle on that, known as *al-Ḍila'* ('The Side'),⁶⁰ that being because he made the right hand side (*al-ḍila' al-ayman*) of the triangle, which he set down in it, the path of the fall through essences; he made its left hand side the path of the ascent through forms; and he made the base of the triangle the position of the kingdoms of nature, they being the end of the descent and the beginning of the ascent. Thus the rank of the mineral in it, which is the first degree, in that case is the place of setting *and* the very point of rising. Our master Ḥamid al-Dīn Abū 'Alī, the gate of gates (may God exalt his sanctity), said in the *Kitāb al-dhāt wa 'l-šūra* ('The Book of Essence and Form')⁶¹ in regard to the matter whose meaning was discussed above: 'The world subject to determinism consists of essences without form, and the world subject to free will consists of forms without essences, and what is between the two of them consists of essences *and* forms. So through the essences our descent takes place from that world to this world, and through the forms our ascent takes place from this world to that world.' So understand that!

58 Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb ma'ālim al-dīn (al-Risāla al-waḍī'a fī ma'ālim al-dīn)*, ed. Muḥammad 'Isā al-Ḥarīrī (Kuwait, 1987), p. 127.

59 I.e., Ibn al-Walīd's uncle and original teacher, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Ja'far b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Walīd (d. 554/1159).

60 The *Risālat al-ḍila'/al-ḍil'* is also called *Risālat tuḥfat al-ṭālib wa umniyyat al-bāḥith al-rāghib*. Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, pp. 140 and 146.

61 *Al-Dhāt wa 'l-šūra* is only attested through quotations. Ibn al-Walīd apparently ascribes its authorship here to the Fāṭimid *dā'ī* Abū'Alī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad 'Bāb al-abwāb' (the 'gate of gates') (d. 321/933), who was said to have been called Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ earlier in his life. See Madelung, 'An Ismaili Version of Ibn Sīnā's *Qaṣīdat al-Nafs*', p. 168, note 19.

[47] **Section**

By his statement, 'It is as though she were lightning flashing in the sanctuary, then it disappeared as though it had not lit up' [line 20], [Ibn Sinā] means what characterises [the soul's] state when she appeared in the human mould and became individuated in the Adamic shape, and [he means] the period of her life and the imminence of its passing, and the variability in the structure of her body and the swiftness⁶² of its dissolution, comparing that to a lightning flash and the rapidity of its fading away, directing the foremost to get provision for the Day of Return and to hurry to do good deeds and exert themselves, to restrain the irascible soul from blameworthy characteristics and vile deeds – which is the reality of 'holy war' – and inviting them to the performance of acts of worship, to acquire enduring good deeds, to bedeck themselves with the attire of God-consciousness which is the union of the two kinds of worship, the one involving deeds and the one involving knowledge, and to follow God's sainted friends and their [hierarchy of] dignitaries (upon them be blessing and peace) who are the best of creation, in order [that the soul] win eternal graces, intellectual effusions and endless joys in her afterlife.

Therefore every understanding, reasonable person of firm resolve – alert, unimpaired and civilised – must exploit the opportunity of this brief life and seize the period of this short sojourn in it, which he likens to 'lightning' due to the rapidity of its passing and vanishing, [and the rapidity of] the approach and the drawing near of its anticipated deadline, *before* its lender asks for the loan back, such that regret would occur – and it is no longer the time for regret!⁶³ And He to whom they ultimately return will arrest their breathing, and through his deeds a person will run the hazard of what he sent on in advance, and the one appealed to for help has vanished, so in that case there is *no* helper, and the way to proceed has become too narrow, so there is no way forward on that day. We ask God (Exalted is He) that He seal our lives and those of all believers as He sealed the lives of His sainted friends brought nigh, that He place us amongst those whom the angels receive in death as good people, and He distinguish us from the folk who wrong their souls, for

62 *Wushk: washik*. Though not attested as a variant in any of the manuscripts used, the noun seems to fit the context better than the adjective.

63 Cf. Q. 38:3.

their excuse will not benefit them, neither will they be regarded [by God] with favour.

[48] We seal the epistle by praising God for His continuous benefits and for His constant, successive graces, and by invoking blessing upon that heaven of transcendent wisdom, Muḥammad who was announced amongst bygone nations; upon his legate (waṣī), our master 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, in whom the proponents of noxious and extreme creeds perish; and upon the Imams consisting in the descendants of both, the well-springs of whose protection guard the territory of the faith against the injury of the back-stabbing innovators, the radiant suns of the Truth and its shimmering lights; and upon our lord and master, the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abu 'l-Qāsim, the Commander of the Faithful, whose various kinds of learning draw aside the harm of specious arguments for his distinguished followers, and may He grant them peace. And God suffices for us, an excellent trustee, an excellent patron and an excellent defender. And there is no power nor strength save through God, the Exalted, the Mighty.

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‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd

Al-Risāla al-mufīda fī idāḥ mulghaz al-qaṣīda

Arabic Edition

المبتدعين الكالية، شمس الحق المشرقة وأنواره^١ المتلاثلة، وعلى سيدنا ومولانا^٢ الإمام الطيّب أبي القاسم أمير المؤمنين الكاشفة علومه أذى^٣ الشبهات عن أتباعه الجالية،^٤ وسلم تسلياً،^٥ وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل ونعم المولى ونعم النصير، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم.^٦

١. وأنواره: والأنوار، ب.

٢. سيدنا ومولانا: مولانا وسيدنا، ب.

٣. أذى: أذواء، ب.

٤. عن: + نفوس، ب.

٥. الجالية: والجالية، ب.

٦. تسلياً: + كثيراً وعدداً غفيراً، ت.

٧. تسلياً... العظيم: عليهم أجمعين، ب.

للسابقين إلى^١ اكتساب الزاد ليوم المعاد، والمسارة إلى فعل الخيرات والاجتهاد، وزم النفس الغضبية^٢ عن الأخلاق المذمومة والأفعال الرديئة الذي هو^٣ حقيقة الجهاد، وعزمها^٤ على أعمال العبادات واقتناء الباقيات الصالحات، والتجمل برياش التقوى الذي هو الجمع بين العبادتين العملية والعلمية،^٥ والمواولة لأولياء الله وحدودهم عليهم الصلاة والسلام^٦ الذين هم خير البرية، لتفوز بأخرتها بالنعم السرمدية والإفاضات العقلية والمسار الأبدية، فيجب على كل حازم عالم لبيب،^٧ ويقظان كامل أديب، انتهاز فرصة هذا العمر اليسير، واغتنام مدة هذا المهل منه القصير، الذي يشبهه بالبرق لسرعة انقضائه وذهابه، وأزوف أجله المنتظر واقتربه، قبل أن يسترد العارية مغيرها، فتقع الندامة ولات حين ندم، ويقض الأنفاس من إليه مصيرها، فيقيم المرء من أعماله على ما قدم وقد فات المستغاث،^٨ فلا مغيث^٩ حينئذ، وضاق المذهب فلا مذهب يومئذ. نسأل الله تعالى أن يختم لنا ولكافة المؤمنين بما ختم به لأولائه المقربين، وأن يجعلنا من الذين تتوافاهم الملائكة طيبين، ويبيننا عن القوم الذين ظلموا أنفسهم فلا تنفعهم معذرتهم ولا هم يُستعتبون.

[48] ونحن نختم الرسالة بالحمد لله على آلائه المتواليه، ونعمه المتواترة المتتالية،^{١٠} وبالصلاة على سماء الحكمة العالية، محمد المبشر به في الأمم الخالية، وعلى وصيه مولانا^{١١} علي بن أبي طالب الهالك فيه ذوو^{١٢} الاعتقادات القالية والغالية،^{١٣} وعلى الأئمة من ذريتهما الحافظة عيون حراستهم لحوزة الدين من أذى

١. ومنهاً للسابقين إلى: ومتهى السابقين على، ب.

٢. الغضبية: العصبية، ب.

٣. الذي هر: التي هي، ب ت ت.

٤. وعزمها: + (حاشية) ن وحنا، ت.

٥. العملية والعلمية: العملية والعلمية، ت.

٦. الصلاة والسلام: السلام، ب.

٧. عالم لبيب: وليب، ب.

٨. المستغاث: المستغث، ب.

٩. المستغاث فلا مغيث: + (حاشية) المستغث فلا معتب، ت.

١٠. المتتالية: المتتالية، ب.

١١. مولانا: -، ب.

١٢. ذوو: ذو، ب ت.

١٣. القالية والغالية: الغالية والقالية، ب.

قدسه^١ رسالته^٢ المعروفة بالصلع، وذلك أنه جعل الضلع الأيمن من المثلث^٣ الذي أثبتته فيها طريق الهبوط بالنوات وجعل الضلع الأيسر منه طريق الصعود بالصور^٤ وجعل قاعدة المثلث موضع المواليد وهي آخر الانحطاط وأول الارتقاء، فرتبة المعدن منه التي هي أول رتبة^٥ حينئذ بموضع الغروب وعين المطلع، قال سيدنا حميد الدين أبو علي باب الأبواب^٦ أعلى الله قدسه في كتاب الذات والصورة فيما تقدّم معناه: إن العالم المجبور ذوات بلا صورة والعالم المختار صور بلا ذوات، وما بينهما ذوات وصور، فبالنوات كان انحداؤنا من ذلك العالم إلى هذا العالم، وبالصور صعودنا من هذا العالم إلى ذلك العالم، فاعلم ذلك.

[47] فصل

وأما قوله:^٨

فكانها بزق تآلق بالحمى^٩ ثم انطوى فكانه لم يلمع

فإنه عنى بذلك صفة حالها لما ظهرت بالقالب البشري^{١٠} وتشخصت بالهيكل الآديمي ومدة عمرها ودنو زواله، واختلاف^{١١} تركيب جسمها ووشيك انحلاله، ممثلاً بذلك لموع البرق وسرعة اضمحلاله، ومنهياً

١. بن الوليد أعلى الله قدسه: -، ب.

٢. رسالته: في رسالته، ت.

٣. المثلث: النبات، ب؛ النبات + (حاشية) ن المثلث، ت.

٤. بالصور: بالصورة، ب ت

٥. موضع: مواضع، ب.

٦. رتبة: -، ب.

٧. أبو علي باب الأبواب: -، ب.

٨. فصل وأما قوله: -، ت؛ وهو آخر القصيدة، ب.

٩. تآلق بالحمى: تعرض للحمى + (حاشية) تآلق بالحمى، ت؛ تعرض بالحمى، ت.

١٠. البشري: المستوي، ب.

١١. واختلاف: واختلال، ب.

فهبوطها لا شكَّ ضربة لازِبٌ لتعود سامعة لما لم تسمع
وتعود عالمة بكلِّ خفيَّةٍ في العالمين وخرقها^١ لم يُرقع

كأنه^٢ يريد بذلك ما سبق به^٣ القول مما يتصل بذاتها من العلوم المكنونة، والحِكْمُ^٤ المصونة المخزونة، التي بها كمال جوهرها وشرف عنصرها وإطلاغها من أسرار العالمين، عالم الكثافة وعالم الصفاء، على ما كان عندها في حدِّ الاستتار والخفاء، قبل أن يُرقع بالوصول إليه خرقتها، ويُعتق بالاطلاع عليه رِقِّها، فاعلم ذلك.

[46] فصل

وأما قوله:°

وهي التي قطع الزمانُ طريقها حتَّى لقد غَزَبَتْ بعين المَطْلَعِ

فإنه عني بذلك أنها لما دخلت تحت أحكام الزمان، وحركات الأفلاك واختلاط الأركان، اتَّحدت^٦ بقوة العناصر والأمّهات، واتصلت بالمزاج والمتمزج إلى أوّل المولّدات، وهي رتبة المعدن التي كنى^٧ عنها بمواضع الطلوع والأفول، لكونها آخر ما تصل إليه عند الانحدار والنزول، ومنها طلوعها عائدةً إلى موازاة الأوائل^٨، وذلك ما قصده بقوله: حتّى لقد غَزَبَتْ بعين المَطْلَعِ، وقد ذكر ذلك^٩ سيّدنا حميد الدين أعلى الله قدسه في كتابه^{١٠} معالم الدين عند ذكره أوّل مراتب المعدن الذي هو الجصّ بقوله: وذلك^{١١} حين بدت الطبيعة بالانعكاس راجعةً إلى موازاة الأوّل، وعلى ذلك بنى الشيخ الأجلّ عليّ بن الحسين بن الوليد أعلى الله

١. وخرقها: خرقتها، ت.

٢. كأنه: فإنه، ب؛ كان، ت.

٣. به: -، ب ت.

٤. والحكم: والحكمة، ت.

٥. فصل وأما قوله: -، ت؛ + شعر، ب.

٦. اتحدت: واتحدت، ب.

٧. كنى: -، ت.

٨. الأوائل: الأوّل، ب.

٩. ذلك: -، ت ت.

١٠. كتابه: كتاب، ب ت.

١١. وذلك: ذلك، ت.

لن كان أهبطها الإله لحكمة طويت عن الفذ^١ اللبيب الأروع

فإننا نقول: قد تكرر القول بالسبب الموجب لهبوط ما^٢ هبط من المحلّ العالي، وانخداره متشبتاً^٣ بعالم الجسم^٤ الكثيف البالي، وما كان من تخنّ عتول عالم الإبداع وعطفها عليه، بالشفقة وإسراء المواد^٥ الشريفة إليه،^٦ لتكميل ناقصه، وإصعاد ناكسه، وإفادته ما فاته^٧ من الكمال الذي به تمام جوهره، واستماعه منه ما حجب عنه سابق^٨ زلته وعظيم نكره^٩ على ما ذكره في الأبيات التالية لهذا^{١٠} البيت، وهذه الحكمة التي طويت عن ألباب الخلق، فلا يوصل إليها إلا من ألسنة أولياء الحق وأرباب الصدق، ولا^{١١} يعرفها إلا من منّوا عليه بها من المستحقين، ولا يشرب صافي^{١٢} معينها إلا من أرشدوه من أوليائهم الحقين،^{١٣} فاعلم ذلك.

[45] فصل

وأما قوله:^{١٤}

١- الفذ: + (حاشية) ن الفطن، ت.

٢- ما: من، ت.

٣- متشبتاً: نشبتاً، ب.

٤- الجسم: -، ب.

٥- المواد: موادها، ب.

٦- إليه: عليه، ب.

٧- وإفادته ما فاته: وإفادة ما أفاته، ب.

٨- حجب عنه سابق: حجب بسابق، ب؛ حجب سابق، ت.

٩- نكره: فكره، ت.

١٠- لهذا: هذا، ت.

١١- ولا: فلا، ت.

١٢- صافي: ما في، ب.

١٣- الحقين: المحققين، ب.

١٤- فصل وأما قوله: -، ت

طالب^١ صلوات الله عليه: إذا أذلَّ الله عبداً^٢ حظر عليه العلم، وقال صلى الله عليه وسلم: ^٣ ما أعطى الله عبداً علماً إلا استنقذه به يوماً ما، به سبق السابقون في القدم، وبركته يخرج المتأخرون إلى الوجود من مضمار العدم، وهو الإكسير الأكبر، والعمود الأشرف الأنور، فقدزه لا يحيط به صفة الواصفين، وفضله لا يرتقي^٤ إلى حدِّه أوهامُ العارفين، فاعلم ذلك.^٥

[43] فصل

وأما قوله^٦ أعلى الله قدسه في البيت التالي:^٧

فلأني شيء^٨ أهبطت من شاهقي سام إلى قعر الحضيض الأوضع

فنتقول: إنَّا قد أوضحنا سبب هبوطها فيما تقدّم من الكلام، وانحصارها في مضائق عالم الأجسام، وأن ذلك لتخلّفها عن الاعتصام بدرجة العالي عليها، وتأخّرها عن الالتزام بالطاعة لمن ألزمت طاعته وتُدبت إليها، فحجبها ذلك عن الاتصال بقسطها من الكمال الثاني، وأوجب خروجها إلى العالم البائد الغائي، وفيما سبق من ذلك غنى عن تكراره.

[44] فصل

وأما قوله:^٩

-
- ^١ بن أبي طالب: -، ت.
 - ^٢ إذا أذلَّ الله عبداً: ما أَرذلَّ الله عبداً إلا، ب.
 - ^٣ صلى الله عليه وسلم: عليه السلام، ب.
 - ^٤ يرتقي: يرقى، ب.
 - ^٥ فاعلم ذلك: -، ت.
 - ^٦ فصل وأما قوله: -، ت.
 - ^٧ أعلى الله قدسه في البيت التالي: -، ب ت.
 - ^٨ شيء: أمر، ت
 - ^٩ فصل فأما قوله: -، ت.

إلى اللّٰهوق بأمثالها المتجّدين، وقومها المفارقة^١ أضداد الدين المتجّدين، بذروة شاهق، يعني ما انتهت إليه من الكون في هذه القائمة الألفيّة المشابهة للنّوات الأولى الإبداعيّة، وتدرّجت في مراتب الحدود، وصعدت من مراقبها^٢ من منازل الصعود،^٣ فأصبحت في الذروة العالية^٤ حائزة الكمّالين، النّائي والصوريّ، متشوّقة للظهور بالمقام الأشرف النورانيّ والشّبح الأفضل الكافوريّ، فيطلع^٥ منها إذ ذاك^٦ نور النور، ويتجلّى بها الحقّ عند الظهور.

وأما قوله: والعلم يرفع قدر من لم يرفع، فكيف لا يكون ذلك كذلك وهو المغنطيس الأكبر الجاذب^٧ للنفوس الشريفة إلى دار المعاد، الحافظ لنواها من التلاشي والفساد، والصايغ لها صبغة الله الحسنة البهيّة، الملحق^٨ لها إلى^٩ أنوار العالم الأعلى المشرقة المضئية، السالب عنها العادات الرديئة والأخلاق البهيّة، المكسب لها الشّيم الرضيّة^{١٠} الملكيّة، المجهور لناها بعد أن كانت في أعداد^{١١} الأعراض، القاضى لها^{١٢} بدوام السعادة وبلوغ الأغراض، المرقّي لها إلى جوار الملك الجبّار، الموصل لها إلى جنة المأوى آمنّة من السقوط والخسار،^{١٣} المؤزّل لها على مرّ الدهور والأعصار، حبل الله المتين الذي من اعتصم به فاز ونجا، وعُروته الوثقى التي من استمسك بها خرج إلى ضياء الأنوار من دياجير الدجى، قال^{١٤} علي بن أبي

١- وقومها المفارقة: وقرّبها لمفارقة، ت.

٢- مراقبها: مراقبه، ب ت.

٣- الصعود السعود، ت.

٤- العالية: + منه، ب.

٥- فيطلع: فيطلع، ت؛ فطلع، ت.

٦- ذاك: ذلك، ب.

٧- الجاذب: والجاذب، ت.

٨- الملحق: المخلص، ب ت؛ + (حاشية) ن الملحق، ت.

٩- إلى: -، ت.

١٠- الرضيّة: المرصية، ب؛ الوضيّة + (حاشية) ن الرضيّة، ت.

١١- أعداد: عدد، ب.

١٢- لها: -، ت

١٣- السقوط والخسار: الشقاوة والخسارة، ت.

١٤- قال: + أمير المؤمنين، ب؛ + مولانا، ت.

مللتُ بدار الحسّ طولَ ثَوائي
فيا سَفرِي هذا الطويلُ عسى^٢ الذي
ويا شَبحي العَوّائي لي عن مَآري
صحيّتكُ إذ عَينِي عليها عَشاؤهُ
فهلْ لكُ مِن بَينِ يَفرَقُ بَينَنا
ويَلحِقُ مِمّا كُلُّ جَنسٍ يَجنِسُهُ
وإني لأَرجو ذاكَ واللّهُ كَافِلُ
وأَعلَمُ علماً ليسَ بالظَنِّ ما الذي
وما أنا لَاقٍ مِن نَعيمٍ مَضى أُنْزُ
أرى الموتَ جِسرًا والأجَبَةُ خَلَقُهُ

وسَبحُني وتَعذِبي بها وبِقائِي^١
قضى بك يَقبُضي أَوَبي وأَدائي
عَديمُثُكُ أينَ ما أَنتَ مِن قُرنائِي
فلَمّا انجَلَّتْ فَرَعْتُ عَنكَ وَعائِي
فِراقُ ثَمّالٍ قاطِعٍ وتَنائي
ومُشِبهٍ مِن ثَريقٍ وسَباءٍ^٣
يَبتَلِغُ آمالي وتَيلَ رَجائي
إليهِ مَعادي عَندَ كُشُفِ غَطاي
لَهُ الوَصفُ يَعبِجُ فِكرِي ودَكاي
وعائِرُهُ مِن أَسعدِ السُّعداءِ^٤

إلى آخر ما ذكره من هذه القصيدة، فهنا معنى ما^٥ ذكره في البيت، فاعلم ذلك.

[42] فصل

وأما قوله في البيت التالي:^٦

وغدت تغرّد فوق ذروة شاهقي والعلم يرفع قدر من لم يرفع

فنقول: إنه سبق تفسير هذا البيت في الذي قبله، يعني^٧ ما لوح به من تغريدها وسجعها، وأنه^٨ عبارتها عمّا
اطلعت عليه من العلوم الرأيتية، ووصلت إلى معرفته من الأسرار الغامضة والحقائق الروحانية،^٩ واشتياقها

^١ مللت ... بقائي: -، ب ت.

^٢ عسى: على، ت.

^٣ وسباء: وسائى، ب ت.

^٤ أرى ... السعداء: -، ب ت

^٥ معنى ما: ما معنى، ت.

^٦ في البيت التالي: شعر، ب: -، ت.

^٧ يعني: + (حاشية) أعني، ت.

^٨ وأنه: وأنها، ب.

^٩ الروحانية: -، ت ت.

فهو أنه لما انتهى بها^١ المسير إلى هذه الرتبة التي هي آخر أبواب عالم^٢ الكون والفساد، وحصلت في دائرة الوجود بامثال طاعة أئمة الرشاد،^٣ وصعدت في المراقي النفسانية، وأطلعت على مراتب الحدود الجسائية، والحدود الروحانية القدساتية، وانتقشت ذاتها بالعلوم، واتضح لها على قدر مرتبتها كل محبوب عمن دونها^٤ من ذلك مكتوم، وانكشف لها الغطاء عن مكنونات السرائر، وبرح لها الخفاء، فرمقت^٥ مستوراتها بعيون البصائر، فانتبهت حينئذ من نوم الغفلة، واعتنمت الفرصة^٦ في اقتناء المعارف في زمن المهلة، ونطقت بلسان الحكمة والاعتبار،^٧ معبرة^٨ عن مضر جناها، متشوقة إلى اللحوق بالصالحين من أشكالها وإخوانها، يقول الشاعر:^٩

وأبرح ما يكون الشوق يوماً إذا دنت الديار من الديار

وكما قال أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب صلوات الله عليه:^{١٠} لو كشف الغطاء ما ازددت يقيناً، ولتحققته^{١١} ما عند الله له من الزلفى والثرى، ورفيع الدرجة وسامي الرتبة، قال^{١٢} عند وقوع الضربة: فزت ورب الكعبة، وكما قال بعضهم،^{١٣} أعني^{١٤} السلطان الأجل الخطاب بن الحسن أعلى الله قدسه من جملة قصيدة له:^{١٥}

١. بها: به، ب. ت.

٢. عالم: -، ت.

٣. الرشاد: الهدى، ت.

٤. عمن دونها: عن ذاتها، ب.

٥. فرمقت: فرمت، ب.

٦. الفرصة: بالفرصة، ت.

٧. الحكمة والاعتبار: الاعتبار، ب.

٨. معبرة: المعبرة، ت.

٩. يقول الشاعر: كما قال بعض الشاعر، ب.

١٠. علي بن أبي طالب صلوات الله عليه: -، ت.

١١. ولتحققته: تحققاً، ب؛ لتحققه، ت.

١٢. قال: وقال، ب.

١٣. بعضهم: بعض الحدود، ب.

١٤. أعني: وأعني، ت.

١٥. قصيدة له: + شعر، ب؛ قصيدته، ت.

أَلْحَنَّا اللهُ بِمَوَالِينَا الطَّاهِرِينَ وَحَشَرْنَا فِي زَمَرَتِهِمْ وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مَقْبُولَ شَفَاعَتِهِمْ^١ وَالْكَوْنُ فِي جَمَلَتِهِمْ بِفَضْلِهِ وَمَنْهُ^٢ وَكَرَمِهِ وَرَحْمَتِهِ.

[40] فصل^٣

وَأَمَّا قَوْلُهُ:^٤

حَتَّى إِذَا قَرَّبَ الْمَسِيرُ إِلَى الْحَيَى وَدَنَا الرَّحِيلُ إِلَى النَّضَاءِ الْأَوْسَعِ

مَقْصُودُهُ بِذَلِكَ وَصُولَ هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الْهَيُولَانِيَّةِ إِلَى الْقَامَةِ الْبَشَرِيَّةِ وَالصُّورَةِ الْإِنْسَانِيَّةِ الَّتِي هِيَ آخِرُ الْوُجُودِ الْنَائِيِّ وَأَوَّلُ الْوُجُودِ الصُّورِيِّ بَعْدَ أَنْ جَاوَزْتَ الصِّرَاطَ الْمُنْكَوسَ وَالصِّرَاطَ الْمَعْوَجَ الْمُنْحَنِي وَصَارَتْ وَاقِفَةً عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ مَتَّيْنَةً، فَإِنَّ^٦ قَارِبَهَا التَّوْفِيقَ لِلدُّخُولِ فِي أَبْوَابِ جَنَّاتٍ^٧ النَّعِيمِ وَالصُّعُودِ فِي سَلَمِ النِّجَاةِ نَالَتْ^٨ الْكَمَالَ الثَّانِي فَائِزَةً بِالسِّيْحَانِ فِي^٩ النَّضَاءِ الْأَوْسَعِ الْقُدْسَانِي الرُّوحَانِي، فَاعْلَمْ ذَلِكَ.

[41] فصل

وَأَمَّا قَوْلُهُ:^{١٠}

سَمِعَتْ وَقَدْ كَثُفَ الْغُطَاءُ فَأَبْصُرْتُ مَا لَيْسَ يُدْرِكُ بِالْعَيُونِ الْهُجُوعِ

^١ - شَفَاعَتِهِمْ: شَفَاعَتُهُ، ت.

^٢ - وَمَنْهُ: -، ب. ت.

^٣ - فَصْل: -، ت.

^٤ - قَوْلُهُ: + شَعْر، ب.

^٥ - وَالصُّورَةُ: وَالصُّور، ب.

^٦ - فَإِنَّ: إِنَّ، ب.

^٧ - جَنَّاتٍ: جَنَّة، ت.

^٨ - نَالَتْ: -، ب؛ نَال، ت.

^٩ - فِي: إِلَى، ب.

^{١٠} - قَوْلُهُ: + شَعْر، ب؛ + فِي الْبَيْتِ الثَّانِي، ت.

[39] فصل ١

وأما قوله: ٢

إذ عاقبها الشكل الكثيف وصدّها
وقدّث مفارقةً لكلّ مخلف
قفّص ٣ عن الأوج الفسيح الأرفع
عنها حليف التّرب غير مشيّع

فذلك إشارة إلى الجسم الكثيف المظلم الذي قارنته ٥ والهيكل الظلماني الذي ارتطمت ٦ به فسكنته، فعاقبها عن الرجوع إلى عالمها الشريف، والعودة إلى محلّها الذي فارقت النوراني اللطيف، وقوله: حليف التّرب غير مشيّع، يعني ٧ عودته إلى الأرض التي كان فيها ٨ ونشأ عليها واستمدّ غذاءه عنها إذا ٩ عادت النفس إلى محلّها ورجعت أجزاؤها إلى كلّها فائزة بالسلامة، حاصلة في دار المقامة، كما قال بعض الحدود قدّس الله روحه: ١٠

إذ كلّ جنس لاحق بالجنس
وجوهز يلحق روح القدس
من صدّف يبقى بدار الحس

١. فصل: -، ت.

٢. قوله: + شعر، ب.

٣. قفّص: نقص، ب ت ث؛ + (حاشية) ن قفّص، ت.

٤. مقارنة: مفارقة، ب ت ث؛ + (حاشية) ن مقارنة، ت.

٥. قارنته: فارقت، ت.

٦. ارتطمت: ارتبطت، ت.

٧. يعني: -، ت.

٨. فيها: منها، ب.

٩. إذا: إذ، ت.

١٠. روحه: روحهم، ب؛ + شعراً، ت.

حتى إذا حصلت بها هبوطها من ميم مركزها بذات الأجرع
علقت بها ثاء^١ التثيل فأصبحت بين المعالم^٢ والطلول الخضع
فمعناه ما تكرر الشرح فيه من قضية^٣ الهبوط والتعلق بالجسم المكثي عنه بقاء^٤ الثقل عند السقوط والبلوغ
إلى المركز الذي هو الأرض ذات^٥ البسط والقبض، فاعلم ذلك.

[38] فصل^٦

وأما قوله^٧:

تبكي إذا ذكرت عهداً بالحيى بدماع تهمي ولما تفلع
وتظل ساجدة على الدمن التي دزست بتكرار الرياح الأربع

فذلك^٨ كناية عما لحقها من الندم والتحسر على ما فاتها من حقيقة الوجود إذ حصلت^٩ في حيز العدم،^{١٠}
وهذه الندامة الحاصلة لديها يكون ارتقاؤها في درج^{١١} الصعود،^{١٢} وتعلتها بجبل الحياة^{١٣} الممدود، والتزامها
بأرباب الهداية من الأئمة والحدود.

١- تاء: التاء، ب.

٢- المعالم: المنازل، ت.

٣- قضية: قصة، ت.

٤- بقاء: بالتاء، ب.

٥- ذات: بتقدير من له، ب.

٦- فصل: -، ت.

٧- قوله: + شعر، ب.

٨- فذلك: وذلك، ت.

٩- إذ حصلت: وحصلت، ب؛ إذا حصلت، ت.

١٠- العدم: الندم، ب.

١١- درج: الدرج، ت.

١٢- الصعود: السعود، ب. ت.

١٣- الحياة: + (حاشية) م ن الله، ت.

صاحبه،^١ لأن الدنيا تُشبه تلك الجزيرة وأهلها يشبهون القردة، ومثل الموت مثل ذلك الطائر، ومثل أولياء الله مثل القوم الذين انكسر بهم المركب، ومثل الدار الآخرة مثل تلك الجزيرة التي فيها بلدهم وأهاليهم.

هذا قوله صلوات الله عليه^٢ قد تبين معه^٣ ما اشتمل عليه البيت المتقدم ذكره، فاعلم^٤ ذلك.

[36] فصل^٥

وأما قوله أعلى الله قدسه في البيت الآخر:^٦

وَأُظِّنَّا نَسِيْتُ عَهْدًا بِالْحَيِّ وَمَنَازِلًا بِفِرَاقِهَا لَمْ تَقْنَعْ

فهو تأكيد لما ذكرناه من ارتباطها في عالم الأجسام ونسيانها للعالم اللطيف محل المصطفين الأخيار من الملائكة الكرام كما تقدم ذكره من الحكاية الموردة في الفصل الذي قبل هذا الفصل، ونسيان أولئك القوم الذين انكسر بهم المركب ووقعوا في تلك الجزيرة ونسوا مدينتهم التي خرجوا منها ونشؤوا فيها وما كانوا عليه من النعم الكاملة والراحة الشاملة، وفي بعض^٧ ذلك كفاية في هذا المعنى.

[37] فصل^٨

وأما قوله:

^١ وهكذا ... صاحبه: -، ب ت.

^٢ صلوات الله عليه: ع م، ت؛ صلعم، ت.

^٣ قد تبين معه: فدير معنى، ب.

^٤ فاعلم: واعلم، ب.

^٥ فصل: -، ت.

^٦ أعلى الله قدسه في البيت الآخر: شعر، ب؛ -، ت.

^٧ بعض: -، ت.

^٨ فصل: -، ت.

[34] وبينيا^١ مركباً في البحر ويرجعاً إلى بلدهما، فعتدا بينهما عقداً^٢ وميثاقاً^٣ ألا يتخاذلا بل يجتهدا^٤ اجتهد رجل واحد، فلما عزمَا فكراً بأنه لو كان لهما ثالث لكان أعون لهما في ذلك وكلما زاد في عددهم كان أبلغ في الوصول إلى مطلبهم ومقصدهم، فعملوا يذكرون إخوانهم الذين خرجوا من بلدهم ويرغبونهم في الرجوع ويرهبونهم في المقام حتى التأم إليهم جماعة من القوم، فلما اجتمع جماعة من القوم على^٥ أن يبنوا السفينة ويركبوا فيها ويرجعوا^٦ إلى بلدهم، فبينما هم في ذلك دائبون في قطع الأشجار وفشر الحشب لبنيان السفينة^٧ إذ جاء الطائر^٨ الذي كان يختطف^٩ القردة، فاختطف رجلاً منهم فطار به في الهواء ليأكله،^{١٠} فلما أوعن في طيرانه تأمله، فإذا هو إنسان ليس من القردة التي اعتاد أكلها، فمضى طائراً^{١١} حتى صار على الجزيرة التي هو منها، فطرح^{١٢} به على سطح بيته وخلاه، فلما تأمل^{١٣} الموضع فإذا هو في بلده ومزله، فجعل يتمنى لو أن ذلك الطائر^{١٤} يختطف كل يوم من أخوانه واحداً واحداً^{١٥} ويرده^{١٦} إلى بلده كما فعل به، وأما أولئك القوم بعد أن اختطفه جعلوا ييكون عليه ويحزنون، وبقوا محزونين على فرقتهم لأنهم لا يعلمون ما فعل به ذلك الطائر،^{١٧} ولو أنهم علموا به لتمنوا ما تمتاه. وهكذا ينبغي أن يكون اعتقاد إخوان الصفاء فيمن سبقتهم المنيّة قبل

١. وبينيا: ونشأ، ت.

٢. عقداً: + وثيقاً، ت.

٣. يتخاذلا بل يجتهدا: يتخاذلان بل يجهدان، ت. ت.

٤. فلما ... على: -، ب. ت.

٥. ويرجعوا: ويرجعون، ب. ت.

٦. لبنيان السفينة، -، ب.

٧. الطائر: + (حاشية) الطير، ت.

٨. يختطف: يختطف، ب. ت.

٩. ليأكله: ليأكل، ت.

١٠. فمضى طائراً ما، ب.

١١. فطرح: فرقى، ب.

١٢. وخلاه فلما تأمل: -، ت.

١٣. الطير: الطائر، ب.

١٤. واحداً: -، ت.

١٥. ويرده: يرده، ت.

١٦. الطائر: الطير، ت.

ويدخرونها،^١ ويتنافسون على إناث تلك القردة ويغبطون^٢ من كان له حظ^٣ منها، وتمنّوا الخلود هناك،^٤ وانشبّت بينهم العداوة والبغضاء، وتوقّدت بينهم نيران الحرب، ثم لَنَ رجالٌ منهم رأى فيما يرى النائم كأنه قد رجع إلى بلده الذي^٥ خرج منه وأن أهل بلده لما سمعوا بمجيئه خرجوا واستبشروا واستقبلوه خارج المدينة، فأروه قد غيّر السفر والغربة،^٦ فكروهوا^٧ أن يدخل^٨ على تلك الحال، وكان على باب المدينة عين ماء فغسلوه وحلقوا شعره وقصّوا أظفاره وألبسوه^٩ ثياباً جديداً، وطَيّبوه وحملوه على دابة ودخلوا به وجعلوا يسألونه عن أصحابه وسفرهم وما فعل الدهر بهم، واجتمعوا حوله يتعجبون منه ومن رجوعه بعد اليأس، وهو فرح بهم وبما نجاه الله تعالى^{١٠} من الغربة وذلك الغرق ومن صحبة تلك القردة وتلك العيشة النكدية،^{١١} وهو يظنّ أن ذلك جميعه يراه في اليقظة، فلما انتبه إذ هو بين تلك القردة، فأصبح حزيناً منكسر البال زاهداً في ذلك المكان ممتناً متفكراً راعياً في الرجوع إلى بلده، فقصّ رؤياه على أخ له، فتذكّر ذلك الأخ ما أنساه الدهر من حال بلدهما وأهاليهما والنعمة التي كانوا فيها،^{١٢} فتشاورا فيما بينهما وأجالا^{١٣} الرأي وقالوا:^{١٤} كيف السبيل إلى الرجوع وكيف النجاة؟ فوقع في فكرها وجه الحيلة بأن^{١٥} يتعاونوا ويجمعوا^{١٦} من خشب^{١٧} تلك الجزيرة

١- ويدخرونها: -، ت ت.

٢- يغبطون: ويغبطون، ب.

٣- حظ: حظاً، ت.

٤- هناك: هنالك، ت.

٥- بلده الذي: البلدة التي، ب؛ بلدة التي، ت.

٦- والغربة: الغربة، ت.

٧- فكروهوا: وكرهوا، ت.

٨- يدخل: يدخلوا، ب.

٩- وألبسوه: وألبسوا، ت.

١٠- تعالى: -، ب.

١١- النكدية: النكرة، ت.

١٢- من حال ... كانوا فيها: -، ت ت.

١٣- وأجالا: وأطالا، ت.

١٤- وقالوا: وقال، ت.

١٥- بأن: أن، ب.

١٦- ويجمعوا: ويجمعوا، ت.

١٧- خشب: حطب + حاشية) ن خشب، ت

وكان^١ يتجند ما بينهم من الود والمحبة^٢ والشفقة والرفق^٣ بلا تباعض ولا حسد ولا شيء من العداوة وأنواع الشرور مما يكون بين أهل المدائن الجائرة المتضادة الطباع^٤ المتنافرة القوى المتباينة الآراء القبيحة الأعمال السيئة الأخلاق،^٥ وكانوا مستقيمين^٦ في الأخلاق، ثم إن طائفة منهم ركبوا البحر فانكسر بهم المركب، ورمى بهم الموج إلى جزيرة أخرى، فيها جبل وعرة وفيها أشجار عالية وعليها ثمار نزره،^٧ وفيها عيون غائرة ومياه كدرة، وفيها مغارات مظلمة وسباع ضارية، وعامة أهل تلك الجزيرة قردة، وكان في بعض جزائر البحر طير عظيم الخلقة شديد القوة قد سلط عليها، في كل يوم وليلة ينقض^٨ عليها ويخطف من تلك القردة عدداً، ثم إن أولئك النفر الذين نجوا من السفينة تفرقوا في تلك الجزيرة وفي أودية الجبل يطلبون ما يقتاتونه^٩ من ثمارها لما لحقتهم من الجوع والعطش، ويشربون من ماء تلك العيون، ويستترون^{١٠} بأوراق الشجر، ويأوون بالليل إلى تلك المغارات ويتوقون^{١١} فيها من البرد والحر،^{١٢} وأنست بهم تلك^{١٣} القردة وأنسوا بها، فولعت بهم إناث القردة وولع بها منهم^{١٤} من كان به^{١٥} من الشبق ما حمله على إناثها،^{١٦} فحملت منهم وتوالدوا وتناسلوا وكثروا،^{١٧} وتمادى بهم الزمان واستوطنوا تلك^{١٨} الجزيرة واعتصموا بذلك الجبل، وألفوا تلك الحال ونسوا بلادهم ونعيمهم وأهاليهم، وجعلوا يننون من حجارة الجبل منازل ويحرسون في جمع تلك الثمار

[33]

١. وكان: -، ب.

٢. الود والمحبة: المحبة، ب.

٣. والرفق: والرفقة، ب.

٤. المتضادة الطباع: المتضادة الطباع + (حاشية) الطباع، ت.

٥. مما يكون ... الأخلاق: -، ب.

٦. مستقيمين: مستقين، ب.

٧. نزره: نذيرة، ب.

٨. ينقض: يعض، ب.

٩. يقتاتونه: يقتاتون، ب.

١٠. من ثمارها ... ويستترون: -، ب.

١١. ويتوقون: وتديلون، ب؛ + (حاشية) ن ويتقون، ت.

١٢. البرد والحر: البرد، ب.

١٣. تلك: -، ب.

١٤. منهم: عنهم، ت.

١٥. به: فيه، ب.

١٦. إناثها: إناثها، ب.

١٧. وكثروا: وكثروا، ب ت.

١٨. تلك: -، ب.

[31] فصل

وأما قوله:^١

أُنْفِثَ وَمَا أُنْسِتُ^٢ فلما واصلت أُلْفِثَ مجاورةً الخراب البلقع

فمعناه ما تقدّم شرحه في الفصل الذي قبل هذا الباب^٣ من أنسها بعالم الأجسام بعد الأثفة وميلها إلى خزعبلات الطبيعة المهلكة لها، وقد ضرب صاحب الرسائل سلام الله عليه^٤ في ذلك مثلاً أشار به إلى ما كان^٥ من مفارقة النفوس لئار^٦ البسائط الروحانية ومقارنتها للهيكل المركبة^٧ الجسائية وأنسها بها^٨ بعد النور والوحشة، وصبوها إليها بعد التحير عند الوقوع فيها والدهشة، أوردناه ههنا مجملاً لما يحتوي عليه من الدلالة الشافية، والحكمة الجلية^٩ الوافية، والإشارات الواضحة في معنى المبدأ والمعاد، والتنبيهات الكافية^{١٠} [32] لنوي الصلاح والسداد، وهو قوله عليه السلام في رسالة بيان اعتقاد إخوان الصفاء: ذكروا أنها كانت مدينة على^{١١} رأس جبل في جزيرة من جزائر البحر مُخصّصة كثيرة النعم، رعيّة البال، طيبة الهواء، عذبة المياه، حسنة التربة، كثيرة الأشجار، لذينة الثمار، كثيرة أجناس الحيوان على حسب ما تقتضيه تربة تلك الجزيرة وهوأوها^{١٢} ومياهاها، وكان أهلها إخوة وبني^{١٣} عم من نسل رجل واحد، وكان عيشهم أهنأ عيش،

١. فصل وأما قوله: -، ت.

٢. أنست: ألقت، ب.

٣. الباب: + (حاشية) ن م الفصل، ت

٤. الرسائل سلام الله عليه: الرسالة صلح، ت.

٥. كان: -، ب.

٦. لئار: النار، ب.

٧. المركبة: -، ب

٨. بها: -، ب.

٩. الجلية: الجلية، ب: الجلية + (حاشية) ن الجلية، ت.

١٠. الكافية: -، ب.

١١. على: من على، ب.

١٢. وهوأوها: وهوأها، ب.

١٣. وبني: بني، ب.

[29] واعلموا أن العلة في كون هذين^١ الحالين في جبلة الخليقة^٢ وغريزة جوهرها، أعني محبة البقاء وكراهية الفناء، فهو من أجل أن البارئ جلّ ثناؤه لما كان محدث الموجودات وسبب الكائنات ومبتقيا ومكملها، وهو أبدى الوجود دائم ولازمه^٣ جعل في جبلة الحلقة^٤ محبة البقاء الذي هو الوجود، وكراهية الفناء الذي هو العدم، فهم ينجذبون بالطبع شوقاً إلى البقاء وهرباً من الفناء،^٥ ولما كان قبولهم الوجود ضرباً من^٦ الحركة التي بها خرجوا من العدم إلى الوجود جعل ببالغ حكمته سبب بقائهم ضرباً من الحركة،^٧ أعني التي بها طلب البقاء والهرب من الفناء، فهذه^٨ المحبة والكراهية داعية^٩ للنفوس إلى طلب المواد والأسباب والأموال التي بها يتم بقاؤها وتبلغها إلى أتم الغايات وأبلغ النهايات. واعلموا أن عامة الناس أشدّ كراهيةً للموت من غيرهم، وذلك أن كثيراً من الناس لا يتحققون أمر منقلبهم ومثوالمهم، وكيف معادهم ومأوهم،^{١٠} ولا يدرون عاقبة أمرهم، وخاتمة عمرهم،^{١١} وإلى ماذا^{١٢} يصير مرجعهم، فيكونوا أشدّ كراهيةً للموت من غيرهم.

هذا قوله أعلى الله قدسه^{١٣} وكفى به بياناً^{١٤} لمعنى قوله: وربما كرهت فراقك وهي ذات تنفّج، والحمد لله الذي منّ علينا بهداية أوليائه وحماناً من الوقوع في حبال أعدائه حمداً كثيراً.^{١٥}

١. هذين: هاتين، ت.

٢. الخليقة: الحلقة، ت.

٣. ولازمه: لازمه، ب.

٤. الحلقة: الخليقة، ب.

٥. الفناء: + هذي المحبة والحركة، ب.

٦. من: في، ب.

٧. الحركة: الحكمة والحركة، ب.

٨. فهذه: فكان هذه، ت.

٩. داعية: داعيان، ب.

١٠. ومأوهم: ومآتهم، ب.

١١. عمرهم: أمرهم، ب.

١٢. ماذا: ما، ب.

١٣. أعلى الله قدسه: سلام الله عليه، ب؛ ص ع، ت.

١٤. بياناً: تبييناً، ب.

١٥. كثيراً: دائماً سرمداً، ت.

لهم^١ فيما يقولون، فهم واقفون بين الحول والقوة واليأس والطمع، لا يعرفون كيف يكون^٢ عاقبة أمرهم، وخاتمة عمرهم، فهم يكرهون الموت لكونهم لا يتحققون^٣ على ماذا^٤ يردون، ولا^٥ على أي حال ينتقلون، ومنهم من يركن إلى الدنيا ويميل إلى ظواهر أمورها، وينخدع بزخرف غرورها، ويألف شهوات هذا البدن ولذاته الحاصلة لهم بطريق^٦ الحواس، ويكرهون الموت لما فيه من مفارقتها وانقطاع لئانها وانصرام شهواتها.

[27] وبالجملة، فالولي^٧ والعدو^٨ يكرهان^٩ الموت، ويحبتان الموت، ويكونان من مفارقة هذا الجسد على حسرات وغصص، أما^{١٠} الولي فيرى بمفارقتة فوت^{١١} الأرباح والمنافع الحاصلة له بتوسط البدن والخيرات التي هي باشتراكه إليه واصله، والعدو يرى خسارة الحياة وهجوم وفاته وتواتر أسفه وحسراته على ما ضاع منه ولم يعمل بالخلاص فيه، واعلموا أيديكم الله تعالى وإيانا بروح منه أن جميع أنواع الحيوان تكره^{١٢} الموت [28] وتحب البقاء لما عيننا^{١٣} في أول الفصل ولما^{١٤} سوف نذكره في آخره أيضاً، وذلك أن محبة الحيوانات الحياة وكراهيتهم الموت علتين^{١٥}، إحداها^{١٦} ما يلحق نفوسهم من الأوجاع والآلام وأجسادهم من البلاء والفساد عند الموت، والعلّة الأخرى ما في طباع الموجودات وغرائر جواهرها من المحبة للبقاء والهرب مما يؤذيها إلى الفناء كما بيّنا فيما سلف، وإنّ ذلك هداية الله السابقة السارية في جميع الموجودات.

١. تقليد لهم: تقليدهم، ب. ت.

٢. يكون: + إقرار، ب.

٣. يتحققون: يحققون، ب.

٤. ماذا: ما، ب. ت.

٥. ولاي، ت.

٦. على: إلى، ت. ت.

٧. بطريق: عن طريق، ت.

٨. يكرهان: يكرهون، ت.

٩. أما: فأما، ب.

١٠. بمفارقتة فوت: من مفارقة، ب.

١١. تكره: كرهو، ب.

١٢. عيننا: بينا، ب.

١٣. ولما: وكما، ت.

١٤. علتين: علان، ب.

١٥. إحداها: أحدهم، ب؛ أحدها، ت.

فناء وبوار وأنَّ حكم الإنسان حكمُ النبات والحيوان، لأنهم تأملوا أمورهم وتفكروا فوجدوا النبات يتكون^١ وينشأ ويبلغ إلى غايته ومبدأ نهايته،^٢ ثم يتلاشى ويفسد ويضمحل ويبعد، ويتكون مثله الجديد، وهكذا أمر الحيوان، فلما رأوا ذلك على ما وصفناه جعلوه قياساً على حال الإنسان، فقالوا: ^٣ ننشأ ونبلى ونموت ونُحيا وما يُهلكنا إلا الدهر، فقال^٤ الله تعالى ﴿وما لهم بذلك من علم﴾ (٤٥ الجاثية ٢٤) ﴿إن يتبعون إلا الظن^٥ وما تهوى الأنفس﴾ (٥٣ النجم ٢٣) وقال^٦ تعالى^٧ ﴿إن الظن لا يغني من الحق شيئاً﴾ (٥٣ النجم ٢٨) فبالدليل كرهوا الموت لأنهم اعتقدوا أنه^٨ يؤدِّبهم إلى العدم الذي لا وجود معه ولا حياة سواء، وبعضهم أقروا بالمعاد قولاً ولا يعتقدون حقيقته،^٩ يقولون بأفواههم^{١٠} ما^{١١} ليس في قلوبهم، يتسوا من رحمة الله^{١٢} لما أخذوا ذات الشمال، فنُفُوا^{١٣} عن آيات الله وحصلوا محجوبين عن باب الله،^{١٤} لا يعرفون سوى^{١٥} الحياة الدنيا^{١٦} فيكرهون مفارقتها ويرون الموت يؤدِّبهم إلى الفساد. ومنهم من يقرُّ بالمعاد بالسننهم من غير تصوُّر منهم له^{١٧} بقولهم ولا معرفة^{١٨} بحقيقته^{١٩} في عقولهم، فأقروا لهم إيمان وتسليم لقول الأنبياء عليهم السلام وتقليد

١. يتكون: يكون، ب. ت.

٢. ومبدأ نهايته: ونعائته. ت.

٣. فقالوا: وقالوا، ت.

٤. فقال: قال، ت.

٥. يتبعون إلا الظن: هم إلا يظنون، ب.

٦. وقال: فقال، ت.

٧. تعالى: -، ب. ت.

٨. أنه: + مما، ت.

٩. حقيقته: حقيقة، ب. ت.

١٠. بأفواههم: بأهوائهم، ت.

١١. ما: + في، ت.

١٢. الله: + تعالى: ب.

١٣. فنُفُوا: ونفوا، ت.

١٤. عن باب الله: على رهبهم، ب؛ عن رهبهم، ت.

١٥. لا يعرفون سوى: يعرفون نوة، ب.

١٦. الدنيا: -، ب. ت.

١٧. له: -، ب.

١٨. معرفة: معرفتهم، ب.

١٩. بحقيقته: بحقيقة، ب. ت.

إذا تاجرت به^٢ أحرزته، فكرهت فراقه خوفاً أن يفوتها الربح المتوقع والفضل المنتظر فيه لأن أولياء الله يرون هذا البدن وآلات^٣ بنيانه كالترجمان المتوسط بين كلام الله تعالى ورمز أسرار^٤ من آياته^٥ الناطقة الصادقة وبين لغات الناس واختلاف ألسنتهم وتباين عباراتهم ليدعوهم إلى الله فيهدوهم إلى التنزيل المؤدي إليه، والعلامة^٦ الدالة^٧ عليه، وما دامت^٨ معهم الآلات لهذا^٩ البدن فهم قادرون على أن يتلافوا القوات^{١٠}، ويُحيوا الأموات، ويُعتقوا الأبدان^{١١} من رِقِّ الشهوات، وقيد الشبهات، وحبائل المعاصي، ويكونوا هم^{١٢} الموالي فيكونوا من حزب الله المفلحين، وعباده الصالحين، لملك الآخرة والولاية الباقية، ويكون خلفاؤهم يقومون مقامهم ويستنون^{١٣} بسنتهم^{١٤} ويُحيون بالعلم والذكر أنفسهم، وغير ذلك مما يشاكله مما تؤدِّيه النفس بمشاركة البدن، فيكون طول أعمارهم زيادة في أعمالهم، كما قال عليه السلام: طوبى لمن طال عمره وحسن عمله، فلذلك كان أولياء الله يكرهون الموت ويحبون الحياة والبقاء.

[26] وبالعكس من ذلك كره^{١٥} أعداء الله الموت، وذلك^{١٦} أنهم حين وجدوا تمكناً^{١٧} من هذا^{١٨} الجسد وإحمالاً من العمر أخذوا منه ذات الشمال، فعموا عن طريق الحقائق وحدود البصائر، وظنوا أن الموت لهم

١- إنا: إذ، ت.

٢- تاجرت به: تأخرت، ب.

٣- وآلات: وآلاته، ب.

٤- أسرار: أسرار، ت.

٥- آياته: آياته، ب.

٦- المؤدي إليهم والعلامة: -، ب ت.

٧- الدالة: النال، ت.

٨- دمت: دلت، ب.

٩- لهذا: لهذه، ب.

١٠- القوات: القوات، ب.

١١- الأبدان: العبد، ب.

١٢- ويكونوا هم: وليكونوا لهم، ت.

١٣- ويستنون: ويتسبون، ب؛ ويتسبون، ب.

١٤- بسنتهم: بسببهم، ب.

١٥- كرهوا: كرهوا، ب ت ت.

١٦- وذلك: ذلك، ب.

١٧- تمكناً: التمكن، ب

١٨- هذا: هذه، ب.

ثابت^١ لها^٢ على الدوام^٣ ولا^٤ يفوتها مجال لأنه لا سبب لذلك غير ذاتها وخاصة صفاتها، فهي لا تحتاج في ذلك إلى غيرها، ولا يحول أمر بين الفعل وبينها ما دامت مطلقة من الرباط معزاة من الدنس، وليس كذلك المشتركة^٥ التي تكسبها^٦ بوساطة البدن، فهي تستغنم^٧ ذلك وتنزهه^٨، وتحمي^٩ طول إجمالها لتكسب بوساطته أفعالها وتقتني الفضائل الحاصلة بسببه ما دام^{١٠} البدن صاحباً لها عالمة أنها لا تقدر^{١١} على ذلك إذا فارقت، وتبقى^{١٢} فائزة بما اكتسبته.

[25] فهذه العلة التي من أجلها يكره أولياء الله الموت المبني هو فراق النفس البدن وأحبوا الحياة التي بها تم اصطحابها،^{١٣} وبذلك جل^{١٤} استعالمهم للخيرات^{١٥} التي يخافون فوتها، وهو العائق لهم^{١٦} عن الخيرات التي^{١٧} لا يخافون فوتها، أعني التي يفعلونها بذوات أنفسهم، وحق لهم أن يكرهوا الموت لهذه العلة لأنهم وجدوا من هذا^{١٨} البدن ممكناً ومن حياته فرصة في أن يأخذوا منه ذات اليمين ورأوا أنها تؤدبهم إلى الأمن والأمان، والزوج والريحان، وأن هذه النفس من البدن كأنه^{١٩} رأس مال لها وترى لها فيه ربحاً كبيراً، وفضلاً غزيراً،

١. ثابت: ثباتاً، ب ت؛ ثبات، ت.

٢. لها: -، ب.

٣. الدوام: الدواب، ب.

٤. ولا: لا، ت.

٥. المشتركة: المشتركة، ب.

٦. تكسبها: تكسبها، ب.

٧. تستغنم: + (حاشية) تغنم، ت.

٨. وتنزهه: وتنزهه، ب.

٩. وتحمي: وتحميها، ب.

١٠. دام: دامت، ب.

١١. تقدر: تقدر، ت.

١٢. وتبقى: وتلقي، ب.

١٣. اصطحابها: اصطحابها، ب.

١٤. جل: احل، ب.

١٥. للخيرات: الخيرات، ب.

١٦. لهم: -، ب.

١٧. التي: -، ب.

١٨. هذا: -، ب ت.

١٩. كأنه: كأنها، ب.

[23] والإحساس حتى^١ تستكمل القوة البشرية في حال النوم فضلاً عن اليقظة.^٢ فأما قوة إظهار الفعل^٣ فتسميه^٤ الحكماء جود الله، وأما طلبه^٥ للبقاء فتسميه الحكماء^٦ تقدير الله، وأما^٧ الاهتداء للمصالح فتسميه الحكماء^٨ حكمة الله، وهذه الثلاثة بأجمعها تسمى سياسة^٩ الله، والعالم محفوظ معقول على قوامه ونظامه بكمال سياسته،^{١٠} أي بجوده وتقديره وحكمته،^{١١} فكل واحد من سائر الموجودات يفعل هذه الهداية المنيرة لذاته التي هي الاهتداء للمصالح وإخراج ما هو بالقوة إلى الفعل، وطلب البقاء ثلاثة أفاعيل، أحدها راجع إلى صورته والآخر إلى مادته والثالث إلى استكمال ذاته وعينه المركبة منها، فيفعل^{١٢} بصورته فيما دونه ويقبل بمادته عمل من فوقه ويستكمل بعينه ذاته، أعني يستكمل بهذين ذاته وعينه إذ هي الحاصل بين الطرفين والواسطة بين الحاشيتين،^{١٣} تأخذ^{١٤} من كل واحد منها بنصيب، فلا^{١٥} هو منفعل محض ولا هو فعال^{١٦} محض، بل هما جميعاً، فإذا تقرر هذا قلنا: إن هذه الأمور الإلهية المنيرة لكافة البرية عامة فهي^{١٧} المشوقة للنفوس البشرية خاصة إلى اكتساب ما هو مختص بها من الأفاعيل التي بذاتها فيما تقدم، وهي راجعة إلى قسمين، إما أن تفعلها بمشاركة البدن أو تفعلها بذاتها منفردة مجردة عن^{١٨} البدن، فالذي تفعله على الانفراد

١. حتى: -، ب.

٢. اليقظة: يقطئه، ت.

٣. فأما قوة إظهار الفعل: مكرر في ب.

٤. فتسميه: تسميه، ب.

٥. وأما طلبه: وطلبه، ت.

٦. وأما طلبه للبقاء فتسميه الحكماء: -، ب.

٧. وأما: وأهل ما، ب.

٨. الحكماء: -، ب.

٩. سياسة: سياسي، ب.

١٠. بكمال سياسته: بكمال سياسة، ب.

١١. وحكمته: وحكمته، ب.

١٢. فيفعل: متصل، ب.

١٣. الحاشيتين: الجائين، ب.

١٤. تأخذ: فأخذ، ب.

١٥. فلا: خلا، ب.

١٦. هو فعال: افعال، ب؛ فعال، ت.

١٧. فهي: هي، ب.

١٨. عن: من، ت.

وتباين فنونها وحركاتها، وهو المسك لمراتبها^١ إلى خصائص درجاتها، كما قال جلّ جلاله ﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ﴾ (٢٤ النور ٣٥) وكقوله تعالى ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمِصُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا﴾ (٣٥ فاطر ٤١)
فالنفوس متفاوتة في قبول هذا النور، فأكثرها قبولاً الملائكة المقربون، ثم الأنبياء المرسلون، ثم الأئمة
والأولياء،^٢ والأبدال والحكماء والفضلاء والعلماء،^٣ ثم الأمثل فالأمثل^٤ والأقرب فالأقرب، فالموجودات كلها
حصلت محفوظة معقولة مضيئة منيرة بتبليغ هدايته الشائعة السارية، الفائضة الجارية، في عالم العلو والسفل،
والكبير والصغير، ويزيد^٥ هداية^٦ البرية أنه أوجد الجواهر كلها متهيئة^٧ للمصالح المتينة لها طالبة للبقاء بقدر
كل ما كان في^٨ إمكان كل واحد منها، مظهر^٩ لما في قوته^{١٠} إلى الفعل، أي أن كل شيء ينير بهذا^{١١} النور
ويعصر به ما هو خير له، وأنها تنزل منزلة الحياة للجواهر^{١٢} التي لها قوة الإحساس، وأنها هي تنكسب
الجواهر فضيلة^{١٣} النفوس الناطقة^{١٤} والسكون والطمأنينة إلى مدرجاتها،^{١٥} وكذلك شوقاً نحو الإدراك

١. لمراتبها: -، ب.

٢. والأولياء: -، ت.

٣. والعلماء: -، ب.

٤. فالأتمثل، -، ب.

٥. ويزيد: ويؤيد، ب؛ ونريد، ت.

٦. هداية: هدايته، ت.

٧. متهيئة: مهتدية، ت؛ مهديّة، ت.

٨. كل ما كان في: كل ما في، ب؛ ما كان، ت.

٩. مظهر: مظهره، ت.

١٠. قوته: قوتها، ب.

١١. بهذا: بعذ، ب.

١٢. للجواهر: الجواهر، ب.

١٣. فضيلة: الفضيلة، ب.

١٤. الناطقة: الناطقة، ب؛ الناطقية، ت.

١٥. مدرجاتها: ما يدرجها، ب.

درجة تبلغ إليها النفوس البشرية والأشخاص الإنسيّة، وهو الإشراف على حقيقة الحق، والواسطة بين الخالق والخلق، ومتى سعدت^١ بها نفس من النفوس، وأناف عليها شخص من الأشخاص، سُمّيَتْ حينئذٍ نفساً^٢ مشقّةً وروحاً^٣ مقدّسةً^٤ ورسولاً^٥ ونبيّاً^٥ وسفيراً^٦ وأميناً^٦ ومحدّثاً^٦ وملهماً^٦ ووليّاً^٦ وصفيّاً^٧ وشهيداً^٧ وبصيراً، موفّقاً لإيثار الحمد المنجية، ومعصوماً من الذمائم المردية، وصار داعياً إلى الله تعالى وإلى مرضاته، ومبلغاً لكتبه ورسالاته^٨، ومنبهاً على أسرار غيبه، ومبيّناً لغوامض كنهه، وقائماً بين الله تعالى^٩ وبين عباده، ومجاهداً في الله حقّ مجاده، إعلاناً وإسراراً، وكتماً وإظهاراً وإنذاراً، ومبيّناً للناس ما نزل إليهم، ومعزّفاً لهم ما فُرض عليهم^{١٠}، كما قال جلّ من قائل ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ﴾ (١٤) إبراهيم (٤)، وقال تعالى ﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾ (١٦ النحل ٤٤) ثم من بعدهم الخلفاء الراشدون^{١٢} والأئمّة المهديون^{١٣} الذين يقضون بالحقّ وبه يعدلون، ثم من بعدهم علماء الأمم وأئمّة الملل وأولياء الله الأبرار، والأبدال والأخيار، والحكماء الإلهيون، والفلاسفة الربّانيون، ثم الفضلاء المبرّورون^{١٤} والعقلاء^{١٥} المخلصون، ثم عامّة الناس ودهاؤهم، ثم البهاائم ذات القوائم الأربع، ثم الحيوانات، ثم الأشجار والنبات، ثم الأجسام^{١٦} والمجادات، إلى^{١٧} آخر الموجودات المميّز^{١٨} لها على اختلاف صورها

[21]

١- سعدت: أسعدت، ب.

٢- نفساً: نفس، ب.

٣- وروحاً: روح، ب.

٤- مقدّسة: مقدس، ب.

٥- ونبيّاً: نبيّاً، ب.

٦- وأميناً: أميناً، ب.

٧- وصفيّاً: -، ب.

٨- ورسالاته: ورسالاته، ب. ت.

٩- تعالى: -، ب.

١٠- فرض عليهم: فرض إليهم، ب.

١١- ولعلهم: لعلهم، ب.

١٢- الراشدون: والراشدون، ب.

١٣- المهديون: المهديون، ب.

١٤- المبرّورون: المبرّورون، ت.

١٥- والعقلاء: -، ب.

١٦- ثم الأجسام: والأجسام، ت.

١٧- إلى: التي، ب.

١٨- المميّز: المميّزة، ب.

[19] وقبل أن نذكر شرح ذلك فلنقدّم مقدّمة تكون تنبيهاً وتوطئةً لما أوردناه، فنقول: إن النفس الناطقة في الإنسان خُصّت بثلاثة أفعال من الأفعال الشريفة، الحسنة اللطيفة، فصنف منها^١ تؤدّيه^٢ النفس بمشاركة البدن، وهو النطق الظاهر للحس، أعني العبارة عن نطق الناطق والإشارة بالكلام الجاري على اللسان، عن^٣ الكلام المصوّر في الجنان، وبالجملة^٤ الإعراب عن الضمير، والإبانة عن ذات الصدور، وصنف منها تؤدّيه^٥ بقوة الفكر، واستحضار الذكر، واستعمال النظر والروية، لاستخراج الأمور الخفية، بالقياس على الأشياء الظاهرة الجليّة، والاستنباط للمعاني الدقيقة المستورة، وصنف منها تؤدّيه بقوة الرأى والتدبير، وتحصيل الأمور والتقدير، وهو إشار^٦ أفضل ما في طريق الإمكان، واختيار خير ما في حد الجواز، فهنا تعلم^٧ أن ذاتها وإن وصفت بالوحدة فهي من جهة^٨ قواها متكثرة، وأن عمّ قواها النطق الظاهر، وهو اللفظ بالكلام والعبارة باللسان والإعراب عن الضمير، وأشرف قواها^٩ وأخصّها الاختيار لأفضل ما هو في حدّ الجواز، وإشار خير ما هو في طريق الإمكان، وبهذه القوة^{١٠} تصير عارفة بذاتها ومعرض^{١١} لها إلى معاني ما يخلصها ومميّزة بحسن اختيارها، ومحضلة لما اقتنت في ذاتها، ومرفّقة لها إلى أشرف الإخلاص، ومعرضة لها إلى النجاة والخلاص، ثم بهذه^{١٢} القوة تصير مدبّرةً للأنفس الناقصة^{١٣} ومغيضةً عليها العلم والحكمة، ومستخرجة لها بالتدرّج والترقية والتمرين والتوطئة إلى أشرف الفضيلة، وحقيقة الوسيلة، وأفضل رتبة فيها وأعلى درجة منها هي^{١٤} النبوة ورتبة الرسالة^{١٥} وقبول الوحي والإطلاع على أسرار الغيب، وهي^{١٥} آخر

١. منها: منه، ب ت. ت.

٢. تؤدّيه: تأدية، ب.

٣. عن: من، ت.

٤. وبالجملة: بالجملة، ب.

٥. تؤدّيه: -، ب.

٦. إشار: إيات، ب.

٧. تعلم: نعلم، ت.

٨. جهة: جملة، ت ت.

٩. قواها: قوتها، ت.

١٠. القوة: القوى، ت.

١١. بهذه: هذه، ت.

١٢. الناقصة: الناطقة، ب.

١٣. هي: وهي، ب.

١٤. ورتبة الرسالة: والرسالة، ت.

١٥. وهي: وهو، ب.

[17] وأما قوله: ورتباً كرهت فراقك وهي ذات تنفج، فمعناه أن جميع النفوس الخيرة والشريرة تكره الموت، فأما النفوس الشريرة فلها لما أنست بالعالم الطبيعي الحيواني، واستغرقت في بحر الهوى الظلماني، ونسيت ما فارقته^١ من العالم الشريف الروحاني، وخفي عليها حالها، واستتر عنها^٢ مبدؤها^٣ ومآلها، تمتعت^٤ بالمتع بهذه الحياة النبوية الغانية، واختارت التشبث^٥ بهذه الأجسام البالية، وكرهت^٦ الموت جهلاً منها بما تصير إليه، وخوفاً مما تُقدم عليه، وأما النفوس الخيرة فإن أولياء الله لما تحقّقوا ما وقعوا فيه من^٧ البلية، وعرفوا ما كان من الزلة الموجبة^٨ لذلك والخطيئة، وندموا على ما كان وفرط^٩ من أمورهم، فلاذوا بالمآب وغنموا اكتساب الخيرات بألة هذا الجسم ما داموا في محلّ الاكتساب، فلذلك كرهوا الموت.^{١٠}

[18] وقد بين ذلك^{١١} مشبعاً الشخص الفاضل^{١٢} صاحب الرسائل سلام الله عليه قتال في كتاب^{١٣} مجالس التنظف^{١٤} بطهارة^{١٥} النفوس قولاً أوردناه ههنا بكماله لما يشتمل عليه من المعاني الدقيقة، والحكم الغامضة العميقة، التي تحار فيها ثواقب الأفكار، ويلوح من خلال ألفاظها للبصائر سنا^{١٦} الأنوار، وهو: اعلموا أيّدكم الله وإنا نروح منه أن الموت مكروه عند كافة الناس، فكلّ يكره نزوله، ويشقّ عليه حلوله، لا لعلّة واحدة بل لعلل مختلفة، فالعلة التي لأجلها يكره أولياء الله الموت غير العلة التي لأجلها يكره أعداء الله الموت،^{١٧}

١- فارقته: فارت، ب.

٢- عنها: عليها، ب.

٣- مبدؤها: مبدعها، ب.

٤- تمتعت: تمت، ب.

٥- التشبث: التثبت، ت.

٦- وكرهت: فكرهت، ب.

٧- من: + هذه، ب.

٨- الموجبة: الواجبة، ت.

٩- وفرط، ب.

١٠- الموت: + فصل، ب.

١١- ذلك: هذا المعنى، ب.

١٢- الفاضل: + مولانا، ت.

١٣- كتاب: -، ت.

١٤- التنظف: النظف، ب.

١٥- بطهارة: لطهارة، ب.

١٦- سنا: شفاء؛ ب؛ لنا، ت.

١٧- غير العلة ... الموت: -، ب.

[15] وأما قوله: هي التي سمرت ولم تتبرقع، فهو ما بينا من ظهور أفعالها التي تعجز عنها الأجسام عند التحقيق والبيان، ولا تقدر على إصدار شيء منها إلا بها^١ مما هو مشاهد للعيان، مستغني عن إقامة دليل وبرهان، فاعلم ذلك.^٢

[16] وأما قوله:

وصلت على كره إليك وربما كرهت فراقك وهي ذات تنفج

فُرادته بذلك ما تقدم ذكره من اخطاطها إلى هذا العالم جبراً بغير الاختيار، وهبوطها قسراً بحكم الاضطرار، وذلك أنه لما كان منها ما^٣ أوجبناه من التخلف عن^٤ الإقرار، والتماهي على الجحود والاستكبار، أحاطت بها ظلمات^٥ الثلاثة الأبعاد، وأوجبت الحكمة الإلهية الإقصاء لها والإبعاد، وعلم متولي أمرها أن لا مقام لها في ذلك العالم الشريف النوراني، والمحل القدساني الروحاني، وأنه لا خلاص لها من دائها^٦ الملازم لنوائها إلا بمرور الأزمان، وحركات الأفلاك وامتزاج الأركان، فجعل بعضها لبعض آلة، ورتبها في مراتبها منفعة^٧ بمقتضى العدل وفعالة^٨، وذلك عن طريق الإكراه والإجبار، الذي ليس لها^٩ في شيء منه تصرف بإرادتها^{١٠} ولا اختيار، منساقفة فيه إلى الكمال الأول الجسماني، الذي هو الشخص بالقلب الإنساني، وذلك معنى قوله: وصلت على كره إليك، وهو بالحقيقة إكراه بين تخيرين، وعسر بين يسرين، وما يعقلها إلا العالمون، فسبحان من بدأ خلقه بالتخير إيجاباً للعدل وبه عتب، وجعل الجبر متوسطاً بينها لما رآه في الحكمة أولى وأوجب، ولا إله إلا هو رب العرش العظيم.

١- بها: -، ب.

٢- ذلك: + فصل، ب؛ + إن شاء الله تعالى، ت.

٣- ما: -، ب.

٤- عن: عند، ب.

٥- ظلمات: ظلمت، ب.

٦- دائها: ذاتها، ب.

٧- منفعة: -، ب.

٨- وفعالة: فعالة، ب.

٩- لها: -، ب؛ له، ت.

١٠- لإرادتها: بإرادة، ب؛ بإرادته، ت.

[14] إنها إذا علت هذه الحياة عن^١ هذه المرتبة إلى مرتبة الحيوان المكبوب صعدت في مراتب أنواعه درجة درجة واكتسبت الحواس الخمس التي هي السمع والبصر والشم والذوق واللمس حاسة حاسة^٢، وصار لها حس الألم وحيلة الدفع إما بالهرب وإما بالمدافعة عن ذاتها وقوة الانتقال من مكان إلى مكان بالاختيار والإرادة، فلا تزال تترقى في أنواعه حتى تبلغ إلى أشرفه^٣ وأعلاه، كالفرس الذي هو من حيث الحلقة الجسدية من جملة الحيوان ومن حيث الأخلاق مشاكل^٤ للإنسان، فإذا ظهرت هذه الحياة بالقامة الألفية^٥ اكتسبت أموراً^٦ أخرى أشرف مما تقدم من المراتب التي حازتها، وأجلّ قدراً من القوى الأولى التي ملكتها وحازتها^٧، وهي قوة التخيل والحفظ والفكر والذكر والفتنة والصنعة والتميز والروية، فلا تزال ينتهي بها الحال في مراتب نوع الإنسانية حتى تصل إلى منتهى غايتها، وتركب طبقاً عن طبق حتى تبلغ إلى نهايتها، وهي مراتب ذوي التأييد المتصلين بالملائكة المقربين بنفوسهم اللطيفة، لا بأجسامهم الكثيفة، وذلك غاية ما تصل إليه وتقدم إن قارنها التوفيق عليه، ووقف العامل عن العمل، واتصل الآخر بالأول. فمعنى ما ذكره في بيت الشعر من احتجابها هو ما ذكرناه من تدرجها في هذه المراتب من أدناها إلى أعلاها، وصعودها في درج معراجها حتى بلغت منتهاها، وصعب^٨ معرفة ذلك، وغض^٩ الأمر فيه^{١٠} إلا على من ألهمه الله تعالى أخذه من^{١١} أربابه هداة الأمة وأبواب الرحمة.

١- عن: عند، ب.

٢- حاسة: -، ت.

٣- أشرفه: إشرافه، ت.

٤- مشاكل: مشاكل، ت.

٥- الألفية: -، ب.

٦- أموراً: أمور، ت.

٧- وحازتها: وحازتها، ب.

٨- وصعب: وصعوبة، ب.

٩- وغض: وغموض، ب.

١٠- فيه: فيها، ب.

١١- من: عن، ت.

والذهب والحجر المسمى بغضة^١ الخل، والمنافرة بين الأسرب والماس حتى لا يكسره غيره مع ضعفه ورخوته^٢ وقوة الماس وشدته، وغير ذلك مما يعرفه أرباب الخبرة بخواص الأحجار، فلا تزال هذه الحياة ترتب علواً في أنواع المعادن حتى تنتهي إلى أعلاها كالمرجان الذي^٣ هو من جهة جسمه معدن ومن جهة تكوينه في البحر نبات، وإذا ظهرت هذه الحياة بجسم النبات صارت فيه أئين فعلاً وأقوى أثراً^٤ واكتسبت^٥ قوى النفس النامية السبع، وهي القوة الجاذبة والقوة الماسكة والقوة الهاضمة والقوة الدافعة^٦ والقوة الغذائية والقوة^٧ النمّية والقوة المصورة، فهي بالجاذبة تجذب لطافة المعدن وتمسكه^٨ بالماسكة، ثم تهضمه حتى يوافق جسمها ويصلح للامتزاج^٩ بالقوة الهاضمة وتدفعه إلى مواضع اللاتقة به بالقوة الدافعة وتغتذي به بالقوة^{١٠} الغذائية وتحي أغصانها وفروعها بالقوة النمّية وتصور ما تحتاج إليه من الأوراق والبذور^{١١} والحبوب وغير ذلك بالقوة المصورة، وصار لهذه الحياة في هذه^{١٢} الرتبة شعور لطلب^{١٣} الغذاء من المواضع التي^{١٤} فيها^{١٥} الرطوبة والتعرج عن المواضع الصلبة، فلا تزال تتدرج في أنواع النبات حتى تنتهي إلى الغاية^{١٦} مثل^{١٧} شجر النخل الذي صار من حيث الصورة نباتاً^{١٨} ومن حيث الخواص والأفعال شبه الحيوان، وذلك أنه لا يثمر إلا بتلقيح إنائه بذكرانه وإذا قُطعت رؤوسه جفّ وتلف، وصورة نباته على ساق مشابهة للقائمة الألفية، ثم

١- والحجر المسمى بغضة: والحجرة المسماة بمبغض، ت.

٢- ورخوته: ورخائه، ب. ت.

٣- الذي: التي، ت.

٤- أثراً: أمراً، ب. ت.

٥- واكتسبت: واكتسب، ت.

٦- الماسكة ... الدافعة: الماسكة والقوة الهاضمة، ب.

٧- والقوة: -، ب.

٨- وتمسكه: وما تمسكه، ت.

٩- للامتزاج: الامتزاج، ب.

١٠- بالقوة: القوة، ت.

١١- والبذور: والبزور، ب. ت.

١٢- هذه: -، ب.

١٣- لطلب: الطلب، ب.

١٤- التي: -، ت.

١٥- فيها: فيه، ب.

١٦- الغاية: + النهاية، ت؛ غاية، ب.

١٧- مثل: -، ب.

١٨- نباتاً: نبات، ت؛ النبات، ب.

السموات والأرض منها، فلا يخلو منها شيء،^١ ولا يعزب عنها شيء، فاعلة^٢ فيه تعطي كل شيء كماله الأول الذي يتعلّق بكونه موجوداً، فإذا نسبت إلى الموجودات التي بها وجودها على العموم سلوكاً^٣ طريق الإحاطة بفعله^٤ فهو محرّك لكل شيء هو فيه كمال لوجوده وعلى^٥ الخصوص الذي يكون بحسب أفعاله في كل قسم قسم،^٦ فهو إذا حرّك الأجسام العالية دوراً^٧ فلان،^٨ وإذا حرّك النار والهواء علواً^٩ خفة، وإذا حرّك الماء والشيء الثقيل^{١٠} سفلاً^{١١} ثقل، وإذا^{١٢} حرّك النبات للنماء نفس نامية، وإذا حرّك الحيوان لطلب الملائد نفس حسّية، وإذا حرّك الإنسان للإحاطة بالموجودات نفس ناطقة، والكل^{١٣} يكونه فاعلاً طبيعة واحدة وبأفعاله بالموادّ المختلفة التي فيها تفعل كثيرة، إلى آخر ما ذكره أعلى الله قدسه.

[12] ثمّ إنّنا نقول: إنّهُ لخروج^{١٤} هذه الحياة الكامنة من القوّة إلى الفعل أدبرت^{١٥} الأفلاك، ورتّبت الأملاك، ومخضت الأسماء، وبرز المعدن والنبات، وظهر الحيوان المكبّوب، وانتهت الغاية^{١٦} إلى وجود الشخص البشريّ الذي هو الغرض المطلوب، وذلك أن أول ما ظهر من المواليد المعدن، فكانت هذه الحياة فيه كامنة غير ظاهرة بأفعالها بالكليّة إلا بما يشاهد من الخواصّ التي فيه، كحجر المغناطيس والحديد، وحجر الماس^{١٧}

١- شيء: مكان، ب. ت.

٢- فاعلة: هي فاعلة، ت. ت

٣- سلوكاً: + من، ب. ت. ت

٤- بفعله: بفعله، ت. ت.

٥- وعلى: على، ب.

٦- قسم: -، ب.

٧- دوراً: دور، ب.

٨- فلان: ملك، ت. ت.

٩- علواً: علو، ب.

١٠- الثقيل: + سفلى إلى مركزه، ت.

١١- ثقل: ثقل، ب.

١٢- وإذا: وإذا، ت.

١٣- والكل: وكل، ب.

١٤- لخروج: بخروج، ب.

١٥- أدبرت: إذا دبّرت، ب.

١٦- الغاية: العناية، ب.

١٧- الماس: المسائي، ب؛ الألماس، ت

كذا، إلا إذا كان تقدّم كونه^١ فيه، وفي بعض هذا غنية لمن وقّته الله^٢ لمعرفته وأرشده إلى تصوّر حقيقته، جعلنا الله من الموقّنين لقبول الحق الراشدين، ولا جعلنا من المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالّين بمنّه وكرمه.

[10] فصل

وأما قوله:^٣

محجوبة عن كلّ مقالة ناظر^٤ وهي التي سنفرّث ولم تتبرّع

فإنّه عني بذلك هذه الحياة الهابطة التي تقدم ذكرها لما غشيتها أمواج الخيرة والتبسّت بالأجسام وأحاطت بها سرادقات الشكوك وهوت في حنادس الظلام، وهي المكنى عنها بالطبيعة تارة وبالحياة السارية تارة وبالخبرة الإبداعية تارة التي قال الله تعالى <فيها> ﴿وهو الذي يخرج الحَبَّ في السماوات والأرض﴾ (٢٧ النمل ٢٥) فلا يخلو جزء من أجزاء العالم الكبير ومواليده منها، ولا يتعطل شيء من الموجودات الجسمية عنها، وكيف يخلو منها وهي^٥ الجوهر الحامل لأعراضه المنتهية^٦ به إلى أفضل أحواله وأكمل أغراضه؟ وهي كما قال سيدنا حميد الدين أعلى الله قدسه فيها في المشرع الأول من السور الخامس من كتاب راحة العقل عند ذكره الجزئين اللذين هما الهيولى والصورة: وبيانه أن الطبيعة هي^٧ الجزء الأشرف منها^٨ المكنى عنها بالصورة، نقول^٩ فيها أنها حياة بالفعل منبعثة من عالم القدس غير مستقلة في وجودها بذاتها ولا مجرّدة عن غيرها مما يرتمن وجودها به، يعني الهيولى^{١٠} الحامل لها، ثم قال: <فهي> شائعة في عالم الجسم قد امتلأت [11]

١- تقدم كونه: قد قدم وكونه، ب.

٢- الله: + تعالى، ت.

٣- قوله: + أعلى الله قسه في البيت الثاني، ت.

٤- ناظر: ناظر، ب.

٥- عنها: منها، ت.

٦- وهي: وهو، ت؛ وهو الذي، ب.

٧- المنتهية: المنتهية، ب.

٨- هي: في، ب.

٩- منها: منها، ب.

١٠- نقول: + ههنا، ت.

١١- الهيولى: -، ب.

انسحاق الأمر وسريان^١ القوة النفسانية في أول الأشخاص الإنسانية، وهي الصورة^٢ الآدمية، وهو آدم الجزئي العاصي الواقع به النبي عن أكل الشجرة النباتية، وبيان ذلك في بدايته في حال البسائط الأولى إلى حين ظهوره في العالم الصغير، إذ^٣ كان ما بدا في البسائط بالقوة بدا في عالم التركيب بالفعل، إلى قوله عليه السلام في هذا الفصل: إذ^٤ كانت البداية لا اختلاف في جوهريتها من جهة الحلقة الإبداعية، وإنما وقع الاختلاف والتباين في الإضرابات البادية في الأوهام والتخيلات.^٥ هذا قوله عليه السلام، ولو أردنا التوسع في الاستشهاد على ذلك من الرسائل الشريفة وسواها من كلام موالينا صلعم^٦ وتأليفات حدودهم أعلى الله قدسهم ودرجاتهم^٧ لخرج ذلك عن حد ما^٨ بنينا عليه هذه الرسالة، وفي القليل من^٩ ذلك ما يغني^{١٠} طالب الكثير منه، وقد لوح مولانا أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب صلوات الله عليه بشيء من ذلك في مواضع من كلامه في نهج البلاغة وغيره، ومن ذلك قوله: ^{١١} «ولينظر أحدكم أسائر هو أم راجع، فإنه من الآخرة قدم واليها يرجع، ويكفي في ذلك ما استشهدنا به من قوله سبحانه ﴿انظَرُوا إِلَى ظِلِّ ذِي ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ لَا ظَلِيلٌ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ اللَّهَبِ﴾ (٧٧ المرسلات ٣٠-٣١) وقوله تعالى ﴿اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ﴾^{١٢} (٢ البقرة ٣٦) ثم قال سبحانه ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً﴾ (٨٩ الفجر ٢٧-٢٨) والمفهوم من الكلام^{١٣} أنه لا يُقال للواحد: ارجع إلى موضع

١. وسريان: وسرياً، ب.

٢. الصورة: الصور، ت.

٣. إذ: إذا، ب.

٤. إذ: إذا، ب.

٥. والتخيلات: والتخيلات، ت؛ والمتجليات، ب.

٦. صلعم: -، ب.

٧. ودرجاتهم: -، ت.

٨. ما: مما، ب.

٩. من: عن، ب.

١٠. يغني: + عن، ب.

١١. قوله: + عليه السلام، ب.

١٢. ولكم ... حين: -، ب ت.

١٣. الكلام: كلام العرب، ب.

أغلب، وما دنا إلى الطرف الأسفل كان أقص وأكف وصورته أشبه بهيولاه واليا أقرب، ﴿ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ﴾ (٦ الأنعام ٩٦) ﴿وَمَا زَيْنُكَ إِلَّا لِلْعَمِيدِ﴾ (٤١ فصلت ٤٦).

[8] وقد ذكر ذلك الشخص الفاضل صاحب الرسائل^١ في كثير من رسائله الشريفة، منه ما لَوَّح به ومنه ما صرَّح، فمن ذلك قوله في الرسالة الجامعة عند ذكره في الرسالة: العالم إنسانٌ كبير، وهو: إذا^٢ قالت الحكماء: النفوس الجزئية، فإنما اعتوا بها القوة^٣ المنيئة من النفس الكلية الهابطة إلى المركز السفلي، المنساقعة^٤ إلى عالم الطبيعة، المتخلفة عن قبول الإفاضة العقلية التي لحقتها الفطور عن التسييح والتقديس^٥ في محلّ الأنوار، فأهبطت إلى قرار المركز وتكليف العبادة وصعوبة الطاعة بالآلة الجسدانية والأشخاص الطبيعية، وكانت بنوع ليست هي به الآن^٦، واليه ترجع إذا تابت من خطيئتها واستقالت من^٧ عثرها، ولذلك تعطف الكل^٨ عليها وتأنس^٩ إليها، وأرسل الرسل المنذرين وأمدّهم بالملائكة المقربين، فإن تابت وأُتابت عادت إلى رُوح وريحان، ورَبَّ غير غضبان، وإن عصت وأبَّت وأصرَّت واستكبرت، وعن المنذرين تخلفت، وإن ذكرت لا تتذكر، وإن بُصرت^{١٠} لا تتبصر، تحيرت وتقطعت كتنقطع السيل المنحط من ذروة الجبل في تخوم الأرض، وصارت في ظلمات أسفل السافلين، وهي تارة تنزل بالفساد، وتارة تطلع بالكون إلى محلّ الأجساد، وتارة يمصرف بها الزمان وتغايّر^{١١} الأيام، وتنبث في الآفاق وتنتعلت أماً.

[9] ثم ما جاء عنه عليه السلام في جامعة الجامعة عند ذكر آدم الكلي وزوجته وإبليس الكلي والشجرة المنهية عنها وهو قوله: وما كان من الأمر في ذلك في البداية والمعصية الحادثة في عالم النفس وكيف كان

١- الرسائل: + في الرسالة، ت؛ + سلام الله عليه لرسالة، ب؛ + الرسالة، ت.

٢- إذا: إذ، ت.

٣- فإنما: فإنها، ب.

٤- القوة: القوى، ب.

٥- المنساقعة: المشتاقعة، ب.

٦- والتقديس: -، ب.

٧- الآن: الآتية، ب.

٨- من: عن، ب.

٩- الكل: -، ب.

١٠- وتأنس: وتأنسوا، ب.

١١- بصرت: أبصرت، ب.

١٢- وتغايّر: ويغايّر، ب ت ت.

[7] وقوله: ورقاء ذات تعزز وتمنع، إشارة إلى ما كان سبق^١ من التكبر عن الخضوع لمن سبق عليهم بإجابته، وتمنعهم عن طاعة من أمروا بطاعته، واقتسامهم في ذلك إلى نادٍ مستغفرٍ بعد تَعَذُّر الإمكان، وشالٍ متحيرٍ هو بالحقبة هؤلاء الثلاثة الأركان، ومصرٍ مستكبرٍ هو قسم الأرض التي عليها نقطة المركز والمكان، وما كان من المدبر تعالى من أقدره من وضع كل قسم من هذه الثلاثة الأقسام في موضعه اللائق به بمقتضى العدل لما أطلع عليه من سابق نياتهم وترتيب كل شيء من ذلك في مكانه الذي يستحقه لما علم من باطن طوياتهم أفلأكام وكواكب^٢ هي الآباء، وأركاناً هي الأمهات، لتكون النتيجة المواليد التي أولها المعادن وغايتها الإنسان الحقيقي الذي هو القصد وعليه المعول، وأول الفكر^٣ وآخر العمل، الولد التام الحائز لما فات من رتبة الكمال والتام، الخالف لموجده في موضعه ومكانه، والمدبر لما كان مصروفاً إليه من أفلالك العالم وأركانه، فجعل المدبر جلّت قدرته أجزاء العالم الكبير مرتبة بعضها في أفق بعض ليقع بتقابل المناسبة والمشكلة والمشابهة والمائلة اتصال الضدّ بضده المنافر له، ويحصل باتصال البعض ببعض الغرض الذي قصد إليه متولي أمره وعمله، فكان الطرف الأعلى منه الذي هو الفلك المحيط أصفى الهابط وأشرفه، وأقربه مناسبة لما فوقه وألطفه، وكادت^٤ هيولاه تتحد بصورته للطفاته، ولكونه^٥ على الغاية للتهيو^٦ لما يكون منه لبساطته^٧ وشفافته، وكانت الأرض التي في^٨ الطرف الأدنى من العالم أكتف أجزائه وأشدّها^٩ ظلمة وأبعدها عن ذلك العالم الشريف وأقلها قبولاً لما يراؤ به خروجها^{١٠} بموجب العدل والحكمة حتى كادت صورتها تشبه هيولاه^{١١} لبعدها نسبتها عن مشاكلتها لعالم الأنوار واختطاط رتبتها، وما كان بين هذين الطرفين من الأفلاك المائتات والأكر المتحركات كلها^{١٢} كان أقرب من الطرف الأعلى كان أطف وأشرف وصورته على هيولاه

١- سبق: سبقه، ب.

٢- وكواكب: وكواكب، ب.

٣- الفكر: الفكرة، ت.

٤- وعمله: -، ب ت.

٥- وكادت: كادت، ب ت.

٦- ولكونه: وكونه، ب ت.

٧- للتهيو: اللاهي، ب؛ المتهيو، ت.

٨- لبساطته: لياطته، ب.

٩- في: هي، ب ت.

١٠- أشدها: أشد، ب.

١١- به خروجها: خروج، ب ت.

١٢- هيولاه: هيولاه، ب.

١٣- كلها: كل من، ب.

إن كان الإله أهبطها لحكمة
فهبوطها لا شك ضررُهُ لأرب
وتكون عالمة بكلِّ خفيّة
وهي التي قطع الزمان طريقها
فكأنها بزرق تالّق بالجمي
طويت عن الفذّ¹ اللبيب الأروع
لتعود سامعةً لها لم تسمع
في العالمين وخرقها لم يُرقع
حتى لقد غزيت بعين المطلع
ثم انطوى فكأنه لم يلعب

[5] فصل ٢

نقول بتوفيق الله تعالى وهديته، ومادة³ وليه في أرضه صلوات الله عليه وإفادته:⁴ أما قوله:

هَبَطْتُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْمَحَلِّ الْأَرْفَعِ وَرَقَاءُ ذَاتِ تَعَزُّزٍ وَمَتْنَعٍ [6]

فإنه عني بذلك ما جرى من فتور من فتر عن قبول الإجابة في عالم الإبداع وتخليفه وتهيه⁵ للنكوص بعد الإعذار إليه وتكثفه وما كان من مخاطبة الحق سبحانه له عند تنهقه ناكساً على العقب بقوله تعالى ﴿انطلقوا إلى ظلٍّ ذي ثلاث شعب لا ظليل ولا يغني من اللهب﴾ (٧٧ المرسلات ٣٠-٣١) وهي الثلاثة الأبعاد المقومة لنوات الأجسام المنحطة بها إلى دركات النقص عن درجات الكمال والتمام، ويقول⁶ سبحانه ﴿اهبطوا بعضكم لبعض عدوٍّ ولكم في الأرض مستقرٌّ ومتاعٌ إلى حين﴾ (٢ البقرة ٣٦ و٧ الأعراف ٢٤) فأهبطوا من عالم اللطافة، إلى محلّ الكثافة، ومن فضاء الأنوار العالية، إلى محلّ الأجسام البالية، وأسر الطبيعة وبحر الهوى المتلاطم الأمواج، وظلمة عالم الكون والفساد ودار المزاج.

١- الفذ: الفطن، ت. ت.

٢- فصل: -، ت: الخواب، ت.

٣- ومادة: ومعوقة، ب.

٤- بتوفيق الله ... وإفادته: يعون الله ومادة وليه صلح، ت.

٥- تهيه: تهياته، ب. ت. ت.

٦- ويقول: بقوله، ب.

وقصور صوري، وما كان من صواب^١ فمن بركات^٢ أولياء نعمتي وأسباب هدايتي، وبالله تعالى وبركاتهم أعوذ من الخطاء والزلل، وأستهدي التوفيق إلى صواب القول والعمل، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم.

[4] قصيدة^٣

هَبَطْتُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْحَلِّ الْأَرْفَعِ
مَحْبُوبَةً عَنْ كُلِّ مُقَالَةٍ نَاطِلِ
وَصَلْتُ عَلَى كَرَمِ إِلَيْكَ وَرَبِّهَا
أُنَيْتُ وَمَا أُنَيْتُ فَلَمَّا وَاصَلْتُ
وَأُطَّلِيهَا نَبِيْتُ عَهْدًا بِالْحَمَى
حَتَّى إِذَا حَصَلَتْ بِهَا هَبُوطُهَا
عَلَّقْتُ بِهَا ثَاءً الثَّقِيلَ فَأُصْبَحْتُ
تَبْكِي إِذَا ذَكَرْتُ عَهْدًا بِالْحَمَى
وَتَظَلُّ سَاجِدَةً عَلَى الدَّمَنِ الَّتِي
إِذْ عَاقَهَا الشَّكْلُ الْكَثِيفُ وَصَدَّهَا
حَتَّى إِذَا قَرَّبَ الْمَسِيرُ إِلَى الْحَمَى
وَعَدْتُ مَفَارِقَةً لِكُلِّ مَخْلَفٍ
سَجَعْتُ^٤ وَقَدْ كَشِفَ الْفُطَاءُ فَأَبْصَرْتُ
وَعَدْتُ تُعَرِّدُ فَوْقَ ذُرُوءِ شَاهِقٍ
فَلَايَ شَيْءٍ أَهْبَطْتُ مِنْ شَاهِقٍ

ورقاء ذات تعزّز وتمتّع
وهي التي سَفَرَتْ ولم تتبرّع
كرهت فراقك وهي ذات تَفَجّع
أَلَقْتُ مجاورة الخراب البلقع
ومنازلًا بفراقها لم تنفّع
من ميم مَرَكِهَا بذات الأجرع
بين المعالم^٥ والظلول الخضع
بمدامع تهجي ولما تَقَلّع
فَرَسَتْ بتكرار الزّياح الأربع
قفص^٦ عن الأوج الفسيح الأرفع
ودنا الرحيل إلى القضاء الأوسع
عنها حليف التّرب غير مشتبّع^٧
ما ليس يُدرك بالعيون الهُجّع
والعلم يرفع قَدْرَ مَنْ لم يُرَفّع
سام إلى قعر الخضيض الأوضع

١. صواب: ثواب، ب.

٢. بركات: بركة، ب.

٣. قصيدة: القصيدة، ت.

٤. المعالم: المنازل، ب ت ت.

٥. قفص: نقص، ب ت.

٦. مفارقة: مقارنة، ت.

٧. حتى إذا ... مشبّع: ورد هذا البيت قبل البيت السابق في ب ت.

٨. سجع: شجع: ب.

شقوقه من أحزاب الشياطين والأبالسة المدّعين لما لا يستحقّونه من المراتب تسلّقاً^١ على التكالب في الحطام الزائل والمنافسة^٢، وليكون ما احتوت عليه من الرموز^٣ إيقاظاً^٤ لذوي التمييز^٥ من سينة الغفلة ليبحثوا عن مخبأها، وتذكّراً^٦ لأرباب الهمم العالية ليطلعوا إلى الإشراف على ألغازها ومكنائنها، وسألني إيضاح ما أودعه فيها من الأسرار اللطيفة^٧، وألغز وأشار إليه في مضمونها من الحقائق الشريفة، ورمز، فتعيّن عليّ فرض إجابته وإسعاف أمله^٨ وتلبية دعوته، رغبة في ثواب الله في نشر الحكمة للطالبيين من أهلها، وإيصالها^٩ إلى الراغبين المستحقّين لها العارفين بفضلها، لقول النبي صلى الله عليه وآله: لا تُعطوا الحكمة غير أهلها فتظلموها ولا تمنعوها أهلها فتظلموهم^{١٠}، وجعلت ذلك في هذه الرسالة ووسمتها^{١١} بالمنفيدة في إيضاح ملغز القصيدة، وبالله^{١٢} أستعين وعليه أتوكل، ومن بركة من تشتمل عليّ دائرته ويحيط بي فلكه استمداد المعونة فيما أخوه منه وعليه المَعُول.

[3] ولم أعدُ فيما أوردته طريق الإشارة، القريبة من العبارة، صيانةً للحكمة أن تقع في يد من لا يستحقّها^{١٣} من الرعاع الجّهال، ورعايةً لأسرار^{١٤} أولياء الله عن أن ينالها من لا يستوجبها من الأشرار ذوي العناد^{١٥} والضلال، فما كان من ذلك من خطأ من غير عمد أو زلة من غير قصد^{١٦} فمنسوب إلى تبلّد بصيرتي^{١٧}

١- تسلّقاً: تسلطاً، ت.

٢- والمنافسة: والمناخة، ب.

٣- والرموز: والرسوم، ت.

٤- التمييز: النحائر، ب.

٥- وتذكّراً: وتذكراً، ب.

٦- سألني ... اللطيفة: -، ب.

٧- وإسعاف أمله: -، ب.

٨- وإيصالها: وإفضالها، ب.

٩- فتظلموهم: فتظلموها، ت.

١٠- ووسمتها: وسميتها، ت.

١١- وبالله: + تعالى، ت.

١٢- يستحقّها: يستحق، ت.

١٣- للأسرار: للأسرار، ت.

١٤- ذوي العناد: وذوي عفار، ب.

١٥- أو زلة من غير قصد: ولا زلل ولا زلة أو قصد، ت؛ ولا زلل زلة أو قصد، ب؛ وزلل أو زلة بغير قصد، ت.

١٦- تبلّد بصيرتي: تبلدي، ب.

المطهرة ببيان^١ التأويل، وموضح ما استتر من المعاني الشريفة في مضمون التنزيل، والهادي لمن انتم^٢ به من الأمة إلى قصد^٣ السبيل، وعلى زوجته الحوراء^٤، فاطمة الزهراء، دوحة الأعصان الإمامية، ومقر الزيد الإسلامية، وعلى ولديها الإمامين الفاضلين والسبطين الطيبين^٥ الكاملين، مستودع سر الإمامة ومستقرها، الحائزين من شرف النبوة والوصاية قصب فخرها، وعلى الأئمة من ذرية^٦ الحسين بن علي هداة الخلائق، وبيوت أنوار^٧ العزيز الخالق، والساكنين بشيعتهم^٨ أشرف المناهج وأوضح الطرائق، وعلى من سبقت به البشائر قبل^٩ تشخصه والإعلام، الزيدة المتخضة^{١٠} بها الليالي والأيام، مولانا وسيدنا وإمام عصرنا الإمام الطيب أبي القاسم أمير المؤمنين خاتم دور الأشهداء، ومفتتح دور الأبدال وعلى الأئمة من ذريته الطاهرين الأجداد، وسلم تسليماً.

[2] أما بعد، فإن بعض الإخوان الفضلاء، كثرهم الله تعالى وأنعمهم، وحاطهم عن المكاره في دينهم ودنياهم وحماهم، عثر على قصيدة منسوبة إلى الرئيس أبي علي ابن سينا قدس الله روحه أغمض معانيها، ولوح بأسرار حقيقية^{١١} أسس^{١٢} عليها مبانيها، لئلا يستخرج دقائقها^{١٣} المكنونة ويغوص على دررها^{١٤} الثمينة، ويهتدي إلى ما ضمتها فيها من المعاني الشريفة، والعلوم الغامضة اللطيفة، إلا من أنعم الله عليه بالاستملاء لها من أربابها، وأسرى إليه لطفاً من خزان بيوت الحكم لتقصده إليها من أبوابها، ولئلا يطلع عليها من غلبته

١- بيان: بيان، ب.

٢- انتم: انتم، ب.

٣- قصد: -، ب.

٤- الحوراء: -، ب.

٥- الطيبين: -، ب.

٦- ذرية: ذريته، ت.

٧- وبيوت أنوار، وأنوار، ب.

٨- بشيعتهم: + إلى، ب.

٩- قبل: قبله، ب.

١٠- المتخضة: المتخضة، ب.

١١- حقيقة: حقيقة، ب ت.

١٢- أسس: أس، ب.

١٣- دقائقها: دقائقها، ت.

١٤- دررها: درها، ب ت.

الرسالة المفيدة في إيضاح ملغز القصيدة

لسيدنا علي بن محمد أعلى الله قدسه ورزقنا شفاعته وأمنه

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

[1] الحمد لله منور بصائر أتباع آل محمد عليهم السلام بنور الرشاد، ومُطْلِعهم بمواذم الرحيمية من أسرار الخلقة على ما غاب عن المتكبرين عن طاعتهم من العباد، النازل فيهم وفي جَدِّهم المصطفى صلوات الله عليهم أجمعين ﴿إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ﴾ (١٣ الرعد ٧) نحمده إذ منَّ علينا باتباعهم ونشكره إذ جعلنا من أشياعهم حَمْد من عرف موقع الحمد والشكر فحمد وشكر، وأوذي في محبتهم فرضي احتساباً وصبر، ونشهد أن لا إله إلا الله الذي حجب العقول عالياً ودانيتها عن أن تصفه، فخفضت مذعنة مُقَرَّة بالحيرة والقصور، ومنع الخواطر أن تكتينه فأهبطت معترفة بالعجز عما رامته والحسور، وكيف يحيط المُحدث^١ المصنوع^٢ بمن أحدثه وصنعه، أو يجد المخلوق المُخْتَرع سبيلاً إلى صفة من خلقه واخترعه، جلّ ثناؤه وتعالى عن ذلك علواً كبيراً، ونشهد^٣ أن محمداً أفضل منتجب اختاره لأداء رسالته، وأشرف مبعوث^٤ بعثه لهداية بريته، الرحمة الممثلة للأبصار بالهيكل الإنساني، الحائز من مراتب التأيد المقام القدساني، صلى الله عليه وعلى وصيه^٥ وابن عمه، قاضي دينه وكاشف غمه علي بن أبي طالب، ناقل روح الحياة في جسم شريعته

^١ -الصفح: -، ب.

^٢ -المصنوع: والمصنوع، ت.

^٣ -ونشهد: وأشهد، ت.

^٤ -مبعوث: + مقرب، ب ت؛ مقرب، ت.

^٥ -وصيه: آله، ب ت.

الرسالة المفيدة

في إيضاح ملغز القصيدة

تأليف

علي بن محمد بن الوليد

تحقيق

ويلفرد مادلوغ