

BETWEEN REASON AND REVELATION



Twin Wisdoms Reconciled

An annotated English translation
of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's
Kitāb-i Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn

Translated from the Persian by
ERIC ORMSBY

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This is the first English translation of the final philosophical work of the great eleventh-century Ismaili thinker, poet, and Fatimid emissary, Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Appointed from Cairo by command of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustanṣir to serve first as a *dā'ī*, and then as the *ḥujjat*, for the entire region of Khurāsān, he maintained his allegiance both to his mission and his Imam-caliph for the rest of his life, even when threatened and driven into exile. Written during his exile in Badakhshān in the year 1070, Nāṣir-i Khusraw here develops a powerful presentation of both Aristotelian philosophy and Ismaili exegesis, or *ta'wīl*, and strives to show that they are ultimately in harmony. The work is presented as a learned commentary on a long philosophical poem, written in the previous century and sent to Nāṣir by the *amīr* of Badakhshān, 'Alī b. al-Asad, who copied the poem out in his own hand from memory and asked the poet-philosopher to explicate it. In doing so, Nāṣir ranges over a huge span of topics from logic and language to the nature of the physical world, from the spheres of the highest heavens to the plants and animals of the earthly realm, and, most importantly, hidden spiritual realities: the esoteric (*bāṭin*) as well as the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) realms. He thus discusses the nature of God, the creation of human beings, and the mysteries concealed in the physical world, itself a reflection of a higher, transcendent realm.

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Between Reason and Revelation Twin Wisdoms Reconciled

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by

Eric Ormsby

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Abbreviations

BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
EI2	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> (2nd edition)
Elr	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
GAS	F. Sezgin, <i>Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
NKh	Nāṣir-i Khusraw
Q	Qur'ān
RAAD	<i>Revue de l'Académie Arabe de Damas</i>
SI	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
WKAS	<i>Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache</i>

Introduction

In the year 462/1070, 'Alī b. al-Asad, the *amīr* of Badakhshān, wrote to Nāṣir-i Khusraw to ask him to elucidate a long philosophical poem written in Persian a century earlier by the little-known Ismaili master Abū al-Haytham Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī. The *amīr* sent a copy of the poem in his own hand, which he had transcribed from memory. By this time Nāṣir had been in exile in the valley of Yumgān in Badakhshān (a mountainous region in Central Asia, now divided between Tajikistan and Afghanistan) for about four years. He responded to the request with alacrity for he had a high regard for 'Alī b. al-Asad. He was not only an independent Ismaili ruler whose dynasty survived in Khurāsān under Seljuq dominion, but also, as Nāṣir describes him, a man who was 'vigilant, astute, brilliant, incisive of intellect, far-sighted, subtle in reflection, correct in his opinions, possessed of a powerful memory, pure of heart, utterly praiseworthy and yet, alongside all these virtues and merits, a religious man' (Chapter 1:20). This does not seem to be the usual florid persiflage. After succeeding his father to the throne, 'Alī b. al-Asad had himself been driven into exile, only to be reinstated some years later, and Nāṣir may well have felt a personal bond with him as a fellow exile. In the work which he composed at the *amīr's* request, Nāṣir quotes 'Alī b. al-Asad's own verses with approval. Furthermore, as Nāṣir noted, he was a ruler who combined a respect for science and philosophy with unimpeachable religious and ethical principles. More importantly, perhaps, as his own poems show, the *amīr* shared Nāṣir's view that in their day and age 'the bazaar of wisdom is laden with shoddy goods' (1:20). To counter this, the *amīr* had surrounded himself at his court with 'free men' who were 'searchers out of the world' - high praise from Nāṣir, especially since his own driving endeavour, attested in the present work, is to seek out 'the how and the why of creation'.

The *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, or *Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*, the book he composed at the *amīr's* request, is the last known work of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the culmination of the series of treatises dealing with Aristotelian philosophy and Ismaili hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) which he

composed during his long exile in Yumgān. The work, here translated under the title *Twin Wisdoms Reconciled* (about which more below), was completed in Yumgān in the year 462/1070. Rather unusually for Nāṣir, it takes the form of a commentary on the *qaṣīda* written by al-Jurjānī about whom almost nothing is known, though his *qaṣīda* was commented upon by al-Jurjānī's disciple, the tenth-century Ismaili scholar Muḥammad b. Surkh Nishāpūrī. Nāṣir does tell us that Jurjānī was a physician (8:183) as well as a philosopher, and he seems to have been acquainted with other works of his (all now lost). As for the earlier commentator, of whose work Nāṣir is plainly unaware, Muḥammad b. Surkh (or Muḥammad-i Surkh, 'Red Muḥammad') was Jurjānī's disciple for nine years and arranged for the posthumous publication of his master's work; his commentary differs markedly from Nāṣir's both in the order of the verses and in his comments.²

Though Nāṣir's work purports to be commentary, it is not a *sharḥ* in the conventional sense; he has little or nothing to say, for example, about any linguistic or philological aspects of the poem. Rather, he uses selected passages as springboards for far-ranging speculations of his own on a wide variety of questions. This is apt since the *qaṣīda* itself is cast in the form of a series of puzzling questions to which Nāṣir attempts to formulate authoritative answers. The *qaṣīda* contains 91 questions in 82 *bayts*. By contrast, the text in Nishāpūrī's commentary comprises 89 verses, but it is not clear whether the text as we have it in the *Jāmi'* is an alternative version or whether the *amīr*, who transcribed it from memory, and 'in his own hand', inadvertently omitted the seven missing lines.³

To gain a better understanding of the *Jāmi' al-hikmatayn* and its significance as Nāṣir's final and crowning work, it will be helpful to take a brief look at his life and career.

1. Muḥammad b. Surkh Nishāpūrī, *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Fārsī: Commentaire de la qaṣīda ismaélienne*, ed. H. Corbin and M. Muḥ (Tehran and Paris, 1955). See also F. de Blois, *Persian Literature* (London, 1992), vol. 5, part 1, pp. 63–64, and G. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans* (Tehran and Paris, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 24–25, 78–84; vol. 2, pp. 52–63 (which contains a version of the *qaṣīda*). On the importance of this commentary for the practice of *ta'wīl*, see H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris, 1964), p. 115.

2. See Corbin's introduction to the *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Fārsī*, cited above, especially pp. 41–112.

3. Corbin, *ibid.*, gives a useful concordance of the verses in both commentaries.

The life of Nāṣir-i Khusraw

Most of what we know about Nāṣir comes from his own work both in prose and poetry. This must be qualified, however, in a rather unusual sense. Though he did not leave an autobiography, he does refer in his writings to several significant episodes in his life; these references are precious and help us to place him firmly in the intellectual and historical context of his times. Nevertheless, a different and far deeper aspect of his life and thought emerges from those writings, and especially from his verse.

Nāṣir was born in the year 394/1004 in Qubādiyān, near Marv, in the Balkh district of Khurāsān (hence, his *nisbas* al-Qubādiyānī and al-Marvazī) during the period of Ghaznavid rule. He worked for the Ghaznavids – and later, for the victorious Seljuqs – as a government functionary, a scribe, and tax collector, until the year 1045; in that position, as he tells us himself, he did so well that he ‘acquired no small reputation among my peers’.⁴ But in that same year, for reasons he alludes to in his work but never fully explains, he experienced a profound change of heart. In the *Safar-nāma*, his classic travel work, he confesses that while on official business he travelled to Jūzjānān where he ‘stayed nearly a month and was constantly drunk on wine’.⁵

As is common in such accounts, Nāṣir reports a dream in which an unnamed ‘someone’ berates him for ruining his faculty of reason through drunkenness. In Nāṣir’s dream-reply we hear echoes of the future poet, for he replies, ‘The wise have not been able to come up with anything other than this to lessen the sorrow of the world.’⁶ Nevertheless, this dream had a profound effect; when he awoke he said to himself, ‘You have waked from last night’s sleep. When are you going to wake from that of forty years?’⁷ He resolved to change his life, resulting in his conversion to the Ismaili faith. The account in the *Safar-nāma*, which is extremely succinct, can be supplemented by certain of his poems, as when he writes:

When the heavens had measured out forty-two years of life to me,
My rational soul began to search for wisdom.⁸

4. *Safar-nāma*, tr. W. M. Thackston Jr., as *Naser-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnāma)* (Albany, NY, 1986), p. 1.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Diwān-i ash'ār*, ed. Mujtabā Minuvi and Mehdi Muḥaqqiq (Tehran,

Indeed, in these magnificent, long, autobiographical odes, Nāṣir often appears to provide the hidden spiritual analogue to the events he describes more drily and factually in his travel account; the poems give us the inner significance of the outer events – hardly surprising, since this double perspective of inner and outer pervades his thought as well as his verse. This presents us with the interesting paradox that in some ways we know more about Nāṣir's inner life – not merely his convictions but his deepest feelings – than we do about his outer circumstances.

Nāṣir's first two years of travel culminated in his arrival in Cairo on 3 August 1047 where he remained for three years. During his sojourn in the Fatimid capital, he became an ardent supporter of the Fatimids; as he writes in one of his poems, 'I am a Fatimid, I am a Fatimid, I am a Fatimid', the triple repetition serving to emphasise his fervour. Certainly, no parts of his *Safar-nāma* are more enthusiastic than his detailed descriptions of Cairo. Nothing seems to escape his notice or his admiration. He is as interested in the merchants and markets of Cairo, with particular attention to their produce – from such goods as tortoiseshell implements to a huge variety of fruits and herbs – as he is in the formal administration of the capital – its judicial system and laws as well as the policies and practices of the Imam-caliphs. He was especially impressed by the benign climate of Egypt, remarking that

If anyone wants to make a garden in Egypt it can be done during any season at all, since any tree, fruit-bearing or other, can be obtained and planted. There are special people called *dallals* who can obtain right away anything you desire because they have trees planted in tubs on rooftops. Many roofs are gardens and most of what is grown is fruit-producing, such as oranges, pomegranates, apples, quince, roses, herbs, and vegetables.⁹

Such attention to everyday details, even of the humblest sort, enhances the *Safar-nāma*'s 'documentary' value, but it also reveals Nāṣir the poet. His fascination with natural things is always specific, always vivid, and this is reflected later in his poetry with its invocation of the seasons, or the

1353/1974), p. 508; see also Alice C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhshan* (London and New York, 2003), p. 55, who renders 'rational soul' (*nafs-i sukhavar*) rather misleadingly as 'conscious self'.

9. *Safar-nāma*, tr. Thackston, p. 81.

cycles of the heavenly spheres, or the mysterious emblematic characteristics of certain plants and animals. And this fascination is much in evidence in the present work, as his various disquisitions on the growth and development of plants or the generation of animals make abundantly clear.

More significantly, whilst in Cairo Nāṣir came under the patronage of powerful and influential figures such as al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shirāzī (d. 470/1078), the chief *dā'ī* and administrative head of the Fatimid *da'wa* – and a poet in his own right – whom Nāṣir credited as his teacher.¹⁰ During these years in Cairo, thanks to his access to the Fatimid court and to leading thinkers of the time, Nāṣir must have acquired his considerable learning in philosophy and theology as well as science, all of which are reflected throughout the *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*. Certainly his admiration of the Imam-caliph al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh (427–487/1036–1094) knows no bounds; he praises him effusively throughout his *Dīwān*, declaring his allegiance even in exile from Yumgān. It was by order of this enlightened Fatimid caliph that Nāṣir was despatched as a *dā'ī* to his homeland of Khurāsān (where he would later become the *ḥujjat*, the chief *dā'ī* for the entire vast region). Years later he still took pride in describing himself as 'the *ḥujjat* of Mustanṣir'.¹¹

Though he had begun his travels from Marv with the intention of performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, Nāṣir first headed west, following a route along the Caspian coast of Iran, thence into Anatolia and from there he journeyed to Syria and Palestine (where he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem). It was during his years in Cairo that he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina on two occasions. On his return journey, he travelled down the Nile, crossing the Red Sea into the Hijaz; he made his way across the Arabian Peninsula to Basra and from there he travelled through southern Iran, finally arriving in Balkh, almost seven years after he had first set out. His journey was an astonishing one, as rife with hardship as with marvels, and his account is rightly considered a classic of the genre.

Some four years after his return as *dā'ī* and then *ḥujjat* for all of Khurāsān, around the year 1056, Nāṣir came under attack from anti-Isma'ili opponents; under threat of assassination he went into exile, fleeing into Badakhshān. He would remain there for the rest of his life. He would also compose his surviving works in exile both in verse and prose. These include such treatises as *Gushāyish va-rahāyish* ('Unfettering and

10. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw*, p. 157.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

Setting Free'),¹² *Khwān al-ikhwān* ('The Feast of the Brethren'), the *Shish faṣl* ('Six Chapters'), *Wajh-i dīn* ('The Face of Religion'),¹³ and *Zād al-musāfirīn* ('The Pilgrims' Provision'), probably his greatest philosophical work. He also left behind a large body of poetry and, in fact, he is ranked among the four or five greatest of Persian poets.

As a poet, Nāṣir returns often to certain recurrent themes. These include majestic philosophical odes as well as more personal lyrics in which he laments the passing of youth or grieves over his lost homeland; he is a great poet both of old age and of homesickness. As might be expected, such poems often display that doubleness of vision which characterises much of his theological and philosophical explorations. Thus, in verses at once rueful and gently self-satirical, he writes:

When your body was beautiful, you acted pretty ugly.
Now that you're ugly, you should beautify your actions.
Time has made your body feeble:
Yesterday a peacock, today a porcupine.¹⁴

Such verses exemplify his poetic manner. The language is direct yet musical; the lines are not merely nostalgic but hortatory: they enjoin the poet to improve his character, all the while playing on the disparity between outward appearance and inward disposition, between the loveliness of youth and the decrepitude of old age, both viewed in moral terms. And yet, at the same time, the tone is strangely playful and slyly humorous.

Though he enjoyed the patronage of the Ismaili *amir* of Badakhshān, himself a poet (and the inspiration of the present work), Nāṣir's later years in Yumgān remain obscure and little is known of his life there apart from what he himself tells us in his work. Even his death-date is unknown; some accounts give the date as 1077 but others place it as late as 1088, when he would have been in his mid-eighties.

Though his work proved influential, often in surreptitious ways, Nāṣir himself remained a puzzle to later writers, and legends, often fabulous, sprouted up about his name. He was said to have been a sorcerer, a wonder-worker, or 'the king of Balkh'. And of course, there were those who

12. Ed. and trans. as *Knowledge and Liberation: A Treatise on Philosophical Theology*, by Faquir M. Hunzai (London and New York, 1999).

13. Ed. G.-R. Aavani (Tehran, 1977).

14. *Diwān*, p. 174; tr. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw*, p. 238.

branded him a 'heretic'. Thus, the obscure later heresiographer Ibn al-Dā'ī al-Rāzī writes that he founded a heretical sect known as 'the Nāṣiriyya' and that 'he was a cursed poet who led many people astray'.¹⁵ Even modern scholars, who should know better, have perpetuated some of these mis-statements; thus, the great Vladimir Ivanow, a pioneer in the field of Ismaili studies, could write: 'A tall, robust, rustic looking man, Nasir brings into his works the rustic, primitive atmosphere ... Nasir was not a pioneer in writing on philosophical matters in Persian, but his style is extremely unartistic, dull, full of unnecessary repetitions ...'¹⁶

Needless to say, this is a minority view. As his works have been published and studied, his originality as a thinker as well as an early master of Persian prose and poetry has been recognised and acclaimed. Readers of this translation will be able to form their own judgements on his brilliance.

The title of the work

In *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, translated here as *Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*, which involves the exploration of nothing less than 'the how and why of creation', Nāṣir strives to reconcile – or to reunite – the 'wisdom' of philosophy – by which he means the largely Aristotelian *falsafa* tradition of the metaphysicians (or 'divinising' philosophers, the *ḥukamā-yi muta'allihān*, as he calls them) with the esoteric 'wisdom' of Ismaili doctrine, and especially the tradition of symbolic exegesis or *ta'wil*. This raises the question as to whether the work represents a novel synthesis of parallel wisdoms or a restoration to harmony of primordial truths artificially separated and set at odds by the uncomprehending 'rabble' (*hashwiyān*) of dimwitted dogmatists, on the one hand, or of those 'cultured despisers' of religion, the philosophers, on the other.

Though the title literally means 'joining' or 'uniting' the two wisdoms, it is translated here as *Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*. From the author's own remarks, it seems clear that the second of the two alternative meanings of the title is what is meant. In a broad sense, this sets his work in a distinct tradition, of which al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā are the best-known exemplars: the endeavour to construct a system in which the philosophical

15. Ibn al-Dā'ī, *Kitāb Tabṣirat al-'awāmm*, ed. A. Iqbal (Tehran, 1313/1934), p. 184.

16. W. Ivanow, *Nasir-i Khusraw and Ismailism* (Bombay, 1948), p. 11.

and scientific methods and insights of the *falsafa* tradition are shown to be ultimately in accord with Islamic doctrine, broadly understood, and here specifically, with Fatimid Ismaili teachings. Nāṣir was, of course, a Fatimid *dāʿī* and later the *ḥujjat* for Khurāsān and the work may be said to epitomise the teaching aspect of his mission. It is clearly written for readers not much acquainted with either philosophy or *taʿwīl*. Beyond this, however, as he himself remarks, 'If it is justice not to condone an injury against a person who has been wronged, then it is even greater justice to convey knowledge to the ignorant, for ignorance is manifest injury. If it is in our power to give some portion of what we possess of this to the needy, that is an act of beneficence' (1:12).

Apart from benevolence, there is perhaps a deeper reason for Nāṣir's effort of reconciliation. As the *Jāmiʿ* makes explicit, philosophy and science apply in the realm of the *ẓāhir*, the exoteric aspect of things, while *taʿwīl* addresses the privileged realm of the *bāṭin*, the esoteric understanding of revelation. Neither realm is essentially separable from the other; they are complementary and constitute a whole. They are as interdependent as the bodily senses and the soul, each of which plays a fundamental role in the constitution of the human being and of the cosmos.¹⁷ And though Nāṣir does not consistently use this familiar pair of terms, his various analyses reflect both their polarity and their ultimate coherence within his system. Such disciplines as Aristotelian logic, of which he is a forceful advocate, or natural science, whether physics or meteorology or medicine, belong in the sphere of the *ẓāhir*, the exoteric, and properly so; and yet, knowledge of them is essential. Nevertheless, as he demonstrates in a number of passages, their truths are external to the inner sense of things, whether scriptural revelation, the teachings of the Imams or, indeed, creation itself. Such esoteric knowledge – the *bāṭin*, imparted by the Imams through their *daʿīs* – is like the pearl hidden beneath the rough shell of the oyster, to use one of Nāṣir's own favourite similes.

The method of the work

As in earlier works, Nāṣir relies on the contrastive approach typical of Ismaili hermeneutical methods in which opposition serves as a governing

17. As he states, 'The hands, the feet, the mouth, and the rest, all stand linked with the soul which is the sovereign of them all' (6:99).

principle. Thus, the *ahl-i tafsīr* or *ahl-i taqlid* – the partisans of literal exegesis and the proponents of uncritical assent, respectively – are contrasted unfavourably with the ‘sages of true religion’ (*ḥukamā-yi dīn-i ḥaqq*): the *ahl-i taʿwil*, the masters of symbolic exegesis, the *ahl-i bāṭin*, those endowed with esoteric insight, or – the highest category of all – the *ahl-i taʿvid*, those empowered by divine inspiration, that is, the Prophets and Imams. These oppositions are, however, neither simplistic nor absolute. Though he is often dismissive of those who advocate ‘uncritical assent’, and especially of the professional jurists, the *fuqahā*, he also presents a nuanced defence of *taqlid* as a necessary precondition for deepening awareness, distinguishing it sharply from the kind of lazy ‘habit’ (*ʿāda*) of thoughtlessness with which it is sometimes confused. Moreover, these oppositions do not result in ‘a coincidence of opposites’ (as in much Sufi doctrine) but, rather, intersect and interfuse. For Nāṣir, the various phenomena of this world stand as lucent shadows of other realities, perfected in a transcendent realm.¹⁸ Thus, philosophy by its very nature may be concerned with the outer, phenomenal world while Ismaili hermeneutics delves deeply into the inner, spiritual world, but neither is ultimately at odds with the other: they stand in a continuum. They are not opposing realities but different dimensions of a single reality. This extends to the humblest matters. The imperative mode in grammar denotes a simple command (*amr*) but it also corresponds to the First Intellect in the celestial hierarchy and so foreshadows God’s own command.

The *Jāmiʿ* also contains valuable information on such figures as the earlier philosopher – and Ismaili *bête noire* – Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyāʾ al-Rāzī; it thus supplements Nāṣir’s earlier critique of al-Rāzī, whilst reinforcing the vigorous objections to that philosopher raised by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934) and later by Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. ca. 411/1020).¹⁹

The questions raised

On a first reading, Jurjānī’s *qaṣīda* appears to be a jumble of diverse questions. His questions address everything under the sun. He is as

18. On this, see also NKH’s *Wajh-i dīn*, p. 201.

19. See *Zād al-musāfirin*, ed. M. Badhl al-Rahmān (Berlin, 1341/1923), pp. 73–118.

curious about the occult properties of certain gems as about the essential nature of divine oneness; he will veer from bizarre queries on medicine – how does the ruby ward off cholera or the emerald blind a serpent? – to lofty questions on time and fate, the nature of the human self, or the true meaning of eternity. The sequence of his questions appears almost haphazard and this unsystematic approach is reflected in Nāṣir's responses, though it is evident that he struggles to impose some sort of logical order, if not on the subjects themselves, then on his responses. In fact, though, the questions do fall into several loose categories as is evident from even a casual glance. There is one category dealing with philosophy, including logic, the nature of language, and metaphysics (e.g., verses 1–4, 12–13, 16–19), others dealing with natural science and medicine (24–27, 37–39), anthropology and especially the nature of man (e.g., 33–34, 40–48), time and eternity (e.g., 23, 30), the celestial spheres (e.g., 63–66), the importance of knowledge contrasted with ignorance (*passim*), as well as a few specifically Ismaili questions (e.g., 3, 53). Even so, the text of the poem as we have it gives an impression of disarray.

Compounding this curious melange is the strikingly down-to-earth tone of the verses. Jurjānī sometimes displays a rather bluff sense of humour as when he raises questions about the self and then exclaims, 'Speak, do not just scratch your beard!' (line 33). Elsewhere he mocks a mistaken view by observing that 'there are many knights who do not even know how to fasten their trousers!' (line 35). Sometimes too he loses patience as when he cries, 'What donkey-loads of lavish nonsense have I heard on these [subjects]!' (line 51). These brusque and salty interjections enliven the poem; they impart a human voice amid many abstractions. At the same time, it has to be said that Nāṣir makes no secret of his frequent exasperation with Jurjānī and his poem. He often refers to him rather dismissively as 'this man' (*in mard*) rather than by his name. Nor does he hesitate to rebuke him for erroneous notions as well as for a certain frivolity. He shows particular annoyance, towards the end of the work, at Jurjānī's surprise disclosure that he knows the answers to the questions he has raised but refuses to supply them on the grounds that, in his day, 'the nettle has usurped the place of the date'. For Nāṣir, the disclosure is 'annoying, not beneficial'. And he counters by citing one of his own verses: goodness, he writes, is concealed within 'like the dates amid tangles of thorn'. He remarks further that 'questions without answers are like good tidings without joy – tough and insipid at once!' Still more pointedly, he argues that 'if it would be fitting for sages and scholars to keep silent and not pursue wisdom, because ignorance

has imposed its empery over people, then it would have behoved the wisest of the wise, the Seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad, the Chosen One, not to give mankind this treasure of wisdom, this mine of the truths of all knowledge which is the Noble Qur'ān' (32: 355–357). To begrudge knowledge to others is a breach of that beneficence Nāṣir praised at the outset; worse, it perpetuates the injuries inflicted by ignorance. In such rebukes we seem to catch the particular accents of Nāṣir's own voice; we glimpse, or at least have the sudden sensation of glimpsing, something of his personality. Such moments give his commentary an unexpected sparkle.

The pedagogic aspect of the text

As befits a *hujjat* in a remote area of the Fatimid *da'wa*, Nāṣir is at pains to impart instruction. This is true, of course, of other works, such as the magisterial *Zād al-musāfirin*, written about a decade earlier, in 453/1061, but here he seems especially concerned to provide clear and simple examples of unfamiliar subjects. But he is also concerned to prompt his readers to think, to explore, to question. As he put it with characteristic bluntness in a poem, 'Why do you think God gave you a mind? To eat and sleep like a donkey?'²⁰ Whether his explanations are principally for the benefit of the *amir* or for a wider circle of readers – I suspect that the latter is the case – he often chooses analogies which would be immediately comprehensible to his readers and yet, at the same time, fresh. Thus, in elucidating the logical concepts of genus and species, he invokes the *ahl al-bayt*, remarking that the notion of genus corresponds to the Prophet's Household as a group while the individual members, from 'Alī onwards, can be understood as distinct species (21:273). His discussion of the topic is more complex and detailed than this analogy suggests, but his use of such an example illustrates his concern to make both foreign terminology (adapted from Arabic logical treatises) and unaccustomed subject matter immediately comprehensible to less sophisticated readers.

He also displays a tendency to give an Ismaili slant to certain of his technical discussions. Thus, when he presents the five Aristotelian causes, at the very outset of the book, he not only offers homely examples – the construction of a throne by a carpenter – but imparts an esoteric spin to

20. *Dīwān*, 22:3.

his discussion when he states that 'the sages of true religion' teach that there are seven, rather than five, causes; these two additional causes, the spatial and the temporal, accord well with his own later concerns in the treatise but they also have an unmistakably Ismaili flavour, not only because of the number seven but because of the (unidentified) sources of authority which he cites. This is a small, discreet foretaste of the *ta'wil* which is yet to come in later chapters. By such means Nāṣir gradually prepares his readers for a wide array of Arabic technical terms drawn from logic, theology, and philosophy whilst at the same time setting these new notions in a well-known Ismaili context.

This raises another significant point. Like all of Nāṣir's philosophical work, the *Jāmi'* is written in Persian. It is not clear what earlier models for this stylistic endeavour he may have drawn on – he does express admiration for the earlier Persian philosopher Īrānshahrī (whose works are, however, lost), as well as other writings by Jurjānī – or whether in fact he had any such models to draw upon. It seems quite likely that in many respects his was a pioneering effort. This is shown not only by his assimilation of Arabic technical vocabulary, which he either translates or Persianises, but by his use of citation. He consistently translates quotations from the Qur'ān or from Ḥadīth into Persian alongside the original citation. (I have not noted this except where his Persian translation diverges from the Arabic.) This suggests that many of his readers were unable to read Arabic, but it is also fully consistent with his obvious ambition to create a medium of philosophical discourse in his native tongue. His love of the Persian language is well-attested, particularly in his *Dīwān*, as when he declares in a famous verse:

I am one who refuses to throw beneath the feet of swine
This precious pearl, the Persian language.²¹

This passionate attachment is quite evident here as well, both in his own verses which he quotes and in his prose, notwithstanding the clumsiness of his copyist. Indeed, in the creation of a supple, nuanced yet precise Persian philosophical language, Nāṣir stands alone in his time. As S. H. Nasr has stated, 'his works have made an indelible mark upon both Islamic philosophy and Persian philosophical prose'.²²

21. *Man ān am keh dar pay-i khugan narizam mar-in qimati-yi durr-i lafz-i darī-rā. Dīwān*, 64:32, tr. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw*, p. 43.

22. S. H. Nasr, Introduction to *Wajh-i dīn*, p. [3]. See also J. T. P. de Bruijn,

The text

The present translation is of the text as edited and published by Henry Corbin and Mohammed Mu'in, based on the *unicum* manuscript Aya Sofya 2393, presently in the Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.²³ The manuscript, written in a clear *naskh*, comprises 115 folios, with some 23 lines to the page. Since Corbin and Mu'in prepared their edition from a photostatic copy and were not permitted to see the original manuscript (because of wartime security concerns), they could not determine the dimensions of either the pages or the written surface, nor describe the physical features of the volume (paper, ink, binding, etc.). (In the present translation, having only a digitised copy of the original manuscript to consult, I have encountered the same limitations.) The colophon is lacking; however, Corbin and Mu'in supply the missing *explicit* in their edition, drawing on the so-called '*Risāla*', an abstract of the *Jāmi'* included at the end of the 1929 edition of Nāṣir's *Dīwān*, which Muḥtabā Mīnuvī first discovered in the Malek Library, Tehran.²⁴ Unfortunately, the date of composition given in that rediscovered colophon – that is, AH 422 – is incorrect, as both Corbin and Mu'in have shown conclusively that the correct date, given by Nāṣir himself at the outset, is AH 462 (CE 1070).

The manuscript Aya Sofya 2393 is undated and there are no indications as to when it was copied. Moreover, the manuscript is textually unreliable. As Corbin remarks in his Introduction, 'the copyist unfortunately had only a very limited knowledge both of Persian and of Arabic; he obviously does not understand what he is writing'.²⁵ As Corbin noted further, the copyist transposes words from one line to the next, or he loses his place and recopies an entire phrase; sometimes he drops whole sentences. This no doubt accounts for the number of gratuitously repetitive passages as well as for the lacunae in several parts of the text, e.g., the portions of text evidently missing in the final chapter between

'Classical Persian Literature as a Tradition', in J. T. P. de Bruijn (ed.), *General Introduction to Persian Literature* (London and New York, 2009), p. 9, commenting on 'the profound turn in stylistic history' effected by NKh's works.

23. *Kitāb-e Jāmi' al-hikmatayn: Le livre réunissant les deux sagesse ou Harmonie de la philosophie grécque et de la théosophie ismaélienne* (Paris and Tehran, 1953).

24. See Corbin, 'Etude préliminaire', p. 43, and Mu'in, 'Muqaddima', *ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

sections 365 and 366. Compared with Nāṣir's earlier works, the prose of the *Jāmi'* often seems uncharacteristically prolix, inelegant, and obscure, an impression no doubt due to the copyist's incompetence. On the other hand, there are many passages of great beauty and even soaring eloquence (see, for example, section 269) which attest to Nāṣir's extraordinary poetic gift, as well as to his rare command of Persian expository prose.

The present translation

In their edition, Corbin and Mu'in strove to bring order to the text. They marked and numbered the chapters clearly and provided titles; they subdivided the text into discrete sections and to these too they assigned sequential numbers. In my translation I have followed their numbered subdivisions and included their chapter titles, all in the same interest of clarity.²⁶ After I had completed the translation I was able to acquire a digitised CD-ROM copy of the original manuscript, thanks to the kind offices of Dr Mehmet Karabela, my former student at McGill University. Though I have not been able to make a systematic study of the manuscript, given the constraints of a deadline, I have consulted it to make better sense of certain puzzling passages.

This is the first complete translation of the work into English, aside from a few excerpts.²⁷ There are translations into Arabic and into French.²⁸ Though I have consulted these other versions throughout and have benefited from them, I have not always agreed with them; my differences of reading or interpretation are documented in the footnotes.

In general, I have aimed to prepare a translation that is accurate, clear, and readable. Given the state of the text, this has not always been a straightforward task. I have inserted Persian or Arabic terms in transliteration for the sake of clarity wherever it seemed necessary,

26. It should be noted that sections 226–230 are inadvertently repeated in the numbering of the Corbin/Mu'in text. The correct sequence has been restored in this translation.

27. See Latimah Parvin Peerwani, 'The Sum of the Two Wisdoms', in S. H. Nasr and M. Aminrazavi (eds), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* (London and New York, 2008), vol. 2, pp. 308–328.

28. For the Arabic version, see I. al-Dasuqi Shatā, *Jami' al-hikmatayn* (Cairo, 1977); for the French, see Isabelle de Gastines, *Le livre réunissant les deux sagesse* (Paris, 1990).

especially since I have not always translated such terms consistently but interpreted them within their immediate context; such key terms as *ibdā'* (creation *ex nihilo*, origination, instantiation, etc.) for which there is no obvious English equivalent proved especially troublesome. As Corbin has pointed out, the term cannot actually be rendered as 'creation from nothing' any more than as 'creation from something'.²⁹ In other cases, such a term as *mawālid*, which Nāṣir uses repeatedly, seems best rendered as 'kingdoms' (i.e., animal, vegetal, and mineral), though it sometimes struck me that something along the lines of 'matrices' might be preferable. In quoting the Qur'ān I have alternated between the translations of Allen Jones and M.A. Abdel Haleem when either of their versions struck me as especially apt; translations of verses not so designated are my own.

I have resisted the temptation to alter or improve upon the text, even when it seemed clumsy or repetitive. At the same time, however, I have tried to do justice to the original, which is often both eloquent and even beautiful. In the translations of poetry I have sought to provide accurate English versions without regard for the rhyme scheme or metre of the originals. The annotations to the text are intended to clarify obscure or recondite matters wherever possible, as well as to provide essential information for readers not familiar with either Islamic philosophy or Ismaili thought.

It remains for me to acknowledge with gratitude the support which I have received during this project from Professor Azim Nanji, formerly Director of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, and from Dr Farhad Daftary, current Co-Director of the Institute. It was they who first suggested that I undertake this translation, and they have offered encouragement and assistance throughout the three years in which it has been in preparation. I am also grateful to Dr Faquir M. Hunzai with whom I read portions of the original text and whose perceptive suggestions and emendations have proved most useful. Finally, I wish to thank Mr Kutub Kassam for his meticulous and thoughtful editing of the translation, which has improved it throughout.

29. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, p. 120.

Kitāb-i Jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn

The Book of Twin Wisdoms Reconciled

Exordium

[1] First we praise God – Creator of the heavens, Fashioner of the world and all who dwell within it – as is fitting as well as required by the command which He sent down in His Noble Book through the mediation of His Emissary Muḥammad, the trustworthy, who, unfurling the carpet of religion, bids us to say, *‘Praised be God, Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Last Day.’*³⁰

[2] Praise be to God – glory be to Him – because He brought us forth from the bellies of our mothers, without our knowing anything, and then He gave us an eye with which to see, an ear with which to hear, and a heart with which to know. With the eye we view His majestic works in this vast world; with the ear we hear His word, which is this Noble Qur’ān; and with the heart we come to know the teaching of His Emissary, namely, that He is the Enunciator of the Noble Book, the Sender of the sublime Discourse, the Maker of the mighty vault.

[3] We praise God – glory be to Him – because, without our showing any prior obedience to Him – exalted and mighty is He – He gave us these three immense gifts and set us apart from other living things by these specific qualities. He made thankfulness incumbent upon us by the rule He imposed in the verse in which He said, *‘God brought you forth from the bellies of your mothers, knowing nothing, and made for you hearing and sight and hearts, so that you might be thankful.’*³¹

[4] And we thank God too because, after He gave us a speaking soul and a questing heart, He sent a trustworthy counsellor, a discerning guide, and a noble emissary on the Straight Path, and restrained our evil passions and our craving souls by the Noble Book filled with His wisdom; so that in this way, through obedience to His Emissary and His Book, we might become worthy of His mercy – He is exalted and mighty. For this

30. Q1:1–4.

31. Q16:78.

reason He says, '*This is a Book We sent down, a blessed one, so follow it and fear God; perhaps you will be granted mercy.*'³²

[5] And we praise God, Exalted in Oneness, because He created us out of the dust and called us to His path by the Prophet and the Book, and guided us so that we might not be among those who at the Resurrection yearn to be the same dust which they were at the very beginning; as God says, '*The day when a man shall see what his hands wrought before, and [when] the unbeliever will say, "O would that I were dust!"*'³³

[6] We praise Him – exalted be His praise – that in this world He gave us the pleasures of life and of health as well as the agonies of sickness and death, so that through this gift, which is His wisdom, we might know that God possesses a treasure house of graces without end, together with a treasure house of afflictions without limit; and, furthermore, that those pleasures which here we find everywhere are the mere tiniest particulars of those immense universals. In this vein He says, '*There is nothing whose treasure houses are not with Us, but We send them down only in a measured amount.*'³⁴ Without any doubt we know that if today we are obedient and upstanding, tomorrow our return will be to that treasure house of untroubled repose, for we know that God speaks the truth when He says, '*The pious will be in delight and the licentious in hellfire.*'³⁵ If He had not brought us to taste those particular pleasures of the senses and those pains of the flesh in this world, we would not know that with Him the Exalted – glory be to Him – there is a mine of universal bliss, which is Paradise, as well as a mine of all-encompassing torment, which is Hell.

[7] That wise God be praised from whom the pain and illness of death, which comes to us from Him – just as do life and health and happiness, in this vanishing realm of the world – is Wisdom.³⁶ We give Him thanks and in pain and distress, we seek His help, as in His Glorious Book He

32. Q6:155.

33. Q78:40.

34. Q15:21.

35. Q82:13–14.

36. See also Sharif al-Raḍī, *Nahy al balaghah*, ed. M. Abduh (Beirut, 2003), p. 21, in which death and illness are counted as signs of God's blessings to human beings, as well as of His power: 'the fixed term of life which puts an end to them (i.e., humans) and the maladies which age them (*awṣāb tuhrimuhum*)'.

says, 'Whatever blessing you have, it is from God; but then, when harm touches you, it is to Him that you cry out.'³⁷

[8] Still greater praise to God for the intellect (*khirad*) by which we know that harm and pain and illness – from which we are constantly escaping and which we always imagine to be evil – are mercy and manifest wisdom as well as a goad to incite us to the good (*taḥrīṣ-ast bar ālat-i khayr*). For this very reason, praise of God is incumbent upon us in pain and in distress: we are obliged to praise God because all that befalls us must be a benefit from Him. These sufferings of ours are a blessing to us. Because of them we beware that mine of misery, which is Hell, and come to that eternal mine of delight, which is Paradise.

[9] From this logical exposition (*bayān-i manṭiqī*) of our obligation to praise God, it should be obvious to anyone with intelligence that God's benefits to us are numberless, as He Himself says, 'If you tried to count God's blessings, you could never count them: He is forgiving and merciful.'³⁸ This verse makes clear that since we know God's favours to us are uncountable, if we repeat and count ...³⁹ [some small part of them, we will give thanks for His Emissary], a lamp in the darkness⁴⁰ of disbelief and error, and a guide to people through the sending down of the Noble Book, by disclosing His Law full of wisdom⁴¹ – making plain what is lawful and what unlawful – by promulgating decrees and rulings, by inciting to justice and benevolence and warning against injustice and sin, by travelling in noble nature and sturdy character on the Straight Path to please God; as He says, 'A day when people will rise before the Lord of the worlds ...'⁴²

And next [let us thank 'Alī], the treasurer of the knowledge of the Book and Wisdom, the threshold of the most rigorous mysteries of the Law, [which are] 'harsh to the impious' – as He says, 'harsh against unbelievers, merciful among themselves'⁴³ – father of the Prophet's household;

37. Q16:53.

38. Q16:18.

39. There is a lacuna in the text here. The remainder is supplied from a variant reading (*Jāmi'*, ed. Corbin and Mu'in, p. 5, note to line 11).

40. An allusion to Q33:46.

41. Emending the text here to read *pur* (instead of *bar*), as suggested by F. M. Hunzai.

42. Q83:6.

43. Q48:29.

of equal standing with the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima the Pure; master of the illustrious sword *Dhū'l-ḥiṣṣa*; cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and his designated heir.

[And let us praise] the angels of the heaven of religion, guides of the worlds to the Last Day, the Imams of truth, the guides of humankind, from the offspring of the Prophet and his designated successor – [upon them] prayers and offerings, blessings, and salutations, everlasting and ever-increasing, ever bearing anew, for as long as the sphere revolves and the star shines.

The Reason for the Composition of this Book; its Title

[10] Abū Muʿīn Nāṣir b. Khusraw b. al-Ḥārith says: Having praised God the Exalted, we must speak about the composition of this book for this book is something new. But whatever is newly formed (*ḥādith*) must have a cause for its appearance. Everything which appears in time necessarily has five causes. First of these is the *efficient* cause (*ʿillat-i fāʿilat*), such as the carpenter who constructs a throne. Next is the *instrumental* cause (*ʿillat-i ālatī*), that is, the axe and saw and other [tools] by which the carpenter brings this about. Third is the *material* cause (*ʿillat-i hayūlānī*), such as the wood which receives the carpenter's constructive activity. Fourth is the *formal* cause (*ʿillat-i šūrī*), that is, the form of the throne which must be present in the carpenter's mind. And fifth is the *final* cause (*ʿillat-i ghāʾī*), which is why the throne is being made at all, namely, so that the ruler can sit on the throne.⁴⁴

[11] The sages of true religion (*ḥukamā-yi dīn-i ḥaqq*) are in agreement with philosophy (*falsafat*) on the fact that a first cause to be caused is [in effect] a final cause. The cause for the throne on which the sultan is to sit, its construction by the carpenter with his tools and out of wood, all come about through the command of the king who wishes to sit upon the throne. Hence, the last to be constructed must be the first cause of that construction. For this reason the sages recite the well-known maxim, 'First in thought, last in deed.'⁴⁵ Do not you see that the carpenter's first thought must be that the king should have a throne and that his final thought must be that the king sits upon the throne? The why of the world (*chirāʾi-yi ʿālam*) is, in the end, the creation of man, after whom nothing else came to be. At the beginning of creation, it is said, the

44. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983a 24ff (Loeb edn, pp. 16ff.).

45. Arabic in the original: *awwal al-fikr ākhir al-ʿamal*.

Creator of the world had the creation of man as His aim, so that man might come to be at the end of His creation.

[12] We will explain this more fully in this book in its proper place. Every book which is composed has these same five causes, and necessarily so. First, the efficient cause; this must be the book's author. Then, the instrumental cause, the pen and the knife. The third, the material cause, is the paper and the ink. Fourth is the formal cause, and this is word and discourse. And the fifth is the perfective cause (*illat-i tamāmī*);⁴⁶ that is, the conveyance of the knowledge which is in the book to those who seek it. Still, the cause of all the causes, and which is greater than the efficient cause, is the perfective cause which we just mentioned. Accordingly, the book's author, who composes its content and arranges its words, does so in order that the seeker after this knowledge which he does not know may arrive at that which he does not know. And if it is justice not to condone an injury (*sitam*) against a person who has been wronged, then it is even greater justice to convey knowledge to the ignorant, for ignorance is a manifest injustice (*jahl sitamī-yī zahīr ast*). If it may be in our power to give some portion of what we possess of this to the needy, that is an act of beneficence. And if it is God's command that we give something out of what we own to those who are our kinsmen – and our kinsmen are other humans among all the animals – then, to give them a share of knowledge, which is the very essence of humanity, is obedience to God. Indeed, He commanded His Prophet in this verse: '*God enjoins justice, doing good and giving to kinsfolk.*'⁴⁷ This is a trait of the Prophet as well. He tells us that 'These three actions which I always perform, God commanded me to perform.' The sages have affirmed that for every new thing these five causes must be present; whenever one of the five is removed, the event does not occur. Thus, if the carpenter has tool in hand, as well as wood, and the form of the throne is present to him, but nobody wants a throne, the carpenter does not make it. And if there is a carpenter who has tools and knows how to build a throne, and the king wants a throne, but the wood – the material cause – is missing, the throne does not come to be. If four causes are present – the carpenter, the wood, the carpenter's knowledge, the form of the throne – and the king wants the throne, even so, the throne will not be constructed if the tools are missing.

46. NKh uses this term interchangeably with the 'final' cause.

47. Q16:90, tr. Jones.

[13] The sages of true religion state that the cause of any newly created thing is sevenfold. If any of the seven causes is absent, that thing may not come to be. First, the efficient cause, that is, the maker; next, the instrumental cause; third, the material cause; fourth, the formal cause; fifth, the spatial cause (*'illat-i makānī*); sixth, the temporal cause (*'illat-i zamānī*); and seventh, the perfective [final] cause.⁴⁸ This is so because the maker can make a created thing in a [given] space at a [given] time; thus these two [the spatial and the temporal] figure among the causes for the emergence of contingent things (*muhdathāt*). And indeed, this is most excellent [as a schema], for in the creation of the world, it is clear, the cause for the emergence of existing things as well as the three 'kingdoms' of nature⁴⁹ [are] the seven stars in the seven spheres; they set individual entities in their [proper] order (*mudabbirān-i ashkhāṣ-and*).⁵⁰ The vegetal, animal, and mineral [realms] are such by the ordainment of the Mighty and Knowing One.⁵¹

[14] We say now that it is the rational soul (*naḥs-i suḥḥan-gū'i*) through which man has become pre-eminent in the world; it is why he has been given charge of earth and water, air, and fire, together with control over the beasts of the earth, such that he can turn each and every one of them to his own advantage. Those who enjoy authority in Islam state that whoever says, 'I know that scammony softens human nature',⁵² or 'I know that oxymel settles the bile'⁵³ is an unbeliever. How could any ignorance be more powerful than this? The notion of *kufr* (unbelief) has, however, taken possession of an entire group. And yet, it is not a doctor's nature

48. In this list, the spatial and the temporal are novel causes.

49. The *mawālīd*, or 'generated entities', i.e., the three 'kingdoms' of minerals, plants, and animals.

50. The number seven is of obvious significance. See, for example, S. M. Stern who notes, with regard to early Ismaili thought, the belief that there are seven prophets, seven heavens, seven seas, and seven earths; moreover, man has seven bodily parts and seven openings in his head; and there are, of course, seven Imams as well as the seven 'prophets with resolution'. *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1983), pp. 23–25, 50, 53–55.

51. Cf. the discussion of the three 'realms' of 'generated entities' (*mawālīd*) in NKh's *Gushayish*, pp. 94–95 (translation), pp. 58–59 (Persian text).

52. Scammony (*sūqmuniya*), a resin derived from convolvulus, was used as a purgative.

53. Oxymel (*siganjabin*), a syrup compounded of honey and vinegar.

to claim 'I created scammony', nor does an astronomer say, 'I caused the solar eclipse.' If a doctor who, in the light of his knowledge, says that myrobalan⁵⁴ wards off the pain of fever and bile in the constitution is an 'unbeliever', then anybody who realises that water wards off the pain of thirst or bread the pangs of hunger must be an unbeliever too. This is so because every remedy, every foodstuff, every drink, was created by God. Even so, there seems to be no end to the error and unbelief into which the mighty of the community have fallen.

[15] Let us return to the discussion, namely, the creation by God of things with a 'how?' and a 'why?' and then His placement within human beings of a soul which seeks that 'how' and that 'why' – analogous to the creation of edible things for the 'sensual soul' (*nafs-i ḥissī*) on a par with the creation, for both [souls] in man perceive flavours in edible things and meanings in things imbued with 'howness'. The sensual soul does not grow strong if it eats things from which this taste is lacking; the rational soul does not become knowledgeable if those meanings are absent from things with 'qualities', whether seen or heard.⁵⁵ Just as the sensual soul seeks taste in food and drink, so too does the rational soul seek meaning in seeing and hearing what can be known. The physical world in its entirety, including the rotating spheres and the stars of differing magnitudes, actions, colours, and movements, is wholly imbued with qualities (*mukavvafât-ast*). The things of this earth, comprising minerals,⁵⁶ plants, animals with all their species, shapes and forms, flavours and colours, and their varied activities, are imbued with qualities too, and are the subjects of human knowledge. Every human soul wishes to know why the heavens turn while the earth stands still, and why the sun is always luminous while the moon now waxes and now wanes, at certain times is visible and at others hidden: why earth is

54. Myrobalan (*halilat*), a medicament derived from an astringent plum-like fruit (*Phyllanthus emblica* L.), in Arabic, *halilaj* or *ihlilaj*; cf. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Beirut, 1968), 1:43; G. W. Freytag, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* (Halle, 1830), 1:68.

55. By 'qualities' (*kavfiyat*), he indicates those physical traits by which a thing may be described.

56. Peerwani (p. 310) translates *jawahir* as 'substances', in accord with the word's technical meaning in philosophy, but here it must be understood as 'minerals'.

hard while water is soft; why a dried clod softens when soaked in water but stone and iron do not soften when soaked; why dried clay becomes soft in water but when baked in a fire hardens and becomes brick; then again, stone and iron, which remain hard in water, soften in the fire; and aside from all these, other things which one observes without knowing why they should be so.

Therefore, by means of demonstrative intellectual analogy,⁵⁷ we can state that the creation of knowable things as well as the placement within man of this soul in quest of knowledge (*naḥs-i dānish-jūi*),⁵⁸ along with that soul's urgent zeal and craving to keep searching out the 'how' of things, is such that God in the process of creation says to every soul, 'Ask and consider why it is as it is, and do not imagine that this creation is vain.' In His own Book He says, '*They reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, You did not create this in vain. Glory be to You! Preserve us from the torment of the Fire"*'.⁵⁹

Today the self-styled jurists of the religion of Islam (*fuqahā-yi laqabān-i dīn-i Islām*) say, 'If somebody states, "The day becomes apparent with the rising of the sun" or "I know which star is moving and which is fixed", he is a *kāfir* (unbeliever).' They have chosen ignorance over knowledge and persist in claiming that 'the how and the why of creation are not our business'. The Prophet said, 'Reflect on the creation but not on the Creator.' Now, since reflection on the Creator is not right, on the strength of this Tradition, as mentioned, it is then right [to state], in accord with this Tradition, that reflection on the creation is obligatory (*wājib*).⁶⁰ That is because, if reflection on the creation were not right, as in the case of our Creator, then creation would be on a par with the Creator. A discourse which proceeds from the sacred soul of the Prophet and which is manifested in his thought – which most represents the descent of the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-amin*) – must be truthful and mighty as well as probative (*burhānī*).

57. *Bi-qiyyās-i 'aqlī-yi burhānī*; all (Arabic) terms used in formal logic and NKh's introduction of them is significant, here and throughout his work, as being amongst the first instances of their employment in Persian, and perhaps indeed, the first.

58. Incorrectly transcribed by Peerwani (p. 310) as *naḥs-i dānish-juz'i*.

59. Q3:191, tr. Jones.

60. The term (Arabic: *wājib*) is juridical and denotes a binding obligation.

[16] Anyone who maintains such a conviction that it is obligatory to search fervently for the why and the how of creation renders his knowledge-questioning rational soul dominant over not only the beasts of the earth – and that, by divine authority – but has in addition made all things subject to him. It is through this soul that man becomes worthy of the divine address (*khiṭāb-i khudā*). It – by which I mean the ‘articulate soul’ – is entrusted by divine delegation to pry inquisitively⁶¹ into what it sees and hears amid those things imbued with qualities, as to what they are, and amid cognoscible things, as to what the meanings of those things may be. That children ask after the names of different and variegated things which they see, asking their mother and father, ‘What is that?’, demonstrates the soundness of our argument and stands as our proof: the human soul is innately constituted to inquire and to pry.

Nevertheless, when a child is still young and not fully rational, he is content to utter the name of that thing which he has heard, and he does not inquire after the proper activity of the thing or its use; the thing’s meaning, for him, lies in its correct name. Furthermore, the fact that children ask about the names of things is indicative of the fact that Adam – peace be upon him – first learned the names of things by divine instruction (*bi-ta’līm-i ilāhī*); and as a result, his offspring still seek the names of things at the outset, as God Himself says, ‘He taught Adam all the names.’⁶²

The ignorant literalists⁶³ among the community of believers say that God taught Adam the names of all the things which He created in the world so that through knowledge of these names, he might enjoy superiority over the angels, since they did not know the names of things. This is utterly flimsy and vapid. For example, someone may see a myrobalan (*hālilat*) and know that its name is ‘myrobalan’ while another person who sees it does not know its name yet says, ‘The name of this is not “myrobalan” but rather, this has a name like “pear” (*kulūkḥ*).’ Neither one of these is superior to the other since they are both ignorant as to how the myrobalan acts and what effect it may have; nor do they even know what part of it may be eaten. But if one of them does know how

61. To ‘pry inquisitively’ for *tajassus*; cf. F. Steingass, *A Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1977), p. 283, ‘curiously prying into that which God has thought fit to conceal’.

62. Q2:31.

63. *Hashwiya*, a term of contempt; see note 96 below.

myrobalan acts and what effect it produces and what part of it may be eaten while the other does not know, the one who does know and who is familiar with the myrobalan's agency, enjoys superiority over the one who does not know. Nevertheless, nobody is superior to another simply by uttering the name of a thing. Just so, an Arab may call something by one name, a Turk or an Indian or a Greek or an Ethiopian by another, and yet, the significance of the thing's action (*fi'l*) to which this bunch gives such varied names remains one and the same.

[17] Thus we make it clear that when the exegetes (*ahl-i tafāsīr*) state, 'God is wise and knowing and He taught His chosen one – who was Adam, peace be upon him – the names of things, so that he would thereby have precedence over the angels', they speak both absurdly and incorrectly. The religious sages hold that the true name of a thing lies in its meanings and actions. God taught Adam – peace be upon him – those names so that he might know what the action of everything in the world would be, and what benefit lay within it for himself and his progeny. Each of the sciences, such as medicine, astronomy, and the rest, was produced by a prophet through divine teaching which that prophet learned from Adam. And Adam, they say, became superior to the angels through these names because God taught them [the angels] by direct inspiration (*ilhām*) rather than by names that were actually uttered.

[18] The scholars of true religion (*ulamā-yi dīn-i haqq*) use the sciences of medicine and astronomy as proof for the existence of prophecy to philosophers, who reject both prophecy and divine inspiration (*waḥy*).⁶⁴ They all say that he who first knew that a certain medicine, which comes from Rūm, requires one weight of grain, another from China requires the weight of half a dirham, while yet another from Hindustan requires the weight of half a grain – and that all these must be combined: one of them, for example, is pounded, one of them is melted, and one of them burned so that he can ward off illness from a man – is a prophet, and necessarily so. After all, God taught him that there were benefits to man, as well as cures for illness, in these things in these quantities. If not, then nobody could have known these medicaments either through experimentation (*āzmāyish*) or through testing.

64. Probably an allusion to Abū Bakr Zakariyā' al-Rāzī; cf. NKh, *Zad*, pp. 73ff.

They also say that he who first understood that out of the thousands of stars in the heavens which we observe, there are seven which revolve, and who first came to know the orbit of each one, as well as its behaviour and nature, is a prophet too, having learned this lofty science through God's direct instruction. Hence, through theological proof, as well as through drawing on [the philosophers'] own science, the existence of prophecy follows as a necessary consequence.

Nowadays a group, which God Himself has brought forth for the purpose of creating unity with regard to science, has declared the concept of 'origination' (*ibdā'*)⁶⁵ to be null and void (*bāṭil*). And yet, anyone who negates (*bāṭil konad*) creation has become a *kāfir*; just as God says, 'We did not create in vain (*bāṭilan*) the heavens and the earth and what is between them. That is the guess of those who are ungrateful. Woe to the ungrateful because of the Fire.'⁶⁶ This is the cause of the overmastering ignorance of most people.

[19] Because these would-be scholars have branded anyone who studies the science of creation as a *kāfir*, those who do seek out the 'how' and the 'why' have been struck dumb. Those who expound this knowledge have fallen speechless; ignorance has taken over people's minds, and especially the people of our land of Khurāsān and the realms of the East. The

65. 'Origination', i.e., *ibdā'*, a key Ismaili concept comparable to *creatio ex nihilo*; see, among others, NKh's contemporary, the Ismaili author Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī (d. 557/1162), *Kitāb kanz al-walad*, ed. M. Ghālib (Wiesbaden, 1971), pp. 32–66, where he states (pp. 43–44), 'Ibdā', is a [creation] from nothing, "creation" (*khālq*) is from something' (*fa-kana al-ibdā' min laysa wa'l khālq min aysa*). For a discussion, see Paul F. Walker, 'The Ismaili Vocabulary of Creation', *SI* 40 (1974), pp. 75–85, and *idem*, 'The Ismā'īlīs', in Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 79–91. For the concept in the thought of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', see Carmela Baffioni, 'Ibdā', Divine Imperative and Prophecy in the *Rasā'il Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'*, in O. Ali de-Unzaga (ed.), *Fortresses of the Intellect: Ismaili and Other Islamic Studies in Honour of Farhad Daftary* (London and New York, 2011), pp. 213–226. See also note 377 below.

66. Q38:27, tr. Jones. Here NKh plays on the word *bāṭil* in both its Qur'ānic and logical senses. The original sense of *kāfir*, as reflected in Jones's translation, is 'ungrateful', rather than 'unbelieving'; cf. Ullmann, *WKAS*, vol. 1, pp. 261ff.

amīr of Badakhshān ‘Ayn al-Dawlah wa’l-Dīn, Zayn al-Millāh, Shams al-A‘lā, Abū al-Ma‘ālī ‘Alī b. al-Asad,⁶⁷ says in this sense:⁶⁸

The learned man’s glory lies in his knowledge and culture.
 The ignorant man’s glory lies in gowns and stolen finery.⁶⁹
 The learning and refinement of the scholar have now become
 Contemptible – how many men possess culture today?
 Nobodies are at the forefront while the delighting
 Superior men are shoved to a far remove – an astonishment!
 No one knows the cause of this, apart from Him
 Who is the cause of all causes.
 ‘Alī b. al-Asad says so: From top to bottom
 The world is pain and toilsomeness (*ta‘ab*).

[20] Nobody writes books on the how and the why of creation for the simple reason that of the five causes which every book must have, as we affirmed earlier, the fifth cause is lacking; that is, the perfective cause which is the seeker after that knowledge, as is the teacher of such knowledge, who is the efficient cause. With the disappearance of these two causes from the people of this region, the science of religion has disappeared as well. In this region nobody is left who has retained in his mind how he might reconcile the science of true religion, which is one of the products of the Holy Spirit, with the science of creation, which is one of the necessary concomitants (*‘alā’iq*) of philosophy. As a result, the philosopher considers those who call themselves scholars of religion to be on a par with the beasts, and because of their ignorance, he holds the religion of Islam in contempt. Meanwhile these would-be scholars call the philosopher a *kāfir*. Thus, neither true religion nor philosophy remains in the region. So long as the philosopher is not himself religious ...⁷⁰

When I arrived in this land [of Khurāsān] from the holy and prophetic presence – may God augment his sanctity – with a command from

67. The dedicatee of the present work who gave NKh refuge in Yumgān. Little is known of this Ismaili ruler; cf. F. Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlis: Their History and Doctrines* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2007), pp. 206–207, where he is described as ‘the autonomous *amīr* of Badakhshān’.

68. The metre is *khafif makhbūn mahdhūf*; cf. F. Thiesen, *A Manual of Classical Persian Prosody* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 148–151.

69. The word used is *salb*, which denotes both clothing and plunder.

70. There is a lacuna in the text here.

the true Imam, the offspring of the chosen Emissary, and the inheritor of his ancestor's exalted rank, the keeper of his sagacious wisdom – Ma'add Abū Tamīm, the Imam, the Prince of Believers⁷¹ – the prayers of God be upon him, his immaculate ancestors, and his illustrious descendants – I had already made a study of the writings of the masters of philosophy, and I had a sound grasp of the science of true religion, including that very science of [esoteric] interpretation (*ta'wil*) which holds the inner meaning of the Book of the Sacred Law (*sharī'a*).

In the year 460 [1070] of the Hijra of the Prophet, the *amīr* of Badakhshān, known as 'Ayn al-Dawla Abū al-Ma'ālī 'Alī b. al-Asad al-Ḥārith – may God strengthen him in triumph – who is vigilant, astute, brilliant, incisive of intellect, far-sighted, subtle in reflection, correct in his opinions, possessed of a powerful memory, pure of heart, utterly praiseworthy, and yet, alongside all these virtues and merits, is a religious man – sent to me a *qaṣīda* by Master Abū al Haytham Aḥmad b. al-Hasan al-Jurjānī⁷² – may God have mercy on him – in which he posed many questions, and which the *amīr* had written down in his own hand, and at the end he said, 'I have written this from my own memory'. Entreatingly, and with the utmost self-effacement, modesty, and warmth of affection, he – who did not regard persons, whether princes, sultans, earthly rulers, as his equal – asked me with the choicest and gentlest of words to resolve the questions in that poem in his name (*bi-nām-i ū*).

I was delighted in the close familiarity with which this intelligent prince and astute king observed the truths of the sciences and the finer points of philosophy, and at the same time confronted the world in all its

71. The Fatimid Imam-caliph Ma'ad b. al-Zahir, Abu Tamīm al-Mustanşir bi'llah (reg. 427–487/1036–1094); cf. C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties* (New York, 1996), pp. 63–65; H. A. R. Gibb and P. Kraus, 'al-Mustanşir Bi'llah', *EI2*, vol. 7, pp. 729–732; F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlis*, pp. 196–198, and *passim*. On the prominence of the Fatimid *da'wa* during his long reign, see F. Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London and New York, 2005), p. 125.

72. Almost nothing is known of this fourth/tenth-century Ismaili master; cf. F. Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London and New York, 2004), p. 106; I. K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, CA, 1977), p. 76; W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographic Survey* (Tehran, 1963), p. 161 (no. 751). His *qaṣīda* was also commented upon by Muḥammad b. Surkh Nishāpūri (10th/11th c.) and the commentary edited by H. Corbin and M. Mu'in under the title *Sharḥ-i qaṣīdah-yi Fārsī*. See note 1 above.

enticements and sat in the place of honour in his exalted position with regal mien, such that that place constituted an assembly and a meeting place for free men, searchers out of the world; and in a kingdom inherited from his ancestors, he was king. And I thank God that in this age when most people have turned their backs on true religion, when the bazaar of wisdom is laden with shoddy goods and the very character (*mizāj*) of the scholars of the sacred law is corrupt, I have found a great man, equally at home with worldly rule (*wilāyat-i dunyā*) and with the stages of otherworldly rule (*wilāyat-i din*), and whose rule and heritage (*mulk va mirāth*) – not to mention the fact that he has forcefully subdued the enemies of his most illustrious ancestors – have not succeeded in distracting him from the search for religious knowledge and the contemplation of essential truths.

[21] Since the efficient cause of this book is present in me while the formal cause existed within the forms of learning in my own mind; since the instrumental and material causes were [also] present; while the final cause as well stood at hand in this great man among the seekers of religion; and since I was settled in an impregnable place;⁷³ while only the requisite occasion remained so that the appearance of this book might become necessary, it was thus imperative that the book actually come to be. Since the foundation of this book lies in the resolution of religious problems and philosophical perplexities, I have entitled it *Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*. In it I have spoken both to the sages of religion, using verses from God's Book and from the Traditions of His Prophet, and to the sages of philosophy and the experts in logic, employing rational proofs⁷⁴ together with premises leading to satisfying conclusions. For the treasury of wisdom lies in the secret heart of him who is the seal and the heir of the prophets – upon them be peace – and yet, there is also a whiff (*shammātī*) of wisdom in the writings of the ancients. To begin with, we shall transcribe that *qaṣida* which we discovered through the prince's recollection. Then, if it please God, we shall turn our attention to the arrangement of the book.

73. Apparently a reference to Yumgān, where he found protection under the *amīr* himself.

74. Again, Arabic technical terms from logic adapted to Persian: *burhan-ha* yi 'aqlī ('rational proofs') and *muqaddimāt-i muntij-i mufarrij* ('premises leading to satisfying conclusions'); cf. M. S. Sheikh, *A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy* (Lahore, 1976), pp. 25, 131, 134.

The *Qaṣīda* of Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-Jurjānī⁷⁵

[22] The shaykh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan Jurjānī says:

- (1) The form of each species (*nawʿ*) is one; there is no getting away from that.
Why then is the individual appearance⁷⁶ of every form multiple?
- (2) For what reason is substance one but there are nine accidents – Not ten and not eight – fixed within it?⁷⁷
- (3) Why are there seven and twelve imams in name
While the elements are, by common consent, four?
- (4) Why does the share of the three 'kingdoms' not surpass three?
What is this thing which is one stuff yet numberless in aspect?
- (5) Why does a body when full of sustenance not contain more
But suffers distress if you keep on adding more to it?
- (6) And there's another substance here below that nothing can fill,
Neither by prophecy nor by vision nor by instruction (*ishʿār*).
- (7) What is this thing, and what that one, and on what basis are they so?
What sort of thing is it which rules over both of these two?
- (8) The sign of that which is invisible is that it makes a sign
Of something which is visible and leads finally to vision.⁷⁸

75. The metre is *mujtathth muthamman maqṣūr*; see F. Thiesen, *A Manual*, pp. 144–148.

76. The original is *hayʿat*, literally, 'shape' or 'aspect'. See Nishāpūri, *Sharḥ-i qaṣīdah-yi*, p. 3.

77. By 'substance' (*jawhar*) is meant the fundamental nature of any thing – what makes it what it is – whereas 'accident' (*ʿarad*) denotes a non-essential quality which inheres in a substance, e.g., skin colour in human beings.

78. The analogical process, much favoured by Muʿtazilite theologians, of *qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*, i.e., the 'inference of the invisible from the visible', on which see J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAḍudaddīn al-ʿIṣī* (Wiesbaden,

- (9) Seven lights shine: from them everything receives
A fire in the measure of their subtlest qualities (*laṭā'if*).
- (10) First is eternity (*dahr*) – what is it? Eternity, truth, and pleasure –
Again, [what is] the proof, since time passes so fast?
- (11) Perfection and occultation (*ghaybat*), the noblest of all –
For there is the remedy where no remedy is at all.
- (12) Should you speak to me of Universal Nature⁷⁹ in the first principles
Of its state,⁸⁰ then will I know that you are among the just.
- (13) Tell me yet again of both its form and its attribute,
For I prefer this a hundred times more than the music of flutes.
- (14) Angel, *pari*, demon – I know that they exist and indeed,
That they must exist, but tell me yet again
- (15) Of the what and the how: give me demonstrative proof
If you want this discourse of yours to emerge from its veil.
- (16) What is the One in whom the many exist, absolute in uniqueness?
Why do you call Him Creator and Compeller?
- (17) One whom neither doubling nor halving affects;
Who neither increases nor lessens in number?
- (18) One by necessity or by approximation, not by exactitude (*taḥiqq*) –
How can such statements be understood?
- (19) What is genus, not species, and species, not genus?
What is it that is now one genus, now another species altogether?
- (20) What was the world at a time when it was gladness entire
And those two ominous stars had not delayed in their course?⁸¹
- (21) Now the whole world is an evil star (*nahas*) while those two
Benignant stars keep rising and setting, moving, and circling.
- (22) And tomorrow will be just like yesterday, as it has been
Handed down by prophets and sages and illustrious *dhimmīs*.⁸²
- (23) What is 'yesterday', what 'today'? And 'tomorrow' – what's that?
From such as these, what direction; from such as these, what deed?

1966), pp. 381ff.; for the background to this ancient method of inference, see James Allen, *Inference from Signs: Ancient Debates about the Nature of Evidence* (Oxford, 2001).

79. 'Universal nature' for *ṭabī'at-i kullī* in the text.

80. Persian: *awwalīyāt-i ḥāl*.

81. Nishāpuri, p. 41, has 'stood in their course', instead of 'delayed in their course'.

82. *Dhimmīyān-i hamvār*.

- (24) That lead [breaks] diamond, that the magnet draws iron –
What is the cause for each of these, and how do they work?
- (25) How is it that the ruby wards off cholera?
How does the emerald pluck out the serpent's two eyes?
- (26) If a leopard bites a man, why does a mouse
Spring from the roof and the wall with many wives?
- (27) In the city of Ahwāz, nobody is free from fever but
In Tibet, no inhabitant experiences its miseries – why?
- (28) It is not because of its nature (*ṭabʿ*). What is its property? asks one;
What, asks the astute observer, is this property's 'root' (*aṣl-i khāṣṣīyat*)?
- (29) What is the distinction between rational discourse, speech, and talk,
Since in Persian there is only one word but its meanings are many?⁸³
- (30) Beginningless eternity, continuing time, eternity, and ever-
lastingness –
What is the distinction a clever man makes between each of these?⁸⁴
- (31) Why is discourse fourfold: imperative, then vocative,
Then third, declarative, and fourth, interrogative?⁸⁵
- (32) Of the nature (*ḥāl*) of form (*ḥayʿat*) and of the *proprium* (*khāṣṣah*),
Of description and definition, what do you know or have heard?
Speak and instruct!
- (33) Everyone joins the self to 'I' but to what does this I refer?
Speak, do not just scratch your beard!
- (34) Is it the body? Or the soul (*jān*)? The intellect? Or the spirit (*ravān*)?
Or is it like the amalgam of horse and man in the knight?⁸⁶
- (35) Whoever holds this view is mistaken: there are
Many knights who do not know how to fasten their trousers!
- (36) There's many a man who considers himself a weighty 'I',
Who does not attain the measure of a mote when weighed.⁸⁷
- (37) A solar eclipse certainly occurs because of the moon's mass,
But why does the lofty and luminous moon then turn black as pitch?

83. 'Rational discourse' is *nutq*, 'discourse' is *kalām*, and 'talk' is *qawl* in the original.

84. 'Beginningless eternity' (*azal*), 'continuing time' (*hamishah*), 'eternity' (*daymūmiyat*), and 'everlastingness' (*abad*) are the terms used in the original.

85. In the original, these are *amr*, *nida*, *khavar*, and *istikhabar*, respectively.

86. A notion which goes back to Plato; cf. *Phaedrus*, 246, in *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton, 1978), p. 493.

87. A play on words: *man* denotes both 'I' and 'weight'.

- (38) Why does the light not pass down from the sun to the moon
Like the glass which the light from a fire passes through?
- (39) Since the moon is clearer than any glass, why does the sun
Find it so difficult to pierce it with its rays?
- (40) Stronger is man than animal in every circumstance,
Greater in his stratagems, in his savvy a conjuror –
- (41) Why then does man need someone to take charge of him, a nurse
And a schedule, for bedtime and holding him on her breasts and
lap?
- (42) The animals, the birds, the savage beasts, are much weaker than he,
And yet he must toil for his livelihood, just to eat and to sleep.
- (43) If I were to ask you for a proof of creation (*ibdāʿ*),
What could you offer to make it plain in my sight?
- (44) What is this thing, not from anything, though it seems a thing?
How can you make these secrets plain?
- (45) Is it true that God created a single man and then,
Because he was sad, from his body made a mate?
- (46) And then, from these two, that He created a progeny,
Children, a profusion of grandchildren, an innumerable tribe?
- (47) If you deny this, the *sūrat al-Nisāʾ* is the evidence
That He created a one and out of this, thousands upon thousands.⁸⁸
- (48) If you agree, how is it that the individual came first
And then the species? Put that in your pipe and smoke it!⁸⁹
- (49) First comes genus, then species, and then the individual;
That is the way of philosophy, indisputably and incontestably.
- (50) There is, as in chess, one question which has arisen;
Everyone seeks a solution for it.
- (51) Namely, whether intellect or knowledge is superior, which takes
precedence?
What donkey-loads of lavish nonsense have I heard on these two!
- (52) How can anyone who has not learned have knowledge?
No carpenter can do his job without a tool in his hand.
- (53) No one who has not gained humility through instruction (*taʿlim*)
Can pass beyond to the glories of knowledge.
- (54) Because they do not know intellect's definition – and knowledge,
What's that? – they make asinine pronouncements all unblushingly.

88. This is 'Women', the fourth *sūra* of the Qur'ān.

89. Literally, 'think about that!' (*khirad be-dīn bigumār*).

- (55) They draw analogies between the Creator's knowledge and their own;
Ineluctably they stray without hope from the Right Path.
- (56) A distinction must be made between 'perceiver' and 'perception'
If a man means to wake from the slumber of heedlessness.
- (57) Is it right to say that the heavens appeared first, since they're mightier,
And that then the earth, the mountains, and the sea appeared?
- (58) Or that earth appeared first, being the centre of the sphere,
While the rondure (*dā'irah*) was still but a point in the sphere?
- (59) But then, if you reckon thus, how does the earth stand firm
While all around the emptiness of the spinning sphere revolves?
- (60) Who can distinguish the circle's beginning or its end?
Of the chicken and the egg, nothing can be said that's not weak.
- (61) Does being rightly pertain to all while some part is non-being?
If that is right, then furnish me with a proof!
- (62) If not, then genus comes first and then species, and then
After both of these, the individual, as in a chain.
- (63) Why does one speak of Saturn as first of the planets?
Why does the seed of spring have the nature of fire?
- (64) Why is Leo the house of the sun and Cancer
The house of the moon, which form a solid fortress?
- (65) Why is a single 'house' enough for these two while
The others all have two, to the right and the left?
- (66) Two of these planets are utterly ominous, two are auspicious –
What are the ominous and auspicious effects of the other three?
- (67) Why does a male child turn his face on high when he's born,
While female babies turn their napes toward their genitals?
- (68) Why is wetness more evident in water
Such that any dry thing may be moistened by it?
- (69) The air is more humid, in reality, than water;
Air is known by its very nature for its humidity.
- (70) Now my discourse turns tedious. I will let it drop here.
It is become heavy and I fear the weight of its burden.
- (71) I pose questions but my object is neither to pester nor probe.
I've strewed these at such length to offer benefit.
- (72) I'd answer in verse if things weren't now as they are:
The nettle has usurped the place of the date.
- (73) But if not in verse, then I'll speak in prose and make
A forest of words so that wisdom may pluck the fruit of my trees.

- (74) I'll advance my argument and will fashion a cloak
Made out of demonstration, with a turban of proof.
- (75) Seek and write! Then read and question! Afterwards
Learn and then know and sow it all in your heart.
- (76) The lion's prey is the stag, that of the panther the gazelle.
But knowledge and wisdom are the wise man's prey.
- (77) The man of knowledge is not dead, even in the tomb;
The ignorant man is a corpse, even on a throne.
- (78) I'll be greatly gladdened if the answers come
From someone who brings proof and possesses the call (*da'vā-dār*).
- (79) But let him who has not learned and who lacks foundation
Keep still; his discourse has no weight in measure or criterion.
- (80) O You who ordain destinies, Originator of all things,
By the reverence and veneration of Aḥmad the Chosen,
- (81) Save us and those who seek the knowledge of the faith
From the talons of tribulation, O Forgiver of Sins!
- (82) And whoever does evil to those who do no evil,
Him, O Lord, do Thou curse and deliver to the pit!

[23] I have considered it most necessary, by way of introduction, to expose what is beneficial in this subject, namely, the premises (*muḍmirāt*) of the sciences and their hidden aspects. This is the true science of religion, the entirety of which is to know God in His sheer uniqueness and to establish His absolute oneness, far from anthropomorphism (*tashbih*) and free from any denial of His attributes (*ta'tīl*), as is sealed by the noble rank and creaturely devotion in the laudable standing and tremendous virtue of the Chosen Emissary, Muḥammad – may God bless him and give him peace – as well as by the pre-eminence of his religion over every other religion.

[24] Well then, now to explicate that on which the community differs – and because of which its members execrate one another and term them '*kāfir*' – namely, the specification of the imam, which goes to the heart of the whole community, in succession to the Emissary of God and his family.⁹⁰

90. This seems to indicate that some text is missing here since NKh does not discuss this topic.

On the Proof of the Creator's Existence with a Discussion of His Oneness, in Several Discourses

(a) On the Creator's Existence

[25] In our view, most people, notwithstanding their numerous customs and convictions, can be categorised. One category consists of 'materialists' (*dahriyān*).⁹¹ These deny divine attributes and assert that the world is eternal and that there is no creator; or rather, that the creator of the animal and vegetable kingdoms is the heavenly spheres and the stars themselves⁹² which always have been and always will be.

Another category consists of those who affirm a Creator and follow him. Of these, there is one group which holds that the creator is more than one, e.g., Christianity which professes three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There are also dualists (*thanawīyān*) who profess two [creators], one of whom is Yazdān and the other Ahriman, and they believe light and darkness to be eternal (*qadīm*). Still another group says that the Creator is one and yet, even though they affirm a single creator, they fall into five categories.

The first of these [five groups] claims that the Creator is one but that worship of the One is manifold. They are idolators who while acknowledging God say, 'We worship idols so that they may bring us closer to

91. This is the conventional translation of this term, but see *EI2*, vol. 1, pp. 95–97; the designation came to apply to those who asserted the eternity of the world as well as those who denied an afterlife (cf. Q45:24: 'They say, "There is only our life in this world: we die, we live, nothing but time (*al-dahr*) destroys us"', tr. Abdel Haleem).

92. Here reading *khūd* (instead of *khirad*), following a suggestion of F. M. Hunzai.

God', just as God says, 'Those who take protectors to His exclusion, [saying], "We serve them only that they might bring us closer to God".'⁹³

The practitioners of *ta'wil* say that this statement is comparable to that of members of the community who claim that 'We ought to love those persons who, beyond Muḥammad and his family, of themselves increase our closeness [to God].'

Christians form another group. They believe that God is three, but that all three are one and to be worshipped.

Dualists are another group. They hold that the Eternal is two but that Yazdān, the object of their worship, is one.

The philosophers make a fourth group. They say that it is not for creatures to worship Him, but rather, to know Him, His power, might, and dominion.

The fifth group consists of the upholders of monotheism. They say that God is one and alone to be worshipped.

[26] Since we have established that God is one, all the doctrines of the materialists, together with those of the Christians and the dualists, become invalid. The monotheists, who hold that God is one and the sole object of worship, also form three groups, notwithstanding their many differences of opinion.

One is the group of unthinking conformity (*taqlid*). Most people belong with them. They hold to the outer meaning of the Book (*zāhīr-i kitāb*) and say, 'We ascribe to God those attributes which He ascribes to Himself in His Book. Any attribute which is not fitting for Him, even if that attribute appears in His Book, we neither acknowledge nor profess, since "Only God knows its interpretation".'⁹⁴ And beyond this they do not go.

Yet another group consists of the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimān*) of the Mu'tazilites and Karramites. They say that 'Speculative reasoning (*naẓar*) about God's oneness is obligatory, and that by means of proofs and rational speculation, we reject any anthropomorphism in regard to God.'

The third group is the Shī'a, members of the Prophet's household, who say, 'Exegesis applies to God's Book. Through rational exegesis we say that we reject the ascription of creaturely traits to the Creator, and that between [the extremes of] anthropomorphism and denial of attributes, there is [yet another] position, which is our position on divine

93. Q39:3.

94. Q3:7.

oneness.' They adduce a tradition of the Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq – upon him be peace – who when asked, 'Does the truth lie in anthropomorphism or in denial of attributes?', replied, '[There is] a position between the two positions.'⁹⁵

[27] Each of these three groups of monotheists claims equally that 'The truth of divine oneness is the truth which we hold.' We shall provide an extensive discussion on the monotheism of each of these three groups who profess it. We shall establish the gist and the quintessence of the doctrine of each in a chapter. And by means of logical argument and conclusive proof, we shall demonstrate what is true and what false in their doctrines. We will correct the weakness of what is weak but will not reject what is true, so that intelligent readers of this book of ours may know that, for us, religion is both truth and salvation; that we have come to it through spiritual discernment; and that we are truly followers of the authentic lineage and of the veracious Imams from the children of God's Emissary – not out of unthinking conformity nor out of partisan passion. We ask for success from God in exposing the truth and in following it, for He is good, He accords success, He is quick to assist.

[28] We state first that there is consensus among these three groups of monotheists to the effect that God is devoid of the attributes of His creatures. This is the monotheism of the 'prattling literalists'⁹⁶ within the

95. *Manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*, the early and defining Mu'tazilite principle, one of their five articles of faith, which W. Montgomery Watt terms 'the doctrine of the Intermediate Condition', i.e., 'the doctrine that those who commit grave sins are neither unbelievers (as the Khawārij say) nor believers (as the Murji'a say), but are in an intermediate condition'. *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London, 1948), p. 63. Here it is invoked as an intermediate position between two positions on divine attributes.

96. The 'prattling literalists', or *hashwiyan* (Ar. *hashwiya*), were those who espoused a clumsy and simplistic approach to scriptural interpretation, taking the 'anthropomorphic' verses at face value; the term was used by the Mu'tazilites to lampoon their opponents, including most of the traditionists, or *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, of the day. The designation took on broadly contemptuous overtones, e.g., 'the rabble', 'the scum of the populace'. NKh uses it here in its original sense to identify the crudest sort of anthropomorphist. See further, *El2*, vol. 3, p. 269; T. Mayer, 'Theology and Sufism', in T. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 262; J. van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), p. 10. But see also J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre*,

community. This group is made up of those who explicate the Qur'ān and the Law according to its outward sense, even while acknowledging that God is not to be described by creaturely attributes and that 'nothing is like unto Him'. They adduce this verse from God's Book as proof of this position, to wit, '*There is nothing like unto Him, He is hearing, seeing.*'⁹⁷ In this way they state that God is one, which is both right and true, but then, on the basis of the exoteric statement in the Book, declare that God is also knowing, seeing, and hearing.

We say that through this pronouncement this group has stepped outside of the consensus of monotheists. And this is why: a consensus holds that God may not be described by the attributes of creatures and that He retains none of the features of His creation. If a man may be knowing, seeing, and hearing, and if God too may be knowing, seeing, and hearing, then, in conformity with the teaching of such unthinking believers, that man must necessarily be like God. Nevertheless, this is downright anthropomorphism which they profess.

[29] And so we have established clearly that this group which affirms that nothing is like God contradicts itself and breaks faith, for they persist in claiming that man, like God, is knowing, seeing, and hearing. When this group discusses the literal aspect of the Book (*zāhir-i kitāb*), their interpretation of the outer sense of the verse, '*There is nothing like unto Him, He is hearing, seeing*', must be such as to read, 'Nothing is like unto Him and yet, He is hearing and seeing.' Hence, the end of the verse, which states that He is hearing and seeing, stands in contradiction to its beginning, which states that 'nothing is like unto Him', since man too, according to the exotericists' view, is seeing and hearing just like God. Nevertheless, God's word cannot be contradictory (*mutanāqid*). Hence, some exegesis is needed to elucidate this verse. The exotericist says, however, that God's knowledge, hearing, and seeing are essential and real, whereas man's knowledge, hearing, and seeing are figurative (*majāzī*) and 'borrowed' (*ʿarīyatī*).

We respond as follows: What do you say when an intelligent man, clear-eyed and keen of ear, observes the sun bright and shining in the sky, and knows that it is the sun and that it is shining. And then he hears from somebody else that the sun is shining; he sees that the bright sun is

p. 121, where they are mentioned as partisans of 'direct inspiration' (*ilhām*) rather than rational discourse and attacked as such by al-Jāhiz.

97. Q42:11.

shining and he knows that the sun is shining while at the same time he hears that other person's statement – does he say that the sun is shining or not? Now, if he wants to distinguish 'real and essential' knowing from 'figurative and borrowed' knowing, he will say, 'God does not see that the sun is shining and does not see its brightness; moreover, if someone says, "The sun is shining", He hears him as saying, "The sun is dark"', – this, in order to differentiate God's knowledge, hearing, and seeing, from man's. And yet, this is absurd and heretical, of necessity, for anybody to say of God.

Now, if he should say, 'God knows the sun is shining and He sees its brightness and He also hears the statement of that person who says, "The sun is shining", just as that man must have heard it', it must be conceded that that man with his knowledge, seeing, and hearing is comparable to God. An exotericist will not be able to deny this 'likening', which we consider a necessary inference from his position, by any arguments, except perhaps by saying, 'God sees us but we do not see Him.'

[30] They say too that the most distinctive as well as the noblest of God's names – exalted is He – is 'Allah'. [For them], its meaning, in Arabic, must be that He sees others while they do not see Him. And they adduce this verse in explication:

My Lord is wholly concealed from creatures,
For Allah is unseen though He Himself sees.⁹⁸

To this we respond by saying that it is not good for the exotericists to ascribe this sort of thing to God. On the contrary, this is quite a vile form of 'likening', since God Himself says, 'Iblis and his minions see you while you see them not', as in the verse, '*He and his tribe see you from where you do not see them.*'⁹⁹ Anyone who makes pronouncements about the knowledge of *tawhīd* (divine oneness) on the basis of his own murky opinion and explicates revelation – as this group continually does, imagining that in what they say about *tawhīd* they are offering praise – in fact deserves blame. And this is just what the exotericists do.

98. Verses given in Arabic (metre: *khafif*). Note the paronomasia of *laha* and *Allāh* to enhance the connection; *lāha* is glossed as 'to be concealed' (*ihṭajaba*), according to the corresponding note in Corbin and Mu'in, p. 36, citing M. b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tafsīr al-tibyān*, vol. 1, p. 11 (Tehran, 1362).

99. Q7:27.

Whoever in his ignorance blames instead of praises is heading through error away from the path to Paradise and towards the fires of Hell. With reference to the error of Noah's folk, God Himself says, '*Because of their sins they were drowned and put into a fire; and they found no helpers apart from God.*'¹⁰⁰

For literalist exegetes this verse applies to Noah's folk who were drowned in the flood. But for those who interpret and seek the innermost meaning, God's word in the Qur'an takes the form of an example, as He says, '*In this Qur'ān We have coined every kind of example for mankind.*'¹⁰¹ God sent this noble Book by the agency of Gabriel and the mediation of Muḥammad, His chosen one – peace be upon him – to us, who are His chosen people. It is incumbent upon us not to toss aside the examples which are in the Book but rather, to recognise them as admonitions and warnings from God Himself. In Persian, *mathal* means 'like' (*mānand*). Therefore, it is obligatory for us not to be like those who furnish a bad example in their doings but instead, to be like those who set a good example in what they do. God says, '*Those who do not believe in the world have an evil likeness, while God has the supreme likeness. He is mighty and wise.*'¹⁰² The exoteric interpreters do not apply the examples from God's Book to themselves. They will go down to ruin under God's chastisement, just as He said about 'Ād (i.e., the people of Hūd) and Thamūd (i.e., the people of Šālīḥ) and the 'people of the well' (*aṣḥāb al-rass*), that is, those who were Shu'ayb's folk. 'We set them as examples and We destroyed them all for they did not take in hand the examples they were given': '*And 'Ād and Thamud and the companions of al-Rass and many generations between that, for each of them We have coined examples, and each We destroyed completely.*'¹⁰³

[31] Those who practise *ta'wil* say that the cycle of the Prophet is the present, in accord with the Tradition, 'It stands with my house as with Noah's Ark: those who board it are saved, while those who stay away from it are drowned.' In keeping with this Tradition, anyone from this community who does not embark on the ship where Noah is and take his seat in this boat, finds destruction in the whirlwind of ignorance and the sea of strife. We hold that the destruction which God pronounces

100. Q71:25, tr. Jones.

101. Q30:58.

102. Q16:60.

103. Q25:38–39, tr. Jones.

over 'Ād, Thamūd, and the people of al-Rass is no bodily destruction or physical death; rather, it is the death of ignorance and error which makes eternal punishment inescapable. The proof of the rightness of this is that God caused these peoples, as well as their prophets – Hūd and Shu'ayb and Ṣāliḥ – to suffer bodily death. What then was the difference between the death of a *kāfir* and that of the prophets? Just as He uses this verse to call the destruction of sinners to mind, so too does this statement prove that their prophets suffered the same destruction as they did.

[32] Thus we have shown that sinners' destruction is not merely through physical death but rather, is a fatal waywardness (*ḥalāk-i dalālat*), such that the Prophet – may God bless him – could say, 'Say: "Have you considered? If God destroys me and those who are with me, or if He has mercy on us, who will protect unbelievers from a painful torment?"'¹⁰⁴

[33] For us it is beyond any doubt that God will show mercy to the Prophet – may God bless him – and to those who were with him. Just as He was merciful to him, as this verse establishes, He did not destroy him – the condition in the verse being stipulated as either death or mercy – and yet, He did cause Muḥammad to die. So is it affirmed that God does not desire the destruction of sinners through physical death; on the basis of this verse, it is established that it is not physical destruction through bodily death. So, too, Noah's Ark is not a thing of wood but the Prophet's household; Noah's flood is not of water but instead, of ignorance and waywardness. And this is the downfall of sinners.¹⁰⁵

[34] To return to the notion of *tawḥīd* held by unreflective believers (*ahl-i taqlīd*). From our viewpoint, they keep making the claim to practise literal exegesis while again and again, and in many instances, evading literal interpretation, engaging in hermeneutics, or simply bickering in their ignorance. Thus, in the Qur'an, God uses the term 'face', as in the verse, 'Wherever you turn, there is the face of God. God is encompassing and knowing.'¹⁰⁶ The correct interpretation of this is that in whatever direction you may turn your face, there is the face of God, for God is vast and God is knowing.

104. Q67:28, tr. Jones.

105. This passage might be described as a good capsule example of Ismaili *ta'wil*.

106. Q2:115. On this verse and its exegesis, see F. Hamza, S. Rizvi, and F. Mayer (eds), *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, vol. 1 (London, 2009), pp. 67–127.

To take the exoteric interpretation of this verse, this world must be within God's face, and that is vaster than the heavens, which form the uppermost sphere,¹⁰⁷ and the entirety of the world is within His vast space; this must be God's face, such that whichever way we turn our faces, the face of God must be there. But unreflective believers (*ahl-i taqlid*) say, by this is meant the *qibla*, that is, the abode of the Ka'ba.

[35] Three absurdities arise from this position of theirs, and necessarily so. First, it makes it necessary that this noble abode, made by men out of stone and wood, must be, according to them, God's face. This is a colossal absurdity. In fact, it is *kufr* (unbelief). Second, if anyone stands in prayer with his back toward the Ka'ba, his face will [still] be toward the *qibla*. This too is absurd. A third absurdity is that they have turned God's word awry. God says, 'God's face is in this direction', and elsewhere, '*Everything is perishing except His face. To Him belongs the judgement and to Him you will be returned.*'¹⁰⁸ The pig-headed of the community interpret this to mean that everything passes away but that God does not, and they claim that 'face of God' here denotes His ipseity;¹⁰⁹ they do not take 'face' here to mean *qibla*. Both these interpretations are absurd. This is because 'face' in Arabic must mean 'the face of a thing', not the 'direction' or the 'essence' of something. This is not an interpretation (*tafsir*), this is a distortion (*tahrif*), of God's word. God reproaches any group who alters His word from its place, as He says, '*they distort (yuharrifun) words from their places*'.¹¹⁰

[36] The uneducated rabble say that this verse refers to the Jews who altered the description of the Prophet in the Torah. The exegetes, however, state that God's word is on a par with prophethood; by this is meant any group which has diverted the Imamate from the Prophet's household, where it belongs. Elsewhere God says, '*There is no changing the words of God.*'¹¹¹ This is the sense we mentioned earlier, and which God states. He

107. On the spheres, see NKh's discussion in his *Safarnama*, p. 130; and below, pp. 69, 103–107, 243ff.

108. Q28:88.

109. From Arabic *huwiyah*, a technical term in Kalam denoting the 'itness' or quiddity of a thing, its 'self-identity', comparable to the term *ammiyah*, the 'thatness' of something; cf. M. S. Sheikh, *A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy*, p. 20; J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre*, pp. 210, 452 ('Identität; Selbst').

110. Q5:41.

111. Q10:64.

mentions His prophet in several passages as His 'hand', namely, 'Those who swear loyalty to you are only swearing loyalty to God. God's hand is over their hands.'¹¹²

[37] Slavish conformists differ over the meaning of 'hand of God' in this verse. Some say its meaning is 'allegiance to God'. Others say it is 'God's power'. Still others say it means 'God's people', and there are yet others who claim that it means 'God's favour'. And yet, what God says is *yad Allāh*, 'God's hand', not allegiance to God nor God's power nor God's people nor God's favour. The divergence among them over this issue has come about because they have twisted God's words.

Elsewhere God relates that He said to Iblīs, 'O Iblīs! What has prevented you from prostrating yourself to that which I created with My own hands? Are you haughty or are you one of the lofty ones?'¹¹³ According to the exegetes, by 'two hands' He means His two powers.¹¹⁴ But others state that they will not explicate the verse, since they do not know what the meaning of this 'hand' might be; indeed, this hand is without 'why?' and 'how?'.¹¹⁵

[38] Elsewhere God mentions His 'side' (*pahlūʾ*). Thus, He says, 'Lest a soul say, "Alas for my neglect of God. I was indeed one of those who scoffed".'¹¹⁶ The exegetes say that God's action (*kār*) is what is meant by 'side'. Elsewhere too God refers to His 'eye', as in the verse, '[And I bestowed on you love from Me, and (it was)] so that you might be formed under My eye.'¹¹⁷ To Moses He said, 'You shall be My eye and I will see

112. Q48:10.

113. Q38:75, tr. Jones.

114. See, for example, the great Imāmi theologian Ibn Babūya (d. 991), *I'tiqādāt al-imāmiya*, tr. Asaf A. A. Fyzee as *A Shī'ite Creed* (Tehran, 1402/1982), p. 29: '(By two Hands), He means "My power and My strength (*qudra, quwwa*)"', with reference to Q38:75.

115. *in yad bi chūn ve-bi chigūnah ast*: A reference to the Ḥanbalite, and later Ash'arite, creedal formulation *bi-lā kayfa* ('without knowing or being able to say how', i.e., how the physical attributes ascribed to God are to be understood). Cf. the verses by NKh's spiritual mentor, the Fatimid *dā'i*, scholar, and poet al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shirāzi, in his *Dīwān*, ed. M. Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1949), tr. Mohamad Adra as *Mount of Knowledge, Sword of Eloquence* (London and New York, 2011), esp. *qaṣīda* 1: 20–22, p. 36.

116. Q39:56, tr. Jones.

117. Q20:39, tr. Jones.

you.¹¹⁸ To some it seems clear from this statement that there was a time when God did *not* see Moses, until such time as He brought it about that He *did* see Moses with His eye!

Even so, the greatest stumbling-block for the literalists – and it is one which nullifies their conception of *tawhīd* – is God's statement, '*They have not measured God with His real measure, when the earth in its entirety will be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! May He be exalted far above that which they associate with Him.*'¹¹⁹ From this verse it seems plain to them that the earth will be a handful in the left hand of God on Judgement Day, since He mentions that the heavens are in His right hand. Since He specifies one hand as the right hand, the other hand must be the left.

[39] Some thick-headed exegetes (*khudrāyān*) claim to accept this verse without knowing how to interpret it. And yet, to declare that one does not know represents ignorance, not knowledge. And so, how does this group which does not understand God's word know God? Like the literalists, they profess adherence to the outer sense of the Book, for there is no interpretation of the Book in their doctrine (*madhhab*). Therefore, according to what they do teach, God possesses a right hand and a left hand, a face, an eye, and a side. And God moves from one place to another, as He says, '*And your Lord and the angels come rank on rank.*'¹²⁰ Nevertheless, these are all attributes proper to created beings. But this verse makes them not proclaimers of God's oneness but rather, anthropomorphists. For this reason, they do acknowledge interpretation and they shouldn't say of themselves, 'We do not claim that God has such limbs as these', after they have rejected our interpretation.

[40] We have now shown clearly that this group who keep claiming to uphold oneness are in fact polytheists. They ascribe creaturely traits to God. This entails granting partnership to man with God in the form of knowledge, hearing, seeing, a face, limbs, and motion from place to place. This group's belief is an admission of polytheism, just as God says, '*And most of them do not believe in God when they associate others with Him.*'¹²¹ This verse is meant for this group. And the great majority, the vulgar run of people, are with them; by their own admission they are ignoramuses.

118. *Yā Mūsā! Chashm-i man bāshī ve tu-rā bīnam.*

119. Q39:67, tr. Jones.

120. Q89:22, tr. Jones.

121. Q12:106, tr. Jones.

They keep on saying, 'We do not know what the interpretation of "God's hands" is', and they distort God's words, as when they claim that the meaning of 'God's face' is the *qibla* and the meaning of 'God's hand' is power, along with the rest of it. They contradict themselves with their own words in this interpretation; namely, in their first pronouncement, that God is without 'why' and 'how', and then, in their explication that God possesses creaturely attributes which permit of 'whyness' and 'howness'. They state that God has ninety-nine names, each of which has its distinct meaning. But any rational person knows that anyone who has ninety-nine names cannot be a single person, for each one of the ninety-nine must have its own essence. Polytheism, not monotheism, underlies this group's teachings.

Having mentioned this group's notion of *tawḥīd* along with their errors and aberrations,¹²² we shall now turn our attention to the pronouncements of yet another group.

(b) The Doctrine of the Dialectical Theologians of the Karramites on *Tawḥīd*

[41] The doctrine of the theologians of the Karramite 'school'¹²³ is as follows. God, they say, is one and nothing is like unto Him. This is the very basis of *tawḥīd*. The [genuine] monotheist, however, is someone who does not violate this principle when he comes to [the question of] God's attributes. Certain of these theologians state that God is a body not like [other] bodies. God is knowing and powerful and living, alongside other laudable attributes, 'in which man too has a share', which they ascribe to Him. Even so, they say, His knowledge is not like other knowledge, nor is His power like other power, nor is His life like other life; His body is unlike other bodies. This is the foundation of this group's teaching on *tawḥīd* and it has numerous offshoots.

122. There is a rhetorical flourish here in the contemptuous rhymes *khalal-hā* and *zalal-hā* ('errors and aberrations'), which is common to such polemics.

123. On this school, founded by Ibn Karrām (ca. 806–869), see *El2*, vol. 4, p. 667 [s.v. 'Karrāmiyya']; Ibn al-Dā'ī, *Kitāb Tabṣirat al-'awāmm*, pp. 64–74, and (on *tashbīh*), pp. 75–86. Also, J. van Ess, *Ungenützte Texte zur Karramiya. Eine Materialsammlung* (Heidelberg, 1980), and his *Theologie und Gesellschaft* (Berlin and New York, 1991–1997), vol. 1, pp. 228, 299, 360; vol. 2, pp. 557, 564f., 570f., 740, 742; vol. 3, pp. 373–424 (*tashbīh*).

[42] We counter that this doctrine of theirs, according to which God is a body unlike other bodies, is a meaningless utterance and quite invalid. Their statement that He is knowing not like other knowers, powerful not like other powerful, and living but not like other forms of life, is absurd. On this point, the *tawhīd* of this group is no *tawhīd*. Quite the opposite: it is polytheism (*shirk*). In proof, know that the discourse of anyone who says, 'He is a body unlike other bodies', is fallacious. The reason is that a body is defined as something of substance which is both divisible and extended; it has three dimensions: length, breadth, and depth. A body is not defined [solely] by colour, weight, or moistness. Just so, fire, though it is hot and dry, bright and mobile, is a body. And water, fire's opposite – cool and wet, dark and still – is distinct from fire in all its qualities, but it too is a body. Corporeality (*jismiyat*) encompasses them both because both occupy space, both are compound, and each of them, opposed as they are, possesses length, breadth, and depth. Anyone who says, 'It is a body not like bodies', is necessarily saying, 'It is a body not a body', and such a statement is contradictory and nonsensical. Just so, if someone says, 'He's a man not like a man' or 'It is a fire not like a fire', he is speaking fallaciously. Whatever a body may be, it has length, breadth, and depth. Thus, anyone who says, 'It is a body', must be saying that it is a thing of substance with length, breadth, and depth; but if he tacks on to this, 'not like bodies', he has said that this substance with length, breadth, and depth is not long or broad or deep. Such a statement must be both invalid and contradictory.

To prove that the doctrine of this bunch, inasmuch as they proclaim God knowing though not like [other] knowers, powerful though not like the powerful, and living not like other living things, is false, we say: There are many men who are learned; as God says of a group of the Israelites, in the verse, '*Is it not a sign for them that the learned of the children of Israel know it?*'¹²⁴ So we ask these (Karramite) theologians what they would say of this group whom God calls 'learned' – do they have a knowledge which is different from God's? If they reply that their knowledge conforms to that of God, they would be affirming that God is similar to them in knowledge, without any disparity; and yet, the opinion they have stated – namely, that God is knowing not like other knowers – must then be contradictory. But if they state that the knowledge of those learned men is different from God's, in order to assert that God is knowing not like other knowers, their

124. Q26:197, tr. Jones.

statement [is also contradictory].¹²⁵ For whoever calls someone knowing 'ignorant' has spoken falsely. Hence, their saying that God's word calls the ignorant 'learned' is a lie (*durūgh*).

[43] It is the same case in the discussion of power (*qudrat*), in which both God and man participate. We say that God commanded human beings to pray and to give alms (*zakāt*). What now does the theologian say [if we should ask]: Does God know that man possesses the power to pray and to give alms, or does He know that man lacks this power? If he responds that God does know that human beings, to whom He has given this command, do not have this power, it must be said then that His commandment constitutes an absurdity, and that His words, '*God charges no soul beyond its capacity*',¹²⁶ stand rejected. But this theologian may reply, 'God's knowledge encompasses the present and the future (*budānī-hā va-būd-hā*), and that the visible and the invisible also lie within His knowledge, whereas man's knowledge encompasses only a small portion of the present. God's power extends to the creation of the heavens and the earth and beyond, while man's power holds sway over only a single household, if even that. Therefore, God is knowing, not as humans are knowing, and powerful, not as humans are powerful.'¹²⁷

[44] We reply to such a theologian as follows: The knowledgeable, the powerful, and the living do not all stand at the same level (*martabat*). Knowledge, power, and life may be big and small, and yet, all share in knowledge, power, and life, by definition. For example, a gnat (*pashah*)¹²⁸ is living and so, too, is a dog; but a dog has the power to run, the gnat the power to fly. So, too, a scholar who has great knowledge is knowing, but even he who has only a little knowledge is also knowing. It is as God says, '*And above every man of knowledge is one who knows*.'¹²⁹ And so God does not exclude a man of lesser knowledge from the definition of knowledge because of the greater knowledge of a more learned man;

125. There is a lacuna in the text here, but the sense seems to be clear; cf. Corbin and Mu'in (eds), *Jamī'*, p. 47, note 1, which suggests the reading *naqq kardah bāshand*.

126. Q2:286, tr. Jones.

127. This is the classic Ash'arite formulation, derived from the Hanbalites.

128. The gnat is a much favoured example, derived from Q2:26: '*God does not disdain to give a parable about a gnat ...*'; cf. my *Theodicy in Islamic Thought* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 45–48.

129. Q12:76, tr. Jones.

indeed, He calls both 'knowing' (*ālīm*). In this way we make it clear (*durust kardīm*)¹³⁰ that the *tawhīd* of anyone who ascribes to God the attributes by which human beings may be described, is in fact polytheism.

[45] If this theologian replies, 'Then if we say that God is not knowing, we must say that He is ignorant. And if you say that my statement which I made, namely, "God is powerful", is false, you are obliged to say that God is powerless (*ʿājiz*). If you argue further that our statement, "God is living", is incorrect, then you must say that He is dead. And this is utter absurdity and unbelief (*kufr*).' We respond to this as follows: Ignorance and knowledge are correlative. Just as you call it wrong to say that He is ignorant, so too is it wrong to say that He is knowing, and for this reason: Knowing and not-knowing are both of them human traits. You term God 'knowing' because it is not fitting to say 'ignorant' of Him; you suppose that one ought not call God 'ignorant' because this is an ugly name, while it is fine to call Him 'knowing' since this is a good name. You imagine that it is wrong to call God 'ignorant' because this name is bad, and you are of the opinion too that since names which are ugly and repellent ought not to be applied to God, it is appropriate to use fine and upstanding names; and yet, this notion of yours is wrong. Listen well to logical discourse and to [true] *tawhīd*; do not be embroiled in mischievous deviations (*shaghb*)!

Know and be aware that it is not fitting to apply such ugly attributes as 'ignorant', 'incapable', and 'dead' and the like to God, not because these are ugly attributes but because these are human attributes; both attractive attributes and repellent ones pertain to man. Since you know that one ought not ascribe ugly attributes to God because these are human attributes and not because these are ugly attributes, it should be clear to you in the same way that the ascription to God of good attributes is also to be avoided, for these too are human attributes. The Prophet commanded us to deny creaturely attributes, and not simply 'ugly' ones, to God. And you, O theologian, you take such precautions against qualifying the Creator with one trait of the creature, and yet qualify Him with another! This is an error on your part, and indeed, it is polytheism. Despite the fact that knowledge and ignorance are opposites (*diddān*),

130. *Durust kardīm*. In NKh's usage, this seems to mean not 'establish' (as de Gastines translates it, p. 74), but rather, 'to make clear' or 'to show precisely'. See Fritz Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahname* (Hildesheim, 1965; repr. Tehran, 1998), p. 373 (*genau, sicher, gerade, wahr*).

both are attributes applicable to human beings. For there is no man so knowledgeable that he may not have ignorance ascribed to him in some way, nor is any man so ignorant that the attribute of knowledge may not be ascribed to him as well. On the contrary, each of these two opposites is a human trait in its proper place. In just the same way, cold and heat are both opposites, and both are qualities of bodies; for no body is so warm that cold cannot also be an aspect of it, nor is any body so cold that heat may not form one of its attributes. And just as you ought not ascribe to God a human attribute such as ignorance, so too you ought not ascribe knowledge, which is also a human attribute, to Him – glory be to Him – inasmuch as knowledge is a trait which is proper to ascribe to man, and so too is ignorance a trait properly belonging to him. In the same way, heat is a quality which is rightly ascribed to a body, just as cold too is a quality properly belonging to bodies. Neither of these two qualities – opposites though they be – is any worthier than the other to be applied to a [particular] body. Just so, with respect to knowledge or ignorance: neither is any more fittingly ascribed to human beings than the other.

[46] Now we have shown clearly on what grounds it is wrong to describe God by such attributes as 'ignorance' and 'powerlessness' – not because they are unseemly but because they are attributes of creatures – as well as that it is also wrong to ascribe the opposites of such attributes, such as 'knowledge' and 'power', to Him – glory be to Him, He is exalted – on the grounds that these too are creaturely qualities. The so-called theologians of this community have plunged into a grievous error in their inquiry, in ascribing their own fine qualities to God and in declaring Him devoid of their bad qualities. And for this very reason, they have fallen into polytheism. They fail to grasp that whoever worships a thing whose attribute is of a creaturely nature in effect worships a creature, not its Creator. He is not a monotheist but rather a polytheist. The Prophet said, 'In my community, polytheism (*shirk*) is harder to discern (*akhfā*) than the creeping of a black ant in a pitch-dark night on a hard stone.'¹³¹

The great mistake – indeed, the ruinous error – into which this group, who call themselves the Kārramites and who press their theological claims,

131. For this *ḥadīth*, see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 403; A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (Leiden, 1936–1968), vol. 2, p. 107 (s.v. *dabīb*). For Arabic *dabīb* ('creeping'), NKh translates *bāng-i pāy* (the 'sound of the [ant's] foot').

have also fallen is that they maintain that accuracy and error, virtue and vice, on the part of humans come to be by God's will. A discussion which I had with [one of] them went like this: I asked, 'Why do you say that "disobedience" (*ma'siyat*) occurs through God's will?' He replied, 'It is because anyone who claims that a person commits disobedience not by God's will accords power over God necessarily to that person, inasmuch as he claims that the person is performing what God does not will.' I said, 'If then you exalt God above this turpitude (*zishitī*), you ascribe to Him another turpitude, even fouler than the first, by your very act of exaltation; namely, that you claim that He wills that a human being commit disobedience and [furthermore] that the human is incapable of so acting unless God wills it. And that then He inflicts punishment on him for that [act] – something which a man with evil motive might do and which would not be right on his part – how then could it be right from God, who granted man intellect?¹³² Is what is suitable in the case of creaturely inclination truly applicable to their Creator?' This faction, utterly ignorant of created beings, proposes to know the Creator! They themselves with their own vain passions and mistaken cogitations should be hurled into the Fire, all the more so in that they have gone astray from the commandments of God and the legacy of His Prophet!

(c) The Doctrine of the Theologians of the Mu'tazilite School on *Tawhīd*

[47] For theologians of the Mu'tazilite school, the doctrine of *tawhīd* means that the first thing that is incumbent on man is to know God. Through knowledge of God, man derives the impulse to perform laudable actions and to refrain from those which are bad and blameworthy. When a man knows that he has a Creator and that his existence has occurred through the action of a wise Creator, and he sees that the religious obligations have become incumbent upon him, he desires to perform laudable acts and to refrain from reprehensible deeds. We say that this is a good basis, and a rational one, in that it makes knowledge of God a binding personal obligation.¹³³

132. The passage is not entirely clear, he seems to mean that God gave man intelligence, by which he distinguishes right from wrong, so how could He, the giver of intelligence, act in such a way?

133. This sentence is omitted from de Gastines's translation.

[48] This group goes on to state that knowledge of God occurs neither necessarily nor through unthinking acceptance. If knowledge of God came to mankind necessarily, all human beings would be equal in knowledge of God, just as in the knowledge of averting hunger by taking nourishment, or the knowledge of warding off thirst by water – both of which are necessary [knowledge] – all people stand at the same level. They hold that unthinking acceptance is invalid. If such acceptance were right, to follow one who said ‘the world is eternal’ would be right too, just as to follow one who stated ‘the world is created’ would be right. Since such acceptance, as they say, is invalid, and there is no a priori [knowledge of God], there remains only contemplation of a thing. They have a proof (*hujjat*) for the obligatory nature of contemplation in God’s statement, ‘Tell people to consider what is in the heavens and on earth’, that is, as signs of wisdom.¹³⁴ Then He says, ‘Signs uttered by the prophets do not profit a folk who do not believe’, in this verse, ‘Say, “*See what is in the heavens and on earth.*” But neither signs nor warnings avail a people who will not believe.’¹³⁵

[49] In our view, these (Mu‘tazilite) theologians are right when they say that knowledge of God does not occur necessarily but they err when they claim that uncritical acceptance is utterly invalid. When we take up a discussion of this group’s notion of *tawhīd* in proof of the Creator’s existence,¹³⁶ we will make plain in what way they err. This group’s proof for the existence of the world’s Creator is as follows. In this world we constantly observe that categories (*aḥkām*)¹³⁷ change from one moment to the next and that that process, as it acts upon bodies in their various circumstances, could not occur except through an agent. It is just as God says, ‘*We created man from an extract of clay; then We placed him, as a drop, in a safe lodging; then We created from the drop a clot, and from*

134. Here NKh paraphrases Q10:101 in Persian, only giving the Arabic original a few lines later in its entirety. De Gastines (p. 78) conflates the passage, omitting part of NKh’s Persian text.

135. Q10:101, tr. Jones.

136. De Gastine here conflates two sentences of the original.

137. The text reads *aḥkām*, which seems puzzling; de Gastines translates it (p. 78) as ‘bodies’ (‘les corps’), which corresponds to the sense and the context but tacitly amends the text. NKh seems to mean that things in the world undergo continual change from one ‘jurisdiction’ (*ḥukm*) to another, as the Qur’ānic verse illustrates.

the clot a lump, and from the lump bones; then We clothed the bones with flesh, and then produced another creature. Blessed be God, the fairest of creators.¹³⁸

[50] According to them, we all know that these bodies do not undergo alteration in their conditions except through the will of a powerful agent. Hence, this agent must necessarily have been prior to these bodies, so that he might effect these conditions in a body as it emerges in time (*jism-i ḥādith*). Moreover, since these temporal occurrences in bodies come about from him, he must be an eternal agent who existed prior to these contingent things. They claim that by this argument an eternal Creator who effects the various circumstantial changes in bodies is established.¹³⁹ Accordingly, they further state that since [the existence] of the world's Creator has been proved, it must also be known that the Creator is knowing, powerful, living, hearing, seeing, and eternal.

[51] These theologians (*mutakallimān*) assert that these six attributes form God's very essence. They argue further: Should anyone ask how they know that the Creator is eternal, they reply that we observe that of two entities (*tan*), the one which has the power to act is not like the one which cannot act – indeed, the latter is impoverished by comparison – and that necessarily, there must be some attribute from which that act comes to be. Since the Creator of the world is the world's maker (*fā'il*), we ascribe to Him an attribute by means of which that action occurs. That attribute is power (*qudrat*). Thus, we say that He is powerful. Furthermore, if someone should ask why they claim that the Creator is 'knowing', they reply that we observe many an agent in this world whose action is not incontrovertibly grounded (*muhkam*); however, the action of the world's Creator is incontrovertibly grounded. Hence, it follows necessarily that He possesses an attribute from which this incontrovertible action proceeds. The act of an agent without such an attribute never occurs incontrovertibly. Accordingly, we term 'knowledge' that attribute out of which such an incontrovertible action proceeds. And so we know that the world's Creator is not only powerful but knowing as well.

They go on to say that if anyone should ask, 'How do you know that the Creator of the world is living?', they respond that among existing beings we see that there is a being which is powerful and knowing. Necessarily a being which has power and knowledge possesses yet another

138. Q23:12–14, tr. Jones.

139. *Bı-dın dalil şanı' vı qadım ve gardānandah i ḥal ı ajsam thabit ast.*

attribute through which power and knowledge become possible – an attribute, that is, which an entity without power and knowledge does not possess – and that attribute we term 'life'.

[52] In any case we know that the world's Creator, in addition to being knowing and powerful, is living for the simple reason that whatever possesses knowledge and power is alive. Since the Creator's knowledge and power is established, so too is His life. And they continue: Were somebody to ask how they know that the Creator is hearing and seeing, they would reply that in this world, whatever lives and is unimpaired both hears and sees; and indeed, is one who perceives things that are perceptible; otherwise, except by being living and unimpaired, he could neither hear nor see what is to be heard and seen. This being so, as we have shown that the eternal Maker is living and that He suffers no impairment, we know that He is hearing and seeing and that He discerns perceptible things.

They say further, 'Should anyone ask how we know that the world's Maker is eternal (*qadīm*), we reply that the proof that He is eternal consists in this: From observation of His creation, it is necessarily the case that the maker of this thing made must either be non-existent or existent. If He exists, He must be either contingently created (*muḥdath*) or eternal. It cannot be true to say that the world's Maker is non-existent, simply because something non-existent is neither powerful nor knowing nor living. But we have established that the world's Maker is powerful, knowing, and living, hearing and seeing. Therefore, He is not non-existent. If He is not non-existent, then He must exist. We say further: Since He exists, He is either contingently created or eternal. But the Maker cannot correctly be described as contingently created. If He were so, there would have to be another creator who is not contingently created. If that [second] maker were contingently created as well, yet another maker would have to exist. And so on, successively, until [we arrive at] a maker who is not contingently created but, in fact, eternal.' Thus, it is established – at least, in their view – that the world's Maker is not contingently created; and since He is not contingently created, He is eternal.

[53] They pursue the matter further. Someone might ask whether the knowing, powerful, living, hearing, seeing, and eternal God is powerful, knowing, alive, hearing, seeing, and eternal, because of 'attributes' (*ṣifat*) or by virtue of His very essence (*dhāt*). 'We (the Mu'tazilites) reply that these attributes are essential in Him. He is not powerful "by a power",

nor knowing “by a knowledge”, nor living “by a life”.¹⁴⁰ On the contrary, these attributes are in His essence.¹⁴¹ If these attributes were not part and parcel of His essence, each one of them would be either contingently created or eternal. If every attribute were contingently created, it would necessarily follow that prior to the emergence of these attributes in time, God was neither powerful nor knowing nor living. And if God, prior to the temporal emergence of these attributes, was not powerful and knowing and living, from whom did He acquire these attributes, since with these attributes lacking to Him, He would not be an agent? On the other hand, it is not correct to say that these attributes are eternal with Him, for then, it would necessarily follow that the eternal is not one; on the contrary, He is one and His power and knowledge and essence, His hearing and His seeing, as well as His pre-eternity, are also eternal. They go on to say, ‘We have established that the eternal is one [and] and that His attributes are not contingently created, nor are they eternal; rather, they are part of His essence.’

[54] ‘If [they say] anyone asks us our opinion on what the eternal Creator resembles, we reply: The eternal Maker cannot resemble anything whatsoever. That is because everything other than God is contingently created, and whatever is contingently created cannot be eternal. It cannot be correct therefore that the eternal might resemble a created thing. As God Himself says, “*There is no equal to Him.*”’¹⁴² Now suppose someone were to ask, “How do you know that God is one?”, we would reply:

140. The Muʿtazilites are here opposing the characteristic Ashʿarite formulation, by which God is powerful, etc., by virtue of ‘an attribute superadded to His essence (*zāʿid ʿalā dhātihi*)’.

141. According to the commentator and heresiographer Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153), ‘The common belief of the sect of the Muʿtazilites is that Allah is eternal and that eternity is the most peculiar description of His essence. They absolutely reject all other eternal qualities, saying: It is by virtue of His essence that He has knowledge, power, and life; not because they are eternal qualities or ideas inherent in Him. For if the qualities should partake of His eternity, which is His most peculiar description, they would partake of his divinity ... and they agree upon this, that will and hearing and sight are not ideas inherent in His essence.’ Cited in A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed* (Cambridge, 1932), from al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal waʾl-nihal*, ed. William Cureton (London, 1846), vol. 1, p. 30.

142. Q112:4, tr. Jones.

The proof that God is one is as follows. If the world's creator were two, one of them would prevent the other from creation (*ṣan'*). The one prevented from creating would be nature (*ṭabī'at*), not the creator, while the creator would be the [more] powerful one. If both of the two were equal in strength, either both would prevent the other from creating, and then there would be no creation – but there is creation – or both of the two would be in agreement without any divergence, but a creation which occurs from the two, by mutual consent and without disagreement, must be from a single creator, not from two.¹⁴³

Thus we have established' – so they say – 'that the Creator is one, eternal, powerful, knowing, living, hearing, and seeing; that His attributes are inherent to His essence; and that He is not comparable to anything'.

[55] Such as we have presented it is the doctrine of *tawḥīd* of the theologians of the Mu'tazilite school, with its many offshoots. For our own part we say that there is no approach (*ṭarīqatī*) stronger than theirs among the various schools of Islam on the subject of *tawḥīd*. This group calls themselves the 'adepts of speculation'.¹⁴⁴ Apart from the *ahl-i ta'yīd*, those who belong to the household of the Prophet,¹⁴⁵ there is no one who has the capability to formulate a critique of their doctrine of *tawḥīd*. Through our scrutiny the readers of this book will gain information, drawn from the very statements of these groups, on the theologians' approach to *tawḥīd*. In addition, they will be informed by the critique which we shall make with respect to what is right and what is wrong in their teaching.

[56] Our critique of their discourse is as follows. The position of this group, namely, that belief in *tawḥīd* based on authority (*taqlīd*) is invalid – on the grounds that a genuine *taqlīd* which holds that 'the world is eternal', is equal to the *taqlīd* which holds, correctly, that 'the world was created in time' – is erroneous. Such unthinking acceptance is necessary for people in the beginning until such time as their acceptance can be verified; however, this group confuses acceptance with familiarity and habit. The man who declares that 'the world is eternal' speaks not out of unthinking acceptance

143. The argument is that if there were two creators acting in perfect concord, the resulting creation would, in effect, be the work of a single creator.

144. *Ahl-i nazar* or perhaps 'theorists'.

145. That is, those 'assisted by divine insight', at the supreme level of spiritual perception. NKh uses this expression specifically for the Fatimid Imam-caliphs.

but rather, out of easy familiarity and habit. Whatever his father, together with those within whose midst he finds himself, holds as a conviction, he takes from them and makes his habit (*khū*), until his bestial soul takes on that brutish outlook; he grows negligent in observing the religious law, he takes up the principles of the 'materialists' (*dahrīyān*),¹⁴⁶ convinced that it is right to observe the law by unthinking acceptance and the assumption of obligation (*bi-taqlid ve-taklif*). But in reality, he remains fixed in the bestial habit and sheer life of the senses in which he has ever been.

[57] The proof for the correctness of our view – that the 'materialist' does not follow conventional belief but rather, acts out of habit – is that there has never been anyone in the world who issued a prophetic summons (*da'wat-i payghāmbarī*) which invited people to divest themselves of the summons itself. But we say that in lifting this from men's necks – for in Persian *taqlid* means something which has been placed on men's necks¹⁴⁷ – he does not practise conventional belief. On the contrary, the materialist has lapsed through the sheer habit of that bestial and sensual soul which is within human beings; the habit of that bestial soul has led him to forsake the sacred law or to practise his religion out of mere slavish imitation in a manner befitting brute beasts. And yet, *taqlid* is those sacred faiths themselves which the prophets – upon whom be peace – brought forth – from Noah and Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad – upon him be peace, and upon his household. Indeed, the religion of Islam is *taqlid*, it is the 'yoke', set forcibly on the necks of Muslims. So it is that God the Exalted says, '*O you who believe, fight those of the unbelievers who are near you, and let them find harshness in you and know that God is with those who protect themselves.*'"¹⁴⁸

[58] The idolators act out of habit, not out of *taqlid*. There was not one among the prophets who imposed an acceptance of idolatry upon people. Quite the contrary, among the prophets conformity to God's religion was imposed upon people. At the present day, whoever holds to the outer meaning of Islam (*ẓāhir-i dīn-i Islām*) without knowing why this religion is true, and who maintains the divine oneness without falling into anthropomorphism or the denial of attributes, follows in the footsteps of those before him who accepted the religious obligations,

146. For the 'materialists', see 3:25 above.

147. That is, a 'yoke', as de Gastines (p. 83) translates it ('*joug*'). I have not been able to find this meaning elsewhere.

148. Q9:123, tr. Jones.

who also followed in the path of a conventional believer who himself followed a similar conventional believer. The masters of the truth and the true monotheists (*muḥaqqiqān ve-muwahhidān*) are themselves gathered from among such believers by convention (*muqallidān*). He who rejects *taqlid* never arrives at the discernment of deeper truth; it is by the way of acceptance that one arrives at God's oneness and a grasp of the truth. *Taqlid* is true, not false. It is obvious that the acceptance of someone who says 'The world was created in time' is not at all like the acceptance of another who says, 'The world is eternal.' Quite the opposite: the former's acceptance is a forerunner of the truth, and the forerunner of truth is itself the truth. Accordingly, whoever accepts the Book and the Law from the Prophet – upon him be peace – through conventional acceptance (*taqlid*) also is obliged to study the hermeneutics of the Book and the Law.¹⁴⁹ There is a sacred Tradition that one day the Prophet – upon him be peace – was sitting with his friends and said, 'There is one among you who will fight with you over the interpretation of the Book just as I fought with you over its revelation (*tanzil-i ān*).' Abū Bakr said then, 'O Emissary of God, am I the one who will start this fight?' The Prophet said, 'No.' Then 'Umar said, 'O Emissary of God, am I that one?' He answered, 'No.' 'Uthmān then said, 'Am I the one, O Emissary of God?' 'No', he replied. All of them asked together, 'Then who is this one who will fight over the interpretation of the Book?' The Prophet answered, 'He who is repairing my sandal.' They looked and it was 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib – may God be pleased with him – who was seated in another row, sewing the Prophet's sandals – for their straps were broken – and lacing them up.¹⁵⁰ They all knew then that he was the master of hermeneutics of the Book and the Law (*khudāvand-i ta'wīl-i kitāb ve-sharī'at*).

The true doctrine of Oneness lies in interpretation of the Book and the Sacred Law, not in some dark interior of the community (*nah andar baṭn-i tārik-i ummat*), as this group claims and as we find in their pronouncements. For this reason, the Emissary of God calls people to God's oneness by God's command, not by the command of the intellect.¹⁵¹ They accept religion as a matter of individual opinion (*ra'y*) so that they may

149. NKh's argument is that *taqlid* is a necessary precondition without which a deepening awareness and understanding of faith are not possible.

150. See al-Hākim al-Nisāburī, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahīḥayn* (Beirut, 2002), p. 926, no. 4679, cited in R. Shah-Kazemi, *Justice and Remembrance* (London, 2006), p. 19.

151. The Mu'tazilite reliance on intellect (*khirad*) seems to be meant here.

practise speculation (*nazar*). Thus, God says, 'Say: "It is revealed to me that your God is one God. Are you going to surrender?"'¹⁵²

[59] The proof that the maintenance of God's Oneness without resort to anthropomorphism lies in the interpretation of God's Book is that only through interpretation can the differences of opinion as well as the ambiguities which are in the Book be reconciled. Certainly it is true that the outer form of the words may vary and yet, it is not true that God's word can ever be contradictory, such that in one place it is said that apart from God nothing is,¹⁵³ that is to say, 'There is nothing like Him',¹⁵⁴ and in another place He says, 'I am the speaker who says, "Say, 'He is God, One'"'.¹⁵⁵ You too say these words since, like me, you too are a 'speaker', you are 'seeing and hearing', and I too am 'speaking and hearing'. Elsewhere He says, 'God is the creator of everything.'¹⁵⁶ In still another place He says, 'Blessed be God, the fairest of creators.'¹⁵⁷ And elsewhere, 'It is God who has created you and then given you sustenance.'¹⁵⁸ In still another place He says, 'God is the best of providers.'¹⁵⁹ And yet another: 'O you who believe, let not a people scorn another people ...'¹⁶⁰ He also says that the unbelievers mock the believers; God too mocks the unbelievers, as in this verse: '... and deride them – God derides them, and they will have a painful torment'.¹⁶¹ He says too of Pharaoh and his people, 'When they had angered Us, We took vengeance on them and drowned them all.'¹⁶² So, when one man angers another, seized by fury he strikes or murders or insults him. If a group so angers God that He avenges Himself by drowning them, what greater resemblance could there be between the Creator and the creature than this? Yet again, He says, 'Without doubt God knows what they keep secret and what they make public.'¹⁶³ He says

152. Q21:108, tr. Jones.

153. *Juz khudāyi hīch nīst*.

154. Q42:11.

155. Q112:1.

156. Q13:16.

157. Q23:14.

158. Q30:40.

159. Q62:11.

160. Q49:11, tr. Jones.

161. Q9:79, tr. Jones.

162. Q43:55, tr. Jones.

163. Q16:23, tr. Jones.

too, with reference to 'a disobedient group whom We destroyed. Then We appointed you as successors in the land after them, that We might see how you act.'¹⁶⁴

[60] If we were to add up such passages which appear to impair divine oneness, the book would grow long. Those we have mentioned may serve as guidance to the intelligent in the quest for interpretation so that their doubts may be removed thereby. If these theologians have established that God is knowing, God too calls certain of His servants 'knowing', as in this verse: '*Only those of God's servants who have some knowledge fear Him.*'¹⁶⁵ Thus, it is clear that to call God – praise be to Him – 'knowing' is polytheism (*shirk*). And if these theologians assert that God is 'powerful', God too calls His own servants 'powerful', as in this verse: '*They went early, determined on their purpose.*'¹⁶⁶ This too is polytheism. And if these theologians say that God is 'living', God too calls His own servants 'living', as in this verse: '*Do not reckon those who were killed in God's way as dead: No! They are alive with their Lord. They have provision from Him.*'¹⁶⁷ This is polytheism. If these theologians establish that God – praise be to Him – is 'hearing', God too has established that His own servants are hearing, as in this verse: '*... until it returns like an old palm-bough.*'¹⁶⁸ About the speech of the unbelievers, He says in this verse: '*They will say, "This is an ancient lie."*'¹⁶⁹ This is a heresy (*bid'atī*) which this group has invented; in their ignorance they have imposed these names on God.

[61] We say with regard to the Oneness professed by this group – namely, their saying that God is knowing not by a knowledge, powerful not by a power, living not by a life, hearing and seeing not by audition or sight, but rather, by His very essence – that it is generally agreed by intelligent people that an attribute does not subsist through its own nature (*dhāt*) but rather, through what it qualifies, and that that which it qualifies subsists through

164. Q10:14, tr. Jones.

165. Q35:28, tr. Jones.

166. Q68:25, tr. Jones. In Arabic, *wa-ghadaw 'ala hardin qadirin*. The verse appears to ascribe 'power' (*qudra*) to humans.

167. Q3:169, tr. Jones.

168. Q36:39.

169. Q46:11. It is not clear how either of these verses supports NKh's argument. De Gastines calls it a 'passage obscur' and speculates that the copyist has skipped a line or two; see her note 33, p. 331.

its own nature. According to this argument, which is beyond doubt, it is not right to qualify God by an attribute, for God's attribute is His very ipseity (*huwiya*), nor may that attribute subsist in Him. If His attribute were other than His very ipseity, it would be an accident (*'araḍ*) in Him; however, His ipseity is not a substrate of accidents (*mahall-i a'rāḍ*). Hence, no attribute whatsoever should be ascribed to Him.

Concerning the doctrine of Oneness of the *ahl-i ta'yid* – those who enjoy divine assistance – we shall give an exhaustive account of this somewhat later. Since, according to the doctrine of this group, there is an essence to which six different qualities pertain – first, knowledge, then power, thirdly, life, fourthly, hearing, fifthly, seeing, and sixthly, eternity – this has to be an essence divided into six parts. For it is obvious that there can be knowledge without power and power without knowledge, and both of these can be without life as well. Each of these three is possible without hearing, four of these without sight, and five of them without eternity, though all six are attributes. Now if the Creator's essence were in six different parts, this would be a substance (*jawhar*) divided into six. This is not oneness but multiplicity. To say that one essence is knowledge and the same essence is power is a nonsensical statement. If both knowledge and power are one, it follows necessarily that anyone who is knowing is powerful too. Thus, whoever says that God is knowing has also said that He is powerful. But if such is the case, it would be more economical to describe Him by one attribute rather than all six, since when you have pronounced one attribute you have implied the others as well.

[62] If such is not the case, and another signification applied to each attribute by virtue of its own essence, there would be one substance with six multiple [entities], not a single, unique one. On the contrary, whoever says that God is knowing without a knowledge has said that He is unknowing. Whoever says that He is powerful without a power has said that He is powerless. The other attributes too would have to be denied. The result would be what we expounded earlier regarding the doctrine of the group (the Karramites) who state that God is a body not like other bodies, such that one would say, 'He is a body not like a body.' But this is sheer raving. This doctrine of theirs (the Mu'tazilites) that attributes are attributes essentially, comes from a sort of fervour (*sawḍā'ī*) which has alighted within their hearts, a fervour which they cannot quite articulate correctly. In their discourse and in their scrutiny something other emerges than what lies in the hidden insinuations of their thoughts.

[63] No one could come up with less persuasive arguments than these to prove that God is seeing and hearing, as when they state that 'We know that God is seeing and hearing since anyone who is alive and unimpaired sees and hears. But we know that since God is alive and unimpaired, He sees and hears ...' Good heavens! What sort of anthropomorphism could be feebler than this which supposes that God, like a human being, might be 'unimpaired?' Why not say just as well that God eats, drinks, and walks too since everyone can observe that whoever is alive and unimpaired also eats, drinks, and walks? When they state that it is the case that God sees or perceives things in the perceptible realm, well, the taste and smell of things also lies within the realm of the perceptible. But if God does not eat and drink, nor experience taste, nor perceive smells, if He does not encounter tastes and smells, then He is not 'alive and unimpaired'. If too He does not move from one place to another, He is not 'alive and unimpaired'.

Nevertheless, when they state that if there were more than one God, there would be no order in the world, this is right and just, and a worthy theological pronouncement.

[64] Everyone who listens with scrupulous attention to the critique which we have made of the doctrine of Oneness of this group, and turns it over reflectively in his mind, will recognise that it is a correct critique. To posit one essence with six different attributes is not true *tawhīd*. Quite the opposite: it is to posit a multiplicity.¹⁷⁰ Nor can it be true *tawhīd* to ascribe creaturely qualities to God. On the contrary, that is anthropomorphism. This group never sees anything better than themselves and indeed, fancy themselves to be God. 'That is error extreme!'¹⁷¹

(d) The Doctrine of the Metaphysical Philosophers on *Tawhīd*

[65] From Socrates and Empedocles to Plato and Aristotle, the metaphysical philosophers¹⁷² hold that all causes have a single cause, which is the cause of the world, the First Cause. They say that these causes

170. 'Multiplicity, plurality' (*takthīr*), also firmly denied in the opening of NKh's great ode: 'Khudāvandī keh dar waḥdat qadīm-ast az hamah ashyā'/nah andar waḥdatash kathrat, nah muhdath zīn hamah tanhā' in his *Diwān*, p. 1.

171. The phrase is in Arabic: *dhālika huwa al dāllal al ba'id* (citing Q14:18).

172. The term used is *muta'allihān-i falāsifah*. By this term, NKh denotes those who engage in metaphysics.

stand in ranks, and that from each cause an effect proceeds, from the First Cause – and this is the Creator – down to the final effect, which is man. Further, the cause is that which, when we conceive of it, produces the effect. Whatever we conceive through this faculty of representation (*wahm*),¹⁷³ by that very act of conception brings forth another thing: that which is conceived is the effect of the cause which we had posited. So, according to them, the sun's disk is the cause of daylight and daylight is its effect. The proof of the correctness of this view is that when we apprehend the sun's disk, we know that daylight results.¹⁷⁴ Since it is something by which, when we apprehend it, no other thing can be apprehended, we know that that effect is ultimate, and this is man. If as a sort of mental exercise we eliminate man from this world, no other thing whatsoever can be apprehended. Thus, if we imagine an animal, a living thing, man too is apprehended, for the simple reason that man is a species of living creature, whose genus is animal. Nevertheless, if we imagine man, 'animal' is not apprehended.

[66] In short, man is a species and the ultimate effect, not in a temporal but in a creational sequence. The Creator's purpose in creating was the existence of man; with his creation the ultimate was achieved. These sages further say that since we find man to be the final thing caused, the first cause can be rationally established, beyond which there is no further cause, just as there is no further caused thing than mankind. They claim that the cause of this effect – which is man – is food, for the simple reason that if food were eliminated, man could not be. Thus they say, 'We find that food is man's cause. The cause of food lies in the 'natures' (*ṭabā'ī*).¹⁷⁵ If these 'natures' did not exist, there would be no plants, for 'natures' are their cause. The cause of the 'natures' is the spheres. If there were no spheres, there would be no 'natures'. Since they find that these spheres have many forms and unlimited motion, they hold that the spheres too are caused. The reason for this is that just as below them (i.e.,

173. For *wahm*, see Sheikh, *A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy*, p. 143: 'Apprehension of the meanings of the sensible objects, a kind of cognitive experience which is also available to the animals, and one on the basis of which they are enabled to draw inferences for their physical well-being and safety.' See also 5:90, and note 226 below.

174. An example drawn from the logic of the Stoa. See van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, p. 359.

175. By 'natures', NKh means the fixed indwelling characters of things, a notion rejected by Ash'arite theologians.

the spheres) there are other things having form and motion, all of which are caused, so too they possess form and motion, and so, they say, the spheres are caused as well, and their cause is the world's Creator.

[67] They also claim that from the final effect to the First Cause, all that is in between is [characterised by] movement (*mutaḥarrik*). Nevertheless, the movements of these lowest things – from man and nourishment, plants, and 'natures' – are all defective as well as finite. Hence, human movement has immobility as its end-term; nourishment has the human body as its end-point, since the animal emerges from the vegetal. Likewise, vegetal motion, which is the cause of nourishment, has a term: it moves from its initial sprouting to its own completion, from the seed it becomes fruit. The motion of 'natures' too is limited; the midpoint of the spheres is its limit, that being the centre of the cosmos. So long as dust and stone from their all – the earth – are not compelled by a compelling force to be moved and carried into the air, they make no motion to return to the centre; however, when stone or dust or water or air do return to their whole, and fall into the other components of the dust – since the centre of the cosmos is where those components come to rest – their movement comes to a close. When air is forced below water, it rises by its very nature from there until it rejoins the atmosphere, where its movement ends. Fire too, when it comes from the middle of the air to its own midpoint, which is the sphere of the ether, comes to rest. Every movement which has rest as its end-point is defective. This is why the philosopher-sages claim that the movements of caused things (*ma'lūlāt*) here below are defective. It is for this reason, they state, that the movement of the sphere – whose own effects lie below it and whose own cause, being none other than the world's Creator, lies above it – is perfect, for its movement has no destination where it would come to rest, once it has arrived there, the way that a stone always falls toward the ground and when it reaches the ground, comes to rest.

[68] They go on to say that the sphere, whose motion is different from the motion of other caused things, is the first caused thing, and necessarily so; and that the defective motion proper to those caused things which are below the sphere, proceeds from it. Furthermore, that this infinite motion of that caused thing comes from the First Cause. And since the motion of this caused thing, which is the sphere, is infinite, it follows necessarily that the power of its cause, being the Creator of the world, is itself infinite. They concur that the movement of the spheres does not proceed from one direction to another, such that once arrived it would come to rest, the way the movements of the individual components of

'natures', once separated from their wholes, move towards those wholes and when they reach them, come to rest. They hold that this perfected motion – this circular motion – is the cause of the defective motions proper to the components of 'natures'.

[69] They state that the effects of the various actions of these supreme celestial bodies tend downwards toward the centre. The existence of the corruptible natural entities (*kā'ināt-i fāsidāt-i ṭabī'i*) – including the elements, plants, and animals – result from these effects. Among these effects there are some which are irresistible, as well as universal, of a sort that no individual earthly component can avert, such as clouds, rains, thunder and lightning and thunderbolts, earthquakes, and sandstorms (*samūm*), which strike and against which there is no stratagem (*hila*). Still, among individual earthly components there are some natural activities, originating in those celestial bodies, which can be resisted, either by opposition (*mukhālafa*), as when cumin-seed is put into musk and blocks the fragrance of the musk; or by mutual affinity (*muwāfaqa*), as when a magnet rubbed with a mixture of honey and garlic loses its natural properties and no longer attracts iron.¹⁷⁶ Likewise with effects which occur in the human body through corporeal causes: when a person recognises what kinds of occurrences these are, he can take steps to counter these by opposing them.

[70] But if he knows these effects and yet does not know what to do to oppose them, he cannot act to counter them and so remains helpless before them. Thus, we know that fierce heat and bitter cold occur in the world because of the motions of the heavens and the effect of the celestial bodies. And we see that people avert these from their bodies, in the case of fierce heat, by hurrying into below-ground houses and reed-dwellings,¹⁷⁷ eating food and drink which remove the natural heat from the bodily frame; and, in the case of the bitter cold, by hastening into warm houses, seeking the aid of fire, putting on silks and furs, and eating food and drink which conserve natural heat. In just this way, by

176. For these examples, see Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 398–399. For a further discussion of the magnet and its 'intimacy' (*ulfa*) with iron, see Abu Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-īmā' wa'l-mu'ānasa* (Beirut, 1953), vol. 2, p. 109.

177. *Khashan-khana*, cf. Steingass, *A Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 463: 'A house constructed of reeds ... which being kept continually sprinkled, a circulation of cool air is thereby maintained within.'

knowing the causes which may occur, one can avert them by remedies which one knows act counter to them.

[71] They say further, 'We have made plain that the actions of the motion of the supreme body and their effects are not all such as to be beyond opposition.' The final word in this sense, which lies at the source of the *tawhīd* of philosophy, rightly belongs to the prince of Greek philosophers – I mean the divine Aristotle – who says, 'The influence of the celestial bodies acts on things which are lesser in nobility than the celestial bodies. As for the influence of the celestial bodies on that which is superior to them, it is utterly without effect.'¹⁷⁸ And he says, 'The influence of these [celestial] bodies affects the bodies of plants and animals, the compounds (*tarākīb*), the corporeal souls, and growth. Nevertheless, they have no effect on the illustrious rational and articulate Soul, which knows and encompasses the world and all that it contains, which rises above the sphere, which numbers and measures the celestial bodies whose courses and motions it discerns – [that Soul] which no veil can obstruct, which courses through the seas and the dry land in no time and without pain; and this is because the rational Soul enters into the sea but does not drown, while fire is docile before it and does not scorch it.' This knowledge and sovereign authority of the rational Soul, they say, proceed from the fact that it is a part of that All itself which is the cause of the spheres and the stars and all that is below them. Since the Universal Soul (they say) is the adornment (*ārāyandah-i falak*) of the sphere, while the sphere and all the celestial bodies within it, stand at its service, it is possible – no, it is necessary – that this portion, which is the rational Soul and a part of that All, be capable of warding off the harms effectuated by the All itself from its body, for its providence (*'ināyat*) is linked with it.¹⁷⁹ The 'providence' of the individual soul with respect to its body lies in the fact that the body is its servant, its abode, and its mount.

178. Cf. (pseudo) Aristotle, *De mundo*, 398a–399a.

179. 'Providence' (*'ināyat*), a term resonant with the influence of Ibn Sīnā who developed it from Greek, and especially Stoic, teaching (Greek *πρόνοια*), here reflects the Avicennian conviction that the cosmos is designed in the best possible fashion for the benefit of all its components. See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, ed. and tr. M. Marmura, Book IX, Chapter 6, pp. 339–347, as well as H. Ritter, 'Risālat Ibn Sīnā fi'l-arzāq', *RAAD* 25 (1950), pp. 199–209 (in Arabic); also, my *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, pp. 187–189. De Gastines's translation of the term as 'solicitude' (p. 96) is correct with respect to the literal meaning of the word but misses its philosophical connotations.

Aristotle's Teaching on the Four Parts of Speech

*Why is discourse fourfold: imperative, then vocative,
Then third, declarative, and fourth, interrogative?*

(Jurjānī, verse 31)

[72] This is the teaching of the logician and philosopher – that is, Aristotle – who states: Discourse in its entirety falls into four divisions. First is the imperative (*amr*). This is when one person says to another, ‘Do this’ and ‘Say this’, and the like. Another [mode] is the interrogative (*istikhbār*), which is to request information, as when we say to someone, ‘How are you?’ and ‘Where are you going?’, and the like. The third is precative (*su’āl*), asking for something; for example, you say to someone, ‘Give me food’ or ‘Give me drink’, and so forth. And the fourth is declarative (*khavar*), as when we say, ‘So it was’ or ‘So it is’, and the like. A group of logicians ascribe a fifth division to discourse which they call ‘problematical’ (*mas’ala*), as when we say to someone, ‘What do you think about this matter?’ and the like. The objective of Aristotle, that lord of logic, in subdividing discourse and expounding its modes, was – and is – to make clear in which of these modes of speech error may occur and in which it may not. Accordingly, he has stated that in three of those modes – imperative, interrogative, and precative – no error may occur. This is because in each of these three, the mode of speech applies to one thing only, and nothing else. Thus, when one says, ‘Speak’, or ‘Sit’, these words apply only to that thing to which the command is directed and no falsehood may enter in. And if someone should say, ‘What did you say?’ or ‘Where are you?’, no falsehood may enter into these as well. If someone asks for something, the words apply to that thing and from them no error may arise. He thus establishes that falsehood may occur only in one of these divisions. That division is the declarative. The philosopher’s objective in composing his work on logic was so that by this noble discipline falsehood might be clearly distinguished from truth.

[73] And so the philosopher – by whom I mean Aristotle – says, ‘Among the divisions of discourse error may occur [only] in the declarative mode, but the declarative consists of two subdivisions. One of these is the particular (*istithnā*); the other is the general (*ḥukm-i qaṭʿ*). Whatever is particular is true while whatever is general [apodictic or categorical: *batt*] may be true [or] may be possible, that is, it may be between truth and falsehood.’ The particular declarative [sentence] may be such as when someone says, ‘When it rains, there is mud’, or ‘Where there is smoke, there is fire.’ In other words, if there were neither rain nor fire, there would not be mud or smoke. The categorical sentence (*ḥukm-i batt*) is as when someone says, ‘Man is a writer’ (*mardum dabīr ast*).¹⁸⁰ But man may be a writer just as he may also not be a writer.

[74] He says further that [single] words are all ‘indesignate’ (*muhmal*).¹⁸¹ They may occur in either affirmation or in denial but [only] when they do, may they be false or true. For example, when somebody says ‘house’ or ‘palace’, the words are indesignate since falsehood does not enter into them. And if someone says, ‘so-and-so is’ (*fulān ast*), that too is indesignate, and there is neither truth nor falsehood in it.¹⁸² But if these two are connected, either in affirmation or in denial, then there results a sentence into which truth and falsehood may enter, as when one says, ‘This is the palace of so-and-so’ and joins ‘palace’ with ‘so-and-so’. This allows two alternatives: If the palace does belong to so-and-so, the proposition is true; but if the palace does not belong to so-and-so, the proposition is false.

180. That is, a categorical statement: man is a writer by nature, along the lines of ‘man is a rational animal’.

181. De Gastines (p. 98) translates *muhmal* as ‘depourvu de sens’, i.e., meaningless, in accord with the common meaning of the Persian (cf. Steingass, *A Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 1,356). But here the usage seems to be technical; they are not without meaning, but taken in isolation are neither true nor false; cf. al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt* (Cairo, 1357/1938), p. 213, s.v. *muhmalāt*: ‘These are terms not indicative of a meaning by placement (context: *waḍʿ*).’

182. The example is somewhat unclear though its thrust is plain. I have understood it as a sentence lacking a predicate and so neither true nor false; de Gastines (p. 98) renders it as ‘est à Untel’, i.e., as ‘belonging to or proper to such-and-such’, which is also possible, especially given the discussion which follows.

[75] The falsehood and the truth of a proposition are discoverable by this linkage,¹⁸³ by way of either affirmation or denial. As one says, 'It is the palace of so-and-so' or 'It is not the palace of so-and-so.' A proposition may be true either by affirming one thing of another which properly pertains to it, or by denying one thing of another to which it does not properly pertain. Two such propositions will be true and contain no falsehood. Falsehood consists in affirming one thing of another to which it does not properly pertain, as if somebody should say, 'Fire is cold' or 'Fire is not hot.' This is a denial of something which properly belongs to it, inasmuch as heat is proper to fire, and so it is false.

This is the philosophers' discourse on the parts of speech, and on the possibility of error in one of these parts, to the exclusion of the others.¹⁸⁴ We have mentioned a portion of the logician-philosopher's discussion on the separation of the parts of speech into four because this man¹⁸⁵ has asked about it. To know why speech is in four modes, as well as what the purpose of this act of division might be, would be a far weightier matter than to ask why they are four. We will not concern ourselves with an explanation of the other divisions of speech so that we do not stray from our goal.

[76] As for the response of the exegetes (*ahl-i ta'wīl*) – upon them be peace – to this person who asks why discourse has four modes, of which the first of these is the imperative, the second the vocative (*nidā*),¹⁸⁶ the third the declarative, and the fourth the interrogative, just as this man, who was among the adherents of the true faith, has said in this verse – it is as they say: The existence of the world together with all that is in it occurs through the command (*amr*) of God. They term this 'originator' (*ibdā'*), denoting a single word of two consonants, which they identify as 'Be!' (*kun*).¹⁸⁷ The meaning of this statement is that from the Creator's

183. That is, by linking individual terms in a declarative sentence.

184. Though the plural is used (*ḥalāsifa*), the reference seems to be to Aristotle alone; perhaps a scribal error.

185. Referring to the poet al-Jurjāni and the question posed in verse 31.

186. The vocative was not mentioned earlier; perhaps this is another copyist's mistake.

187. The Arabic imperative *kun* ('be') is written with two consonants (K – N) in Arabic. For a discussion, and text, of an early Zaydī source, see Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism*, pp. 3–29. On *ibdā'*, see notes 65 above and 377 below.

command emerged the First Intellect to which the imperative [mode] was united, on the pattern of this one word of two consonants; the whole world with all it contains sprang forth from those two letters, just as God says, 'All We say to a thing when We desire it is to say to it, "Be!" and it is.'¹⁸⁸ The Universal Soul originates from the Universal Intellect by the power of the Creator's command – glory be to Him! They say that the letter *kāf* represents the Universal Intellect and the letter *nūn* represents the Universal Soul with respect to the world's creation. As proof of this claim, they take the individual human being in whom both an articulate soul and a discriminating intelligence are present. Since in the end God's imperative came in the word of God – glory be to Him – to man, as He says, 'O people, fear your Lord',¹⁸⁹ this ultimate existent (i.e., man) provides us with evidence and is a proof that the primordial existence was imperative and was Word. And that was 'Be!' which is both imperative and word; nay, rather, it was an utterance (*qawl*) which was the first imperative – a single word – and at the last, man, the speaking creature, the being receptive to that imperative, appeared.

[77] We say further in response to this verse that the first of the modes of discourse is the imperative; the imperative in discourse is at the level of the First Intellect with which the Divine Command is united, and its source is God's Book. Rather, God's Book in its truth is the very substance of the Intellect (*jawhar-i 'aql*) since all beings are within its essence at the level of seed (*tukhm*). The Intellect's knowledge of things stands as proof of the rightness of our statement, 'the Intellect is all (*'aql hamchi chīz ast*)'. The second mode of discourse is the vocative (*mida*). When by the primal command, the receiver of the Word appears, it must be said to him, 'Accept this Word', so that he becomes aware that the Word is addressed to him. The rank of the vocative in the modes of discourse is the Universal Soul, just as the rank of the imperative in the modes is the Universal Intellect. The third of the modes is the declarative which is the bearer of truth and falsehood. Its rank among the modes is that of the Prophet of God who was the Emissary and the Prophet offering declaration (*khavar-dihanda*). He – peace be upon him – gave tidings to people from God of what is written in the noble and glorious Book. And because the Emissary was a mediator (*mivanji*) between the subtle world

188. Q16:40.

189. Q22:1. Verse given first in Persian translation, then in original; reference omitted in de Gastines, p. 100.

(*'ālam-i laṭīf*) and the dense world (*'ālam-i kathīf*),¹⁹⁰ his God-given Word to mankind cannot properly have a single aspect; a part of it has to be solid (*muḥkam*), as bodies are, and another part has to be ethereal (*mutashābih*), as spirits are, so that there might be inference (*dalīl*)¹⁹¹ from the dense to the ethereal.¹⁹² In the Book, the [outward] examples correspond to bodies while the [hidden] meanings relate to spirits; the creation of man was according to this pattern, for the creation of man was the best creation, as God Himself says, '*We created man in the fairest stature.*'¹⁹³ God's Book too is the fairest expression, the subtlest composition, as He says, '*God has sent down the most beautiful of all teachings: a Scripture that is consistent and draws comparisons; that causes the skins of those in awe of their Lord to shiver. Then their skins and their hearts soften at the mention of God: such is God's guidance. He guides with it whoever He will; no one can guide those God leaves to stray.*'¹⁹⁴ God sent down 'the most beautiful of all teachings, a Book whose parts resemble one another'; that is, the symbol and the symbolised,¹⁹⁵ the outward and the inward, are like body and soul. 'The skins of those who fear [God] shiver', that is, when they see the astounding figures in it. Then 'their skins and their hearts soften at the mention of God' – He is exalted – that is, when they discover the symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of those parables, their hearts are at rest; they understand that that which outwardly seems a likeness (*tashbih*) is not rightly so in terms of its inner sense. Then He says, 'This is the right path of God', that is, interpretation is the 'right path' and on this path 'He guides whom He will', but everyone whom 'God leaves to stray' will find no one to guide him; that is, anyone who, put to the test by God (*az balā'-yi khudā*), neither seeks nor heeds the hidden interpretation of the parables in the Book will find no one to show him the way.

190. On these two realms, see the discussion in 29: 341–342 below.

191. I follow the Arabic translation here, which renders *dalīl* as *istidlāl*; cf. Shatā, p. 211, l. 6.

192. The contrast is between the solid and corporeal, or external (*ẓāhir*), and the insubstantial and spiritual, or internal (*bāṭin*), aspects, as is common in NKh's discourse.

193. Q95:4.

194. Q39:23, tr. Abdel Haleem.

195. *Mathal ve mamthul*, here following de Gastines's rendering (p. 102): 'symbole et symbolisé', for lack of a plausible English phrase.

[78] Now, since the Book of God is replete with figurative expression (*bar mutashābih āmad*),¹⁹⁶ and the differences of opinion in interpreting its enigmas are evidence of this, it is also declarative, and the master of the declarative is the Prophet of God; indeed, God says, '*Tell My servants that I am forgiving and merciful, and that My torment is the painful torment.*'¹⁹⁷ We have now established why the third of the four modes of discourse is the declarative, the reason being that the Emissary is himself the third principle (*aṣl*) of the four fundamental principles of religion.¹⁹⁸

[79] The fourth mode of discourse is the interrogative. It is obligatory to ask how and why about what is heard. The interrogative comes after the declarative; it means to ask about what the declarative comprises in itself. It corresponds to the rank of the masters of symbolic interpretation (i.e., the Imams) and people should interrogate them about those figures and riddles and ambiguities which are in the Book, so that they may emerge from the shadows of metaphors into the light of elucidation, as God Himself says, '*God is the protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light.*'¹⁹⁹ The protector of believers is also the inspiration (*waḥy*) vouchsafed to the Prophet, as God says, '*Your protector is God – and His Messenger, and those who believe: those who perform prayer and pay the zakat and bow down.*'²⁰⁰ At the beginning of this book we spoke in great detail in order to clarify and affirm the spiritual authority (*wilāya*) of the Prophet. We have now shown why the fourth mode of discourse is the interrogative, and just as the interrogative is the fourth mode, so too the master of symbolic interpretation is the fourth foundation of the true faith. We have made it plain too that God's word has arrived by the mediation of these four to people of

196. It should be noted that the term normally used for the 'ambiguous verses' of the Qur'ān is *mutashābih*; however, NKh seems to use this technical term in a somewhat different sense than the traditional, i.e., to denote those verses in which an inner, esoteric meaning lies concealed. For this reason I have not consistently translated the term as simply 'ambiguous', especially when he uses it to mean verses open to figurative or metaphorical or symbolic interpretation.

197. Q15:49–50, tr. Jones.

198. That is, the Universal Intellect and Soul, and their corresponding terrestrial representations, the Prophets and the Imams. See 20:262 below.

199. Q2:257, tr. Jones.

200. Q5:55, tr. Jones. According to most Shi'ī and Sunni commentators, this verse refers to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalib.

understanding. Indeed, it is for this reason that discourse is fourfold. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and may God pray²⁰¹ over the Prophet Muḥammad, his family, and his companions all.

201. For the notion that God prays, see S. D. Goitein, 'Prayer in Islam', in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1968), p. 78: 'Since prayer is the most significant occupation of the pious, it is unimaginable that God should not pray himself ... The main object of God's prayer, of course, is the Prophet of Islam.'

On Form, Property, Definition, and Description

*Of the nature of form and of the proprium,
Of description and definition – what do you know or have heard?
Speak and instruct!*

(Jurjānī, verse 32)

[80] In this verse there are four questions. The first is about form (*hay'at*), the second is about the *proprium* (*khāṣṣa*),²⁰² the third is about description (*rasm*), and the fourth is about definition (*ḥadd*).

These are all matters of logic. The terms were applied by Aristotle, the master of logic. Nowadays the practitioners of this noble art all use these terms throughout this discipline. So too do the grammarians have terms in their art and in teaching use such words as 'nominative', 'accusative', 'genitive', 'apocopation', and the like. Likewise prosodists have technical terms in their art for the rules and metres of poetry, such as 'the long' (*ṭa'wīl*), 'the extended' (*madīd*), 'the outspread' (*basīṭ*) metres,

202. One of the properties of a species which distinguishes it within a genus, e.g., man is an animal 'who laughs' (or has the potential to laugh) or 'who writes'. The term 'laughing animal' implies man. Unlike the 'specific difference' (*faṣl* in Arabic and Persian), the *khāṣṣa* (or *proprium*, in the terminology of the Latin Scholastics) is not an inseparable aspect of man: by definition, man is 'a rational animal' – rationality is his 'specific difference' – but laughing or writing, though exclusively human activities, does not define man qua man. Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics: Topica*, ed. and tr. H. Tredennick and E. S. Forster (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1976), 102a, 18ff.; Porphyry, *Isagoge*, tr. Edward W. Warren (Toronto, 1975), p. 48; J. Gredt, *Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae* (3rd rev. edn, Barcelona, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 144–145; al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rifāt*, pp. 84–85. In this chapter, NKh relies heavily on the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā', vol. 3, pp. 384–392, from which he takes his questions and definitions. (I am indebted to Professor Carmela Baiffioni for this reference.)

and so forth, as well as 'tent rope' (*sabab*), 'combined tent peg' (*watad-i majmū'*), 'joined tent peg' (*watad-i maqrūn*), and the like.²⁰³ This man's (i.e., Jurjānī's) motive in raising these questions is to demonstrate his own knowledge of the science of logic, which is the most powerful instrument in gaining a knowledge of *tawhīd*, itself the most tremendous as well as the most necessary science. Earlier, at the beginning of our commentary on this ode, we spoke about 'form'; now, however, we will discuss each one of these four questions in a fully adequate manner.²⁰⁴

[81] Configuration (*hay'at*) is that which distinguishes one individual from another, and especially in the case of human beings, despite the fact that the form (*ṣūrat*) of all is one and the same.

Thus, Zayd and 'Amr, despite the fact that both are in human form, are distinct from each other by virtue of the different configurations they present. There is great wisdom in this for if these shapes did not differ and everyone was of the same configuration, as with the animals, many evils would arise for mankind. For this reason, the Powerful and Mighty ordered things in this way and so He differentiated each one from the other through its configuration so that they might recognise one another, notwithstanding the fact that they are all of one form. Thus He says, 'O people, We have created you male and female and made you races and tribes that you may know one another.'²⁰⁵ I said earlier – and now repeat it – that the reason for this difference of configurations together with this unity of form is, first, that for each species there is an instantiating form²⁰⁶ while for each individual there is a generative form.²⁰⁷ By this I mean that at the outset, there is out of each species a pair (*jufṭī*), a male and a female, and the instantiating pairs for both the human and the non-human appear in the world without generation (*bī zāyesh*) from that instantiating form, and the intellect necessarily affirms (*muqirr*) these instantiating pairs which are without generation.

203. Technical terms from Arabic prosody: the 'long' metre is so-called because characterised by the use of three long syllables in the second foot, the 'tent rope' and 'tent pegs' designate different syllabic contractions, etc. See William Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (Cambridge, 1951), vol. 2, pp. 350–390, for details.

204. This earlier discussion of 'form' is missing from the MS as it stands.

205. Q49:13, tr. Jones.

206. *ṣūrat-i ibdā'ī*, i.e., the primeval archetypal form.

207. *ṣūrat-i tawhīdī*, i.e., the individual form conferred by generation.

A rational proof for the existence of the instantiating pair among human beings in particular is this: Today we see one individual among others who has a son while he himself is somebody else's son; this is the connecting link (*wāṣīṭa*) of the man in the process of generation. But there is another individual among men who is somebody's son but who has no son of his own; he too stands in the process of generation (*tawlid*). Therefore, it follows by rational classification (*taqṣīm*) that there must be a pair which consists of those who are no one's child but who have children of their own, and this must be the beginning of mankind in the generative process. This pair we affirm to be those whom we call Adam and Eve. This is a religious principle based on a logical definition such as we affirm it and it is absolutely beyond dispute.

[82] Some of the philosophers who affirm 'creation from nothing' (*muqirrūn bi-ibdā'*) declare that when humankind was first created (*mardum-i ibdā'ī*) there was more than a single pair. Every rational person knows that, since a child who has a mother and a father but no child is the last in [the line of] generation (*zāyesh*). Now the pair who were the first humans in this world and who had children but no father or mother were different from this child without descendants. Therefore, this primordial couple had a primordial form; but primordial creation is unalterable and its forms are wholly identical. Empedocles the Sage has called this primordial couple 'the universal human', both enduring and everlasting, whereas individuals who are generated have diverse configurations.²⁰⁸ For this reason, individual human beings may be many or few, while the species itself never undergoes increase or decrease. We have already mentioned the proofs for the diversity of configurations and the necessary cause of that diversity with respect to matter, location, and times, both universal and particular. We will not repeat these here lest the book grow too lengthy.

[83] As for 'property' (*khāṣṣa*), it is one of five terms used in the art of logic; namely, genus, species, specific difference, property, and accident.²⁰⁹ The meaning of 'property' is something which distinguishes one species from other species within its genus and which is particular

208. There is no reference to this notion in the surviving fragments of Empedocles and the ascription seems improbable, given his cosmology.

209. These are the 'five predicables' (*al-alfāz al-khamsah*); see Aristotle, *Topica*, 101b 38–102b 27; Porphyry, *Isagoge*, pp. 28ff.; Gredt, *Elementa Philosophiae*, vol. 1, p. 133.

to that species.²¹⁰ It is understood in two senses. First, it is that which is present in the species as a whole and at all times, e.g., to laugh is a property belonging to man out of all the animals; every man has this property and has it at all times. Second, it is that which belongs to the entire human species but not at all times, e.g., for the hair to turn white is a property of man but only at the time of old age. There is also a third property belonging to man even though it does not belong to all men, e.g., weeping which is proper to man though not to all men.²¹¹ Accordingly, logicians classify this as among 'concomitant accidents' (*a'rāḍ-i lāzim*).²¹² Moreover, there are also properties which pertain to man but which he shares with other animals as well, e.g., to walk on two feet, for birds also walk on two feet.

[84] Description (*rasm*) is a short phrase which is said of a thing to distinguish it verbally from some other thing.²¹³ This phrase ought to indicate the nature of that thing in terms of its accidents. A description is drawn from the genus of a thing together with its property; for example, as when we say, 'The description of man is that living and laughing [being]', or 'living and weeping' one. Hence, 'living' is a description of man taken from his genus as 'animal', while 'to laugh' is a property specific to man; this then is the description of a human being. Description is close to definition, except that description has this property, that it can be present to the mind (*wahm*) without that thing being present; for example, weeping can be conceived in a person without that person being present. This is a difference between description and definition.

210. See Aristotle, *Topica*, 102a, 18ff: 'A property is something which does not show the essence of a thing but belongs to it alone and is predicated convertibly of it. For example, it is a property of man to be capable of learning grammar; for if a certain being is a man, he is capable of learning grammar, and if he is capable of learning grammar, he is a man.'

211. De Gastines (p. 108) renders this as 'laughing until you weep' (*le rire aux larmes*), perhaps because it conveys the point of the argument more clearly; the text reads simply *giryah-i chashmī*, 'weeping'.

212. Cf. al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, p. 129: 'A concomitant accident (*'araḍ lāzim*) is that which remains inseparable from the quiddity, such as the potential for writing in relation to a human being.'

213. 'Description' (*rasm*) is a technical term in logic and paired with 'definition' (*ḥadd*), as NKh now goes on to show. De Gastines (p. 108) incorrectly renders *rasm* as '*mode d'être*'.

[85] Definition (*ḥadd*) is a statement made about a thing such that it delimits it so that nothing can be added or subtracted from it, just as one land is distinguished from another land by its boundary.²¹⁴ Logicians define definition as a final limit (*nihāyat*), as they say: 'A definition of any thing is a statement which has been limited (*maḥdūd*) precisely so that the thing can be known as it truly is.' They also say that a definition is a statement made about a thing such that the definition is impaired by anything added to it, while if something is taken away from the definition, that lack too attaches to the definition. An example of this may be that when we state that the definition of man is 'living, endowed with speech, mortal'. Now if we add something to this definition by saying, 'Man is living, mortal, writing', the very addition of 'writing' leaves out many men since by this word we have excluded men who do not write from the definition of 'man'. But then, if we take something away from this logical definition of man and say, 'Man is living and mortal', we could be speaking about all the other animals, beasts of the field as well as birds of the air, since we have left 'speaking' out of our definition.

[86] This is the answer we have made to the questions which this man has raised in this verse. Those guided by divine inspiration (*ahl-i ta'yīd*) state that for a man to be called wise he must possess seven laudable traits. First is that his action be judicious (*bi-ḥukm*). Second, that his art (*ṣan'atesh*) be flawless. Third, that his words be truthful. Fourth is that his habits be good. Fifth, that his counsel (*tadbīresh*) be correct. Sixth, that his deeds be pure. And seventh, that his knowledge be true.

[87] And now, at this point we wish to mention a further aspect of the true nature of things; this is that it is possible to know things in their real nature through their definitions. Our discourse at this point in the book serves as an answer to this man about 'definition and description' – for we are engaged in commenting in reply to his questions – but also, we have glimpsed in [other] statements of this man – I mean Abū al-Haytham al-Jurjānī – remarks bearing on certain of these meanings; and the truths we will mention are those ascribed to the treasurer of essential Truth,²¹⁵ upon whom be peace. Everything that we say for the guidance

214. The Arabic term *ḥadd* denotes a border, a limit, an edge, as well as a definition, and these more literal meanings are here in play. On definition, see Aristotle, *Topica*, 101b, 38ff.

215. *khāzin-i 'ilm-i ḥaqīqī*: By this title he probably means to designate the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh.

of those who seek right guidance we say by his command and his permission (*bi-farmān ve dastūr-i ū*).

[88] We say, therefore, that to know things in their true nature is to know the definitions of those things. This is because all things are of two types, not more. By this I mean that they are either simple or compound. Compound things can be known in their natures when those things of which they are composed are known; simple things are known when their particular components are known, one by one. An example of that with regard to compound things is when we say, what is 'clay' (*gil*), and we reply, water mixed with earth. And if it is asked, what is the real nature of oxymel, we may answer, vinegar mixed with honey. If it is asked, what is the nature of the throne, we may reply, it is wood worked in the form of a throne. So, too, the definition of 'animal', namely, a soul set in a body.

[89] As for simple things which have been brought into existence (*mubda'*) without being composed of other things, their true natures are to be discovered in their particular qualities. As an example, if someone should ask, what is the nature of 'matter' (*havūlā*), we would answer, a simple substance receptive to form (*jawharī-yi basīṭ ast padhīrā-yi šūrat*). If it be asked, what is 'form', we reply, the form of any thing is that by which the existence of a thing may be known. What is 'substance?' We reply, it is that which subsists in its own nature and is receptive to contrary qualities. If it is asked, what is the nature of 'quality' (*ṣīfat*), we answer that a quality is an accident which descends into a substance but does not form part of its essence. If it be asked, what is the nature of 'thing', that is, how does the name of something occur, we reply that that meaning befalls the name of a thing to make it possible to know it and to provide information about it. And what is the nature of 'existing thing' (*mawjud*)? We respond that an existent is that which we perceive either by the five senses or of which the imagination forms an image, or which something else points to.²¹⁶ And if it is asked, what is the nature of 'existence', we reply, it is that the name of which is *hast*. And 'non-existence?' It is that the name of which is *nīst*.²¹⁷ If it be asked,

216. That is, it can be inferred from something else.

217. The meaning is unclear. It seems to involve either a tautology or a fallacy. The definition may be read as 'that which has a name' or 'that the name of which is *hast*' ('existence' in Persian), and the same ambiguity affects the definition of 'non-existence' (*ankeh nam ī ū hastast ... ankeh nam-i ū mīstast*).

what is the meaning of 'eternal' (*qadim*), we answer that it is that which can be neither non-existent nor possible. And if it is asked, what is the meaning of 'contingent' (*muhdath*), we reply that it is that which can be formed by another. And the meaning of 'cause' (*'illat*)? We reply, that which is the means by which another thing comes to be. For example, the sun is the cause of the daylight since it is the means by which the day comes to be. And the meaning of 'effect' (*ma'lul*)? We say, that whose existence has a cause is an effect. And what is the definition of 'knowledge' (*'ilm*)? We say that it is a conception on our parts of a thing as it really is (*taṣawwurist az mā mar chīzī-rā bi-ḥaqīqat-i ān*).²¹⁸ What is the definition of 'a knowing person' (*dānā*)? We say that a knowing person is one who forms a conception (*taṣawwur*) of a thing as it really is. If it be asked, what is 'living', we reply that that from which an action proceeds is living. If it is asked, what is 'animal', we say that a body to which a soul is joined is an animal. If it be asked, what is the definition of 'powerful', we reply that it is that he is powerful who acts whenever he wishes. If it is asked, what is 'act', we say that it is the effect (*atharī*) of an agent upon something which is acted upon (*maf'ul*), or the working out of an effect in something receptive to it. If it be asked, what is 'to will', we reply that it is the conceptual indication (*ishārati-yi wahmī*) as to which of two quite different alternatives has the possibility of existence. If it be asked, what is God, we answer that He is that which is all; that He is the cause of everything in existence; to make a thing but not out of [another] thing is His action; that He is the maker of the beginning and the end of all things in accord with the capacity of each thing to achieve its own perfection. If it is asked, what is 'one capable of producing an

De Gastines (p. 111) translates as 'Ce qui a pour nom *hast* ... Ce qui a pour nom *nist*', while Shatā in his Arabic translation (p. 219) renders it as *mā la-hu ism* and *mā laysa la-hu ism*. I here concur with de Gastines as the other reading seems not to make sense.

218. In logic, *taṣawwur* denotes a simple concept ('man', 'God', 'world', etc.) which is then employed in *taṣdīq*, i.e., the formulation of a proposition which is either true or false; cf. al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rifāt*, p. 52: 'It is the direct perception (*idrāk*) of quiddity without any judgement either by way of denial or affirmation.' For a historical discussion of the terms, see Harry A. Wolfson, 'The Terms *Taṣawwur* and *Taṣdīq* in Arabic Philosophy and their Greek, Latin and Hebrew Equivalents', in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 478–492.

action', we reply ...²¹⁹ If it be asked, what is the definition of 'art', we answer that it is to impart form to matter. If someone asks, what is an 'artisan', we reply that it is he who draws form out of potentiality and lodges it within matter, e.g., the carpenter is an artisan who draws the form of the throne out of the bound of potentiality (*az ḥadd-i qūwwat*) and conceals it in matter and wood, and so is it with other artisans. If it be asked, what is the 'thing made', we answer that whatever is composed of matter and form is a made thing. If it is asked, what is 'the Agent Intellect' (*'aql-i fa'āl*), we reply that it is the first originated thing which God brought forth out of nothing (*ibdā' kardeh ast*) and that it is a simple luminous substance in which the forms of all things are present. If it is asked, what is 'the soul' (*nafs*), we answer that it is a simple substance (*jawharist basīt*), both spiritual and living in essence, with the potential for knowing and the nature for acting; it is one form among the forms of the Agent Intellect. If it be asked, what is a 'natural genus', we reply that it is a grouping (*jamā'atī*) of things the forms of which are different, though all are in a single category (*ma'nī*), just as animals, beasts and birds, and human beings have different forms, yet all are animals. If it be asked, what is 'natural species', we answer that it is a single form comprising many different individuals. If it is asked, what is 'individual', we answer that everything which is in one category (*bakhsī*) and which is so indicated is an individual. If it be asked, what is the definition of 'logical distinction' (*faṣl-i manṭiqī*), we reply that it is a term uttered with reference to many things which differ in species, in reply to the question 'what is it?'²²⁰ Thus, somebody might say 'animal' and then be asked 'which animal?' to which he replies, 'a bird'. This is a distinction which differentiates the bird from the totality of other animals. And there are also many species of bird, such as the eagle, the partridge, the crow, the sparrow, and the like. If it be asked, what is an 'accident' (*araḍ*), we answer that the definition of an accident is a thing which is in another thing but which when removed from that thing does not nullify it; for example, blackness in hair is an accident but if blackness is removed and it turns white, it is not any less hair. If it is asked, what is 'light', we answer that it is a simple substance which everyone can see and by which everyone sees things. If it is asked, what is 'darkness', we reply that it is the absence (*nīstī*) of light. If it be asked, what is the definition of 'day', we reply that the sun's presence on this side of the world is day. If it is

219. There is a lacuna in the text here.

220. Cf. al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, p. 146.

asked, what is the definition of 'night', we answer that it is the shadow of the earth. If it is asked, what is the sphere (*falak*), we reply that it is a body which encompasses the world. If it is asked, what is the world, we reply that everything which is in the middle of the sphere is the world. If it is asked, what is the definition of 'star', we reply that it is a luminous body, round and compacted with light (*bā nūr fashardah*). If it be asked, what is fire, we reply that it is a moving body encircling the earth. If asked, what is earth, we answer that it is the densest body placed in the centre of the universe. If it is asked, what is time, we reply that according to the philosophers, it is the number of movements of the sphere. But another group says, rather, it is an interval measured and counted by the movement of the sphere. If asked, what is 'space', we reply that it is what circumscribes the body (*niḥāyat-i jism*). And if it is asked, what is 'heat', we answer that it is the compression of the components of matter (*fashurdagī-yi juzwi-hā'i hayūlī*). If asked, what is 'dryness', we say that it is the raising of components of matter. If it is asked, what is 'moisture', we say that it is an exhalation of some sort which arises from mineral, vegetal, and animal bodies. And if it be asked, what is the definition of 'sound', we reply that noise is the expulsion of air which occurs when two bodies are suddenly separated from each other, as when one stone strikes another and is split and air is expelled.

[90] If someone asks, what is 'motion', we answer that motion is of six sorts. One occurs through coming-to-be (*kawn*), another through passing-away (*fasād*), a third through increase, a fourth through diminution, a fifth through transformation (*istiḥālat*), and a sixth through motion from one place to another (*az jā'ī bi-jā'ī*).

As for coming-to-be, it is the emergence of a thing from non-being into being. Passing-away is the return of a thing from being to non-being. It is also said that coming-to-be is the acceptance by matter of a noble form and the concealment of a base form. If it be asked, what is 'increase', we reply that it is the distancing of the limit of a thing from its own centre. And 'diminution' is the return of what had been distant to its own centre. If it is asked, what is 'alteration' (*taghayyur*), we answer that it is the departure of a body from one place to another place. If it is asked, what is 'foam' (*kaf*), we say that it is water mixed with air, as when a quantity of water in a flask (*shishah*) is vigorously and repeatedly shaken, the water inside the flask turns white because it has been mixed with the air inside. If it is asked, what is 'vapour', we answer that it is water which has been mixed with fire. If it is asked, what is 'smoke',

we reply that it is fire mixed with earth. If it is asked what 'minerals' are, we answer that it is something locked in the ground, such as mercury (*sīmāb*) and sulphur (*gūgird*), with which earth is mixed. And if it is asked, what is 'plant' we say that it is something which grows from the earth and increases and is subject to water. And if it is asked, what is 'animal', we answer that it is a mobile being which is sentient and dependent on air. If asked, what is an angel, we reply that angels are souls of surpassing benignity and subject to the nature of the heavenly sphere. And if asked, what is a 'demon', we answer that they are wicked souls bent on evil and subject to both fire and earth. If we are asked, what is the definition of 'nature', we reply that it is one of the powers of the soul which acts upon the four elements. If asked, what is the 'ether', we say that it is the warm air beneath the sphere of the moon. If we are asked, what is 'intense cold' (*zamharīr*), we say that it is the cold air beneath the sphere of the ether.²²¹ If asked, what is 'cloud', we reply that it is a mass of vapours, and we have already said that that is fire mingled with air. If asked, what is 'rain', we reply that it is water which from vapour mixed with fire cools down and separates from the fire and returns to the earth as water; this they call rain. If it is asked, what is 'lightning', we say that it is a subtle fire which appears when the smoky vapours which collect in the air collide. If asked what 'thunder' is, we reply that it is the sound of vapours striking against one another when they expel the lightning's fire.²²² And if asked, what is 'snow', we reply that it is water which chills before it separates from the air and then comes down as snow. If we are asked, what is 'dew', we answer that when water separates from vapour but before it falls to earth, it cools in the air and becomes dew. If asked, what are 'springs', we say that they are the waters drawn from snow or

221. Cf. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn*, ed. and tr. Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor (Oxford and London, 2009), p. 225: 'and no beasts can survive the bitter chill of the Zamharīr'. In their note to this, the translators comment that 'the bitterly cold Zamharīr lies between the fresh air of the *nasīm* and the heat of the *athīr*, or aether, fired by the sphere of the moon. It is in the Zamharīr that thunder originates, when the hot, rising vapours burst its moist envelope. Lightning results when water vapour contacts the fiery upper region.' See also S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (rev. edn, London, 1978), pp. 85–86.

222. Cf. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Hawāmīl wa'l-shawāmīl*, ed. A. Amin (Cairo, 1370/1951), p. 366, for an earlier and similar account of thunder.

rain which accumulate on the summits of mountains and then come down and work their way into crevices of rock and soil until they emerge in a place far below the place where the waters first appeared.²²³ If asked, what is 'earthquake', we reply that there are hollow places in the earth, and vapours from the universal fire which encircles the earth collect in these; when these vapours can no longer be contained, they shake the earth till it splits so that these vapours pour forth,²²⁴ and yet, the whole earth is not shaken: rather, only that part shakes where this particular circumstance prevails. If it is asked, what is the earth itself and on what does it stand, we reply that the earth is a hard substance within which are openings and fissures both small and large. It is suspended in the midst of the air by the command of God the Exalted. All the mountains upon it encircle the earth from all sides by God's command, while the sphere holds the air in its rondure. The centre of the world is a point in the middle of the earth upon which all the parts of the world repose. If asked what is 'good', we reply that everything which is in accord with the Command in the requisite measure and at the requisite time and place because of which it must be, is good; everything that is at variance with this is 'evil'. If it be asked, what is 'right' (*ma'rūf*),²²⁵ we reply that that which conforms to human custom and is not prohibited by the Law is right, while what is contrary to that is 'wrong' (*munkar*). If asked, what is 'imagination' (*wahm*), we answer that it is one of the faculties of the sentient soul which forms conceptions of things perceived by the senses.²²⁶ If someone asks, what is 'thought', we reply that it is one of the faculties of the rational soul which distinguishes between things which

223. See A. J. Wensinck, 'The Ideas of the Western Semites Concerning the Navel of the Earth', *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam*, New Series 17/1 (1916), p. 9.

224. For this notion (and a refutation of it by al-Suyūṭī), see my *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, pp. 261–262.

225. Cf. Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. xi–xii and 567–569.

226. This is a faculty of discernment based on sense perception, common to man and other animals; it is the faculty by which a sheep, for example, perceives that it should flee from a wolf but not from a child. Cf. al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, p. 228. In Scholastic parlance, *wahm* is the *vis aestimativa*, i.e., 'the sensory power of judgment on the part of animals, and that on the part of man', according to R. J. Deferrari and M. I. Barry, *A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, 1948), p. 1,167. See also 3:65, n. 173 above.

are similar. If asked, what is 'faith', we reply that it is the assent of the one who hears the truth to him who speaks it. And what is 'submission' (*islām*)? We reply that it is obedience to another in the hope of a good recompense. And if asked what is 'unbelief' (*kufr*), we say that it is to conceal the truth by denying it. If asked, what is 'polytheism', we say that it is to affirm divinity of two things. If asked, what is 'disobedience' (*ma'ṣīyat*),²²⁷ we say that it is to move away from obedience. If asked, what is 'the return' (*ma'ad*), we say that it is the returning of the particular soul to the Universal Soul. And if asked what is 'reward', we say that the pleasure, rest, and jubilation which the soul finds in its return after it has been separated from the body is recompense entire. And what is 'punishment?' We reply that what the soul finds after its separation from the body in terms of anguish, pain, grief, and regret is punishment entire. If asked, what is 'word', we reply that every utterance which indicates meaning is a word. If asked, what is the definition of 'vocal' (*lafẓ*), we say that every sound which can be written is a vocal.²²⁸ If asked what is a 'true word' and which is it, we say that to describe a thing just as it is, is a true word; the contrary of that is a 'lie'. If it is asked, what is 'correctness' (*ṣawāb*) and what is 'error', we reply that 'correctness' and 'error' correspond to the conscience just as 'good' and 'evil' correspond to action, in the same way that 'truth' and 'falsehood' correspond to legal rulings or benefit and harm to the realm of sense perceptions. If it is asked, what is the 'real nature' of this world (*ḥaqīqat-i dunyā*),²²⁹ we answer that it is the interval of time during which the soul is in the body until the moment of death. And if asked, what is 'death', we reply that it is the soul letting go of the body. If it is asked, what is the 'last thing' (*ākhirat*), we say that it is a second existence after the body's death. If asked, what is 'paradise', we reply that it is a world of spirits and a mine of delights. And if it is asked, what is 'hell', we say that it is a mine of agonies and torments. If it is asked, what is 'the awakening' (*ba'th*), we reply that it is the soul's awakening from the sleep of heedlessness. If it is asked what 'resurrection' is, we say that it is the raising of creatures by the command of God the Exalted. If it is asked what the 'gathering' (*ḥaṣhr*) is,²³⁰ we reply that it is the assembly of particular souls in the

227. I.e., sin.

228. Cf. NKh's discussion of spoken and written utterance in *Zad*, pp. 7–16.

229. The term 'world' is here to be understood as the 'lower world', the world of human experience, not the creation.

230. I.e., the congregation of the risen dead on the Day of Judgement.

presence of the Universal Soul. If asked what the 'reckoning' is, we say that it is the Universal Soul making known to particular souls the good and the evil they performed when they were still in their bodily forms. If asked what the 'way' (*ṣiraṭ*) is, we reply that it is the closest way to God. But may God give us help and true success!

[91] The wise man is he who considers himself closely until he sees that from the time he was a drop of sperm and fell into his mother's womb,²³¹ he has been moving towards God; and by slow degrees, he has come from the weakest of all states to a stronger state, and from a lower place into a higher, until that moment when he stands before God and God calls him to account. If he is among those who do good and are virtuous, he comes to ease and pleasure and jubilation forever; but if he is among evildoers and the wicked, he comes to pain, trouble, and anguish without end. From one day to the next he was blithely happy and yet, he will never reach this happy place.²³² After the coming of the Prophets and their scriptures, after Command and Prohibition, the Promise and the Threat, no one will have any excuse. As God Himself says, '*On that Day they will be speechless, and they will be given no chance to offer any excuses.*'²³³

231. An allusion to Q22:5: 'We created you from dust, then a drop of fluid, then a clinging form, then a lump of flesh, both shaped and unshaped' (tr. Abdel Haleem, p. 209).

232. This passage seems to echo not only Q22:5 but also the celebrated sermon of Imam 'Alī known as *al-Gharra'* ('the Noblest') in Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, pp. 99–100: 'Consider this thing which He brought forth in the darkness of wombs and in concealing folds out of a brimming drop of semen and an enfolded clot, an embryo, then a nurseling, a young child, an adolescent, whereupon He accorded him a heedful heart, an articulate tongue and discerning sight so that by reflection he might understand and lessen reproach. But then, when he had reached his full growth and become like his fellows, he ran wild, swaggering and behaving recklessly, dipping into the leather bucket of his passions, toiling for advancement in this world in exuberant pleasures and capricious desires. He did not take account of calamity nor humble himself in fear of God. And then he dies, bedazzled and deluded, even though he lived but briefly in the error of his ways. He enjoys no reward, for he has not carried out what he was obliged to do. The terrors of death surprise him amid the remnants of his unruliness on pleasure's paths.'

233. Q77:35–36, tr. Abdel Haleem.

The Definition of 'I'

Everyone joins the self to 'I' but to what does this 'I' refer?

Speak, do not just scratch your beard!

Is it the body? Or the soul? The intellect? Or the spirit?

Or is it like the amalgam of horse and man in the knight?

Whoever holds this view is mistaken: there are

Many knights who do not know how to fasten their trousers!

There's many a man who considers himself a weighty 'I'

Who does not attain the measure of a mote when he's weighed.

(Jurjāni, verses 33–36)

[92] This is a good question. Among philosophers there is disagreement about the 'I' of each creature, and of man in particular. One group says that man is a rational soul (*naḥs-i nātiqī*). Another group, who posit man as 'living-speaking-mortal', claim that he is soul and body taken together. If the human body is left out of account, however, it cannot be said that man is mortal since it is the body which dies when the soul is separated from it. Since every intelligent person knows that the body is living by something other than itself, not by its own essence, he knows also that that thing by which the body lives is not mortal; on the contrary, it is alive forever. In just the same way, everyone knows that that by which the earth becomes humid never becomes dry but always remains humid.

[93] Hence, the philosophers say that everyone who says 'I' is referring to the entire complex of body and soul, however much he may speak of 'my side', 'my soul', and 'my hand, foot, and head', as well as of 'my courage, my generosity, my movement' or 'my word', and the like.²³⁴

234. For an interesting parallel comment, though in a quite different context, cf. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Das Stunden-Buch* II (1901): 'And so they say, My life, my wife,/My dog, my child, and yet, they surely know/That all of this: Life,

These parts taken in their totality all refer to 'I'. So, too, they say, is the case when we use the term 'animal' which applies to all living creatures; thus, we say, 'this is a man' and 'that is an ox', 'that is a donkey', 'that is a bird', and 'that is a fish', and so forth, for these are all living things. So, too, when we speak of the sun's disk and of its radiance, heat, and roundness, and the like, for the sun itself is nothing other than the sum of these notions.

[94] They thus hold that man is just this compound of body and soul with all its purposeful organs. Of the body they say, 'The body is I'; of the soul they say, 'The soul is I.' So too is my speech and so too is my skill (*hunar*). These folk claim that whoever speaks of 'man' applies this term to the compound of soul and body, just as someone might speak of a 'knight' and apply this term to the combination of horse and rider. In just the same way that a man without a horse, though not a horse without a man, cannot be a knight, so too, they say, a body without a soul, though not a soul without a body, cannot be termed a man. Though they posit the definition of man as soul-and-body, they confer immortality and a return to a higher world to the soul alone, stating that heaven is the place for the souls of the philosophers. They further hold that the souls of philosophers return to the Universal Soul which is the soul's own lord. These divinising philosophers state, 'Because of our knowledge and the wisdom of our pursuits we become similar to God.' This is why they call themselves 'divinising' (*muta'allih*), that is, 'made god-like' (*khudā shavindah*). On the day of his own death Aristotle, with his disciples close by, took an apple in his hand and while sniffing it uttered words of wisdom which his disciples wrote down, as recorded in 'The Book of the Apple', and when he had finished, he said, 'I surrender my soul to the lord of the souls of the philosophers', and the apple dropped from his hand.²³⁵

[95] Nevertheless, they posit the terms for 'I-ness' and 'humanity' in this compound of the body and soul. We assert that this formulation of the philosophers is correct and so there is no need to oppose it. But whoever claims that this 'I-ness' pertains to soul and body in the same

Wife, and Dog and Child, Are alien images on which they push Blindly with their outstretched hands ...', in *Gesammelte Gedichte* (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 94.

235. Aristotle's remark is given first in Arabic, then in Persian translation. 'The Book of the Apple' (*Kitab al tuffaha*) is a pseudo-Aristotelian work (known in the West as the *Liber de pomo*).

way that the horse and the man pertain to 'knight' is mistaken, for God the Exalted speaks of His own Prophet as soul and body when He says, '*Muḥammad is only an emissary among so many others who have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you turn on your heels?*'²³⁶ Furthermore, whenever the Emissary exhorted people, he would express an oath with these words, 'By Him who has Muḥammad's soul in His hand, I say thus and so...' From this Tradition it is evident that he applied the term 'body' to himself, such that he said, 'By Him in whose hand I myself (*naḥsī*) am'.²³⁷ So too, those who are valiant and generous, rich in right guidance and ability, define themselves as 'soul and body'. Among the poets and celebrated men of letters, the *amīr* of Badakhshān, Shams al-Dīn al-A'lā Abū al-Ma'ālī 'Alī b. al-Asad, *mawlā* of the Prince of Believers, during a time when he had been driven by a misfortune from his rule, uttered these verses after his return to power, thanking God for his trial, since good guidance and capability had befallen him from God as a consequence. Abū al-Ma'ālī's poem:

If wealth and possessions and my country itself are withdrawn from me,
Generosity and courage, virtue and ability remain.
Thanks be to God that my capital is intact
And I will draw profits from it, if God will assist.
If He does not give back my rule, yet He gives me bread each day.
Renunciation is the Creator's bread and it shows me the way.

[96] The response of those aided by divine inspiration (*ahl-i ta'yīd*) to this question is to say that the 'I' belongs to the rational soul which is an intellectual substance (*jawhari-yi 'aqlī*), knowing to the limit of potentiality,²³⁸ active by its very nature. To adduce proof that the soul is active by nature, they state that it is the soul's proper action to put things in order so that the seed may progress from its natural state to a living state and thus act in accord with the dictates to which the soul directs it. And these actions proceed from [the soul] naturally, not as an effect [of something else: *nah be-fi'l*].²³⁹ Hence, we see that the ordered compound from the outset – by virtue of the soul within it – ingests nourishment

236. Q3:144.

237. Or: 'my soul is' (*wa-lladhī naḥsī bi-yadihi*).

238. The phrase is '*ʿālim be-ḥadd-i quwwat*'.

239. Such action is intrinsic to the soul by its very nature and is not prompted by some outside cause.

and drinks and continues to grow unbeknownst to the soul. And to adduce a proof that the soul is potentially knowing they state that we see that every soul comes ignorant into the world and comes to know only insofar as it receives instruction (*ta'lim*). They state further that our own makeup is composed of such internal organs as the heart, the liver, and the like, as well as such external organs as the eye, the ear, and the like, and that all of these act as servants and retainers and instruments for the soul, such that it can command every one of these implements to perform the action best suited to it. Thus, it constrains the eye to see colours and shapes, the ear to hear sounds, and the mind (*dil*) to reflect and make sense of what is seen by the eye and heard by the ear; and it directs the hands to grasp and the feet to walk. This is like a *padishah* in a flourishing city who orders each of his subjects and servants to perform a certain task and then directs them all to return to him. Should the city fall desolate, he commands it to be rebuilt and then he keeps on saying, 'This is *my* city.'²⁴⁰

[97] They (i.e., the *ahl-i ta'yid*) adduce the proof for this intellectual substance from which the 'I-ness' of human beings arises by saying that every person endowed with intelligence knows that there is something within the compound that is man by which he is capable of speech. This thing it is which enables him to move his lips and tongue to produce speech, and this thing it is too which enables him to teach others what he himself knows by means of speech, as well as to learn from others what he does not know, pondering and repeating it until it becomes something known. Within the animal realm this thing occurs only in mankind, and it is something other than the body. This is because the body comes to be out of things in which neither speech nor knowledge plays any part; rather, this something comes to be within man from somewhere else, as God Himself has said, '*Does man not see that We created him from a drop? Even so, he is a stubborn opponent.*'²⁴¹ The proof then is that the faculty of speech, along with the various actions which proceed from man, does not reside in that 'drop' (of semen). Seeing, hearing, speaking, and the like, stand as proofs for the existence of something within the body which effectuates those actions by means of the body's

240. The analogy between the organs of the body and the ruler of a city is a commonplace with a long history; cf. al-Fārābī, *Fī maḥādī' āra' ahl al-madinat al-fāḍila*, ed. and tr. R. Walzer as *al-Fārābī on the Perfect State*, p. 231; also, Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut, 1996), vol. 3, pp. 210ff ('the soldiers of the heart').

241. Q36:77.

organs – I mean, of course, the eye, the ear, and the like. Just as actions which are purposefully concluded and speech which is articulate with meaning are manifest solely in man and do not occur in other animals, so do we know that within us there exists a conceptual faculty (*mā'na'i hast*) which is our own specific property (*khāṣṣah-i mā-rāst*) and that the 'I-ness' of each and every one of us resides there; moreover, all our actions and utterances issue from this conceptual faculty through its use of those organs which go to make up the human compound. Nor do animals possess this faculty. Furthermore, each of us proceeds to action with ordered deliberation when he seeks something, for his own purposes, and does so by his own free choice and at a prescribed time, relying on reflection and well-trodden ways, even before he sets out, acting in accord with the dictates of orderly consideration, not in accord with random impulse (*gizāf*) or the promptings of 'nature', as wild beasts do, rambling in all directions. On the contrary, we head to where we wish to go and we take steps to realise our objectives.

[98] Hence, it is not obscure to anyone who uses his mind that it is that 'something' which carries the body to its desired objective and the object of its quest and, furthermore, that this something is other than the body and that it commands the body to accomplish this. Indeed, the body would be immobile were it not for its command. If those various movements towards the orderly action required came from the body and not from something else, they would perforce be tantamount to the body, including its instrumental organs, and these activities, diverse as they are in purpose, would continually proceed from it; however, we all observe that whenever that 'something' departs from the body, even if the body remains with all its organs intact, no activity whatever ensues. Therefore, we know that within it is something through which the actions of the different parts of the body occur and that they do so because of its command and desire, and that 'I-ness' in the body belongs there. This 'something' is what we call 'soul' (*nafs*). It possesses knowledge of good and of bad. It is the locus of action. And so God says, '*By a soul and what shaped it, and then inspired it [to know] what is abominable and what is reverent within it.*'²⁴² The tongue 'speaks' at the command of the soul; it is the soul which stirs it to speech. The tongue is connected with the soul, just as God said to His Prophet, '*Do not move your tongue about it to hasten it.*'²⁴³ That is, 'so that you may know what should be said'.

242. Q91:7.

243. Q75:16. Here 'it' refers to the revelation of the Qur'ān.

[99] Thus, this is a proof that there is a link between the soul and the tongue and, in addition, that the soul is the lord of all the body's limbs and organs. And so God says, '*That is for what your hands have sent on before.*'²⁴⁴ That is to say, 'this is the requital for those deeds which your hands have performed'. The hands, the feet, the mouth, and the rest, all stand linked with the soul which is the sovereign of them all. God has said, '*On that Day We shall seal up their mouths, but their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness to everything they have done.*'²⁴⁵

[100] So these verses stand as proof that man is something other than his bodily organs, and that his organs are only servants and instruments. When He says that their hands and their feet bear witness to what they have done, that action does not belong to the hand or the foot but rather, it belongs to the soul, which is the agent of the act, and operates accordingly, as these verses of the Qur'an attest. Furthermore, however much the general run of people may believe that man is this ponderous body which they see before them, their inborn intelligence tells them that man is soul. The proof of the rightness of this view is that when anyone loses somebody dear to him through death, he feels pain, and sadness comes over him and he grieves because he knows that that person has departed this world; even if he sees the body without any blemish upon it, he remains inconsolable for he knows that the body which lies there is not he – no, he has departed.

[101] We have established then that the 'I' belongs to the soul while the body stands in the relationship of a servant and assistant to the soul. It is on the level of the horse with respect to the rider; the horse is the rider's property: at his command it stops and at his command it goes. Whatever action the horse may perform has its origin in the man who rides it.²⁴⁶ Likewise, the body has been given to the soul so that through it the soul may acquire knowledge and carry out its duties of devotion and come at last to eternal repose. Whoever has these instruments for the acquisition of knowledge and the observance of duty and yet leaves this world with neither knowledge nor dutiful devotion, just as they appeared on their first day here ...²⁴⁷

244. Q22:10, tr. Jones.

245. Q36:65, tr. Abdel Haleem.

246. Again the metaphor goes back ultimately to Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246a.

247. There is a lacuna in the text here.

On the Body, on the Soul, on the Intelligence

*Why does a body when full of sustenance not contain more
But suffers distress if you keep on adding more to it?
And there's another substance here below that nothing can fill,
Neither by prophecy nor by vision nor by instruction.
What is this thing, and what that one, and on what basis are they so?
What sort of thing is it which rules over both of these two?
The sign of that which is invisible is that it makes a sign
Of something which is visible and leads finally to vision.*²⁴⁸

(Jurjānī, verses 5–8)

[102] ... if our ruler were not already discerning in the explication of these statements, our response to the questions in these verses would be to say that our bodies can be sated because there is more food available than we are able to eat; by the same token, if less were available, they would never be full. But as for that substance which knowledge can never satiate, that is the soul; and as for that which governs each of the two others,²⁴⁹ and which infers signs from the visible to the invisible, that is the intellect.

[103] These are the replies demanded for the questions contained in these verses, and there is no need to add more. O you who are wise, consider these two replies so that the date (*khurmā*) may be distinguished from the thorn (*khār*). But this is quite sufficient and we will now move on from these verses.

248. There is a lacuna in the text at the opening of this chapter, which may account for its relative brevity; in their edition, Corbin and Mu'in have supplied the relevant verses from the *qaṣīda*.

249. By these 'two others' he probably means the body and the soul; or, as de Gastines puts it, 'the body and the individual soul' (p. 332, note 48). It should be remembered that 'soul' (*naḥs*) also designates the 'carnal soul' or self, a prey to appetites and in need of the governance of the intellect.

On the Seven Lights²⁵⁰

*Seven lights shine: from them everything receives
A fire in the measure of its subtlest qualities.*

(Jurjānī, verse 9)

[104] The teaching of the philosopher-sages on the celestial lights and the subtle effects (*latā'if*) which come from them to the elements (*ummaḥāt*) is as follows. Every subtle effect which appears in the elements arrives from a higher world; they call the higher world which is beyond this one 'the spheres' (*aflāk*). They further state that these seven ruling stars (*setārah-i mudabbir*) are comparable to windows looking out onto that world from this one. The light and gracious subtleties of that world are diffused equally. Nevertheless, the heavenly bodies (*ajrām*) whose light reaches here are diverse in their natures, while the receptors of this light and subtlety in this world also differ because of their positions as well as their dispositions (*ṭīnat*). For this reason, things appear manifestly different in their light and subtlety. They hold that all fusible substances (*jawāhir-i gudākhtanī*) want to become gold, while all congealed substances (*jawāhir-i fusurdah*) wish to become ruby (*yāqūt-i surkh*). But because their locations and dispositions are not the same, a disposition which is purer and more completely receptive becomes gold and ruby, whereas one whose disposition is turbid and contaminated never attains the stage of gold and ruby.²⁵¹ Substances are varied, such as silver (*sīm*), copper (*mas*), iron, and the like, or such as emerald (or: chrysolite, *zabarjad*), ruby (*la'l*), amber, and the like.

They express the same view regarding the plants and the animals. The reason why the light and subtlety from the higher world do not

250. Or 'luminaries'. I have benefited from the translation of this chapter into English by Peerwani (pp. 315–318), without, however, following it at all points.

251. On this, see Ullmann, *Die Natur-*, pp. 257ff.

reach everything in equal measure is because the stellar sources differ in both magnitude and nature, and their compositions as well as their locations are diverse. The motions of the sphere around the elements differ too. Thus, one spot on the earth which is below the zone of the sphere (*manṭiqah-i falak*) and where the parts of the sphere are in extremely rapid motion, is like the motion of a wheel, while another spot on the earth is below the pole and its parts are in extremely slow motion, like that of a mill-stone (*raḥāvi*). This is the cause, they say, why these bodies in their radiance have a crystalline nature due to their subtlety, lucidity, and brightness, whereas others have a nature which is opaque due to their murkiness, darkness, and obscurity. Some fruits are sour and red, such as jujube (*bīr*). As examples of disparity in subtlety and luminance, to show that while [light] comes to all it is received differently in its recipients, they list foods such as meat, bread, and the like. Thus, when a rational being, a human, eats these, his intelligence and vitality increase, but when a mouse eats them, it becomes devious and full of mischief. Should a dog eat it, it would become vicious and pester people. In this way they have established that this disparity in existing things resides in the recipients rather than in any disparity in the world as such. And so by means of fire an egg is cooked, wax melted, stone split and a brick baked hard, and so forth.

[105] As for the response of the *ahl-i ta'wīd* – upon them be peace – on the relationship of the seven lights to the world of origination (*ibdā'*), they state that everything that exists in the sensory world is an effect of that which is in the higher world.²⁵² Just as we see that in the sensory world there are seven lights and the things that are born here receive light and subtlety from them, so too those luminous existents stand as proof that in the higher world there are seven primordial and everlasting lights and that those everlasting lights are the causes of the corporeal lights. They hold that of these seven everlasting lights, one is 'origination', another is 'intellect's substance', and a third is the entirety of the intellect in its threefold order: namely, intellect, the act of intellection, and the object of intellect.²⁵³ No other existing thing has this property

252. NKh, *Gushāyish*, tr. Hunzai, pp. 63ff (Persian text, p. 34).

253. 'aql ast ve-ham 'aql ast ve-ham ma qul ast. NKh probably derives this famous formulation from Ibn Sīnā: e.g., *al-Shifa'*, Book VIII, Chapter 7, p. 297. See also al-Fārābī, *Mabādī*, pp. 70–71 (*fa-innahu aql wa-innahu ma qul wa-innahu 'āqil*).

except for the Intellect which is self-knowing and whose essence is its knowledge. Fourth is the Soul which proceeds from the Intellect. Fifth is 'Good Fortune' (*Jadd*), sixth is 'Conquest' (*Fath*), and seventh is 'Imagination' (*Khayāl*).²⁵⁴ In the exoteric sense of the Law (*zāhir-i shari'at*), the names of these three degrees are Gabriel, Michael, and Israfil. In the physical universe the seven planets – the sun, the moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury – are the effects of those subtle forces and root-principles which are also originated. Within the 'little world', the microcosm which is man, the effects of those seven originating substances are also seven: the first of these is life, then knowledge, third is power, fourth is perception, fifth is action, sixth is will, and the seventh is continuance (*baqā*).

[106] Every human being has a share of those seven originating substances – those seven indwelling attributes (*ma'nā*) we have mentioned – to the extent that his soul's essence is capable of receiving them. In just the same way, each of the seven gems present in mines has a share of the seven planets in proportion to the receptivity of its physical substance. One soul may stand at the rank of prophecy, just as one gem may have the value of gold. Another soul may have the rank of spiritual legacy (*waṣāya*), just as a precious metal may have the value of silver. Just as the metals are seven in number – namely, gold, silver, iron, copper, tin, lead, and mercury – so too do people stand in the hierarchy of the *da'wā* at seven different levels; these are Emissary, Spiritual Heir (*waṣī*), Imam, proof (*hujjat*), summoner (*dā'i*), licenciate (*ma'dhūn*), and respondent (*mustajīb*).²⁵⁵ Just as every mineral substance has a share of the light and subtlety of the seven material planets, in proportion to the receptivity of its substance and composition, so too do the substances of human beings have a share in that eternal and primordial light, and also in proportion to the receptivity of their souls' substance. Not every mineral substance is gold, but each one of those substances receives a portion

254. On this triad, see Stern, *Studies in Early Isma'ilism*, pp. 5, 21–22.

255. This refers to the Ismaili spiritual hierarchy (*ḥudud*). The *waṣī* is the spiritual heir or legatee of the prophet; thus, 'Alī b. Abi Ṭalib is the legatee of the Prophet Muḥammad. The last three titles pertain to the organisation of the *da'wā*; the *hujjat*, or 'proof', was the chief *dā'i* of one of the 12 administrative 'islands' of the Fatimid missionary effort, and NKh held this office for the region of Khurāsān. The *ma'dhūn* is the next rank down, while the *mustajīb* is the lowest of the ranks. See F. Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, pp. 117–118, 130–131, 217–221.

of those material planets' light and subtlety, and through that light, it separates and distinguishes itself from the level of simple natures.

[107] Each of these substances occupies a niche close to man, that monarch of the world, at [their different] levels which corresponds to the degree of commonality and affinity each shares with gold, the noblest of all substances receptive to form, in the actual reception of form.²⁵⁶ So too, not every man stands at the level of prophethood and yet, the level of every member of the guiding *da'wat* has a portion of those originating lights, which are planets of intellect, and a share of their subtlety. Thanks to the grace of this share, they then stand apart from men who are at the level of simple nature and the level of the body. And each member of the *da'wat* has a level and a position close to the Universal Intellect, monarch of the higher world, which corresponds to the degree of affinity and connection each one shares with the Prophet, who is the most wholly noble in his reception of the portion of that light which has come so completely to him.²⁵⁷ The followers of the Prophet are themselves of the Prophet, as God the Exalted recounted about Abraham – upon him be peace – who said in his prayer, '*whoever follows me is with me*'.²⁵⁸ Thus, based on the judgement of this firm and decisive utterance, the followers of the Chosen Emissary who, after following him followed his offspring and did not follow strangers, nor turn back, are part and parcel of the Emissary. As the Emissary said concerning his own Legatee (*waṣī*), "Ali is part and parcel of me, and I of him."²⁵⁹ Just as in the vault of heaven

256. This is a difficult sentence and not entirely clear. Peerwani (p. 317) misunderstands the original. De Gastines here inserts Corbin's translation into hers (p. 131), but the latter is not only misleading but even more puzzling than the Persian original. Shata, in his Arabic translation (p. 237), seems to me to capture the sense of the sentence best, and I follow him here. On the 'degrees' of different minerals, see Carmela Baffioni, 'Formules et tableaux ismaéliens des minéraux', in K. D'Hulster and J. van Steenberghe (eds), *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen* (Leuven, 2008), pp. 25–31.

257. Peerwani seems to me to misunderstand the sentence (p. 317): the closeness of each member to the Universal Intellect is due to his own degree of closeness to the Prophet, rather than because of the Intellect's 'affinity and connection with the Messenger' (though this, of course, is true by extension).

258. Q14:36 (not 14:39, as in Peerwani, p. 318).

259. '*Alī minnī wa-anā minhu*.

seven lights are renowned, and whose names we have already given, so too, in the heavens of religion there are seven illustrious lights: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and the Lord of the Last Day – peace be upon them and upon him. This is a logical demonstration based on obscure premises.²⁶⁰ God says, '*Only those who are wise will understand them.*'²⁶¹

260. *burhāni-yi manṭiqīst be-muqaddimāt-i khulfī* [?]; *kh-l-f* is so vocalised in the printed text but it is not clear what this should mean (Peerwani takes it to mean 'contradictory' but this seems doubtful). Perhaps it should be read as *khalfī* in the sense of 'enigmatic' or 'recondite'.

261. Q29:43.

On Eternity, Truth, Pleasure, Life as it Passes, Perfection, and Occultation

*First is Eternity – what is it? Eternity, truth, and pleasure –
Again, what is the proof, since time passes so fast?
Perfection and occultation, the noblest of all –
For there is the remedy where no remedy is at all.*

(Jurjānī, verses 10–11)

[108] In these two verses there are six questions, all obscure. The first is about eternity, the second is about truth, the third is about pleasure. He goes on to say, what is the proof of the statement we make that ‘life passes away day by day?’ Transient life thus forms the fourth question, and it too is obscure: what is meant by saying this word? Perfection is fifth; occultation sixth.

[109] The philosophical answer to these questions addresses eternity first. Thus, eternity (*dahr*) is the unqualified continuance (*baqā’i mutlaq*) of pure disembodied spirits whom neither corruption nor cessation touches. They say too that ‘eternity is the continuance of an entity living in its own essence’, that is, that which is living out of its own essential nature and which does not die; and eternity is a deathless continuance. They hold that time (*zamān*) is a segmented eternity (*dahr-i mutaḥayyiz*); it is the continuance of bodies. The meaning of ‘life passing day by day’ – in the view of the intelligent – is time itself. ‘Perfection’, according to Aristotle, is the substance of the soul. When asked, what is the soul (*nafs chist*),²⁶² he replied, ‘The soul is the

262. This is the classic question regarding quiddity (*mahiya*); the quiddity is what makes a thing the thing that it is. To the query *mā hiya?* (*quid est?* what is it?), a formal definition of the essence of the thing is given in reply, e.g., ‘What is man?’ ‘Man is a rational animal.’ See al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta’rifāt*, p. 171.

perfection of a natural body endowed with life *in potentia* (*bi'l-quwwa*).²⁶³ He means that the body is a substance which is potentially living. The sages of true religion – upon them be peace – say the very same thing, namely, they consider the body as a shadow of the soul which is living by virtue of its very essence, whereas the body comes to be living only accidentally through the soul which is living in its essence.²⁶⁴ To say that the body is a shadow of the soul is well-founded since the shadow of anything bears a resemblance to it. Since the soul lives essentially while the body lives only potentially, it occupies the rank of a shadow to that essentially living thing. Since the body is a substance the life of which is defined by potentiality, and since the body becomes actual whenever some form of soul, vegetal or animal, reaches it, and since life, which is in the body potentially, comes into actuality within it by [the agency of] some growing soul (*naḥs-i nāmī*), such that whatever was potential in it becomes actual, and what was imperfect is perfected, we therefore affirm that the soul is the perfection of the body. This is a definition of the soul which this philosopher (Aristotle) has set down in his own comprehensive manner. This is what we have established as to what the sages of philosophy have said in response to these questions.

[110] The response of the practitioners of *ta'wīl* to these questions is as follows: We state what we heard in the presence of the sacred Imam from the Prophet's lineage and the houses of Knowledge, the Book, and the Law – and with their permission, upon them be peace – when we asked the true Imam [...] ²⁶⁵ – upon him be peace – 'Which is superior, wisdom or truth?' And he – peace be upon him – replied, 'Wisdom is superior to truth. This is because it is through wisdom that truth is truth.' He said further, 'Truth is what removes doubt amid ambiguity. Wisdom is an action accomplished through knowledge. Whoever possesses knowledge but does not manifest that knowledge in the form of action cannot be called wise.' He

263. See Aristotle's *De Anima*, 412a 21. NKh repeats this formulation in the next sentence in almost identical terms and I have omitted this repetition.

264. This is a small but obvious example of NKh's manner of reconciling 'the two wisdoms'. He draws on the philosophy of Aristotle, which he equates with the teachings of the 'sages of true religion', and shows that they are fundamentally in agreement.

265. Here, the text has 'Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh', which appears to be a scribal error as there is no Fatimid Imam of that name. NKh is probably referring to al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh.

continued, 'The Creator's knowledge – exalted be He – lies in giving shape and form to bodies. The divine action consists in the origination (*ibdā'*) of the world in this configured (*mushakkal*) universal body. It is because of the evidence of this divine action that we say that the True Originator (*mubdi' haqq*) is wise.' This is his statement, peace be upon him.

To explicate his statement – peace be upon him – that 'knowledge is giving shape to bodies', we affirm that this is correct: knowledge does give shape to bodies. But this is of two sorts. One of these is the making and the shaping of bodies of fixed configuration, such as is the world itself, standing on its own forms. Another is verbal, giving to air the shapes of letters and words which vanish at once, since knowledge is 'embodied' inasmuch as it is air – itself a body – which has been given shape by a sage's knowledge.²⁶⁶

[111] In the view of rational folk, truth is what eliminates ambiguity (*ishtibāh*). The greatest of ambiguities lies in the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān, which cannot be resolved except by the use of hermeneutics (*ta'wil*). Hence, after God the Exalted mentions the ambiguities of the Book, He says, '*God alone knows its interpretation, and those rooted in knowledge.*'²⁶⁷ With respect to this statement, it may be said that it is by hermeneutics that ambiguity is removed. Since that is so, it is evident that truth itself is the lord of hermeneutics because amidst ambiguities, truth emerges and is seen to be truth through it and falsehood emerges and is seen to be falsehood through it. It is as God says, '*to prove the truth to be true, and the false to be false, much as the guilty might dislike it.*'²⁶⁸

Truth is *ta'wil*, and the proof of this is what God the Exalted says when He told of the Prophet Joseph – upon him be peace – that he said to Jacob, '*O father, this is the interpretation (ta'wil) of my earlier dream. My Lord has made it come true.*'²⁶⁹ Truth must have something which manifests it; that which makes it manifest is the word of God the Exalted, as He says, '*God wished to verify the truth by His words and to cut the last remnant of the unbelievers.*'²⁷⁰ It follows necessarily that the lord of *ta'wil* and of those who practise it by His command is God's word. Jesus – peace be upon him – was one of these words in accord with the verse

266. Cf. NKh's discussion in his *Zād* on this subject, pp. 7ff.

267. Q3:7.

268. Q8:8, tr. Abdel Haleem.

269. Q12:100.

270. Q8:7, tr. Jones.

which says, 'The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, is only an emissary of God, and His word which He cast into Mary, and a spirit from Him.'²⁷¹ In just the same way, God the Exalted calls His chosen Emissary His Book: 'We have a record that tells the truth.'²⁷²

[112] The master of the science of hermeneutics is the Legatee (*waṣī*) of the Emissary of God. The subtle expositors (*mudaqqiqān*) of the *da'wā* have deduced three names from this: first is 'Alī, second is *ḥaqq*, and the third is *waṣī*. They say that the computation of the two letters of *ḥaqq*,²⁷³ if the letters are given their numerical value, corresponds to the name of the master of hermeneutics.²⁷⁴ Computation of the three letters of *waṣī*²⁷⁵ with the three letters also corresponds numerically with the name of the master of hermeneutics. This is a fine point. And just as ambiguity is effaced by truth, so is it removed as well by hermeneutics. Hence, the logical conclusion from these two premises is that hermeneutics is truth (*ta'wīl ḥaqq-ast*). To engage in hermeneutics means to bring the word back to its point of origin. The first of all existing things is origination (*ibdā'*), which is one with the Intellect, and Intellect is that which sustains (*mu'ayyid*) all the emissaries [of God]. Therefore, it is necessary to know that Origination is truth (*ibdā' ḥaqq-ast*) and that the word is received from Intellect by means of hermeneutics through the mediation of the prophets, upon them be peace.

[113] They say that delight is the substance of intellect, that 'the paradise of refuge' (*jannat al-ma'wā*) is its substance.²⁷⁶ The Emissary, the Chosen One, says, 'When Paradise is brought close to its inhabitants, the jubilation of Paradise takes hold of them.' The proof that the substance of intellect is joy is that joy comes with the removal of ignorance, and the removal of ignorance comes through knowledge; and knowledge is the intellect's own activity. It is well known too that man possesses no happiness greater than heavenly happiness (*shādī-vi-falak*) and that the heavenly sphere derives from the Intellect in this world. Thus, it is clear that joy is the substance of intellect.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, out of all the

271. Q4:171.

272. Q23:62, tr. Abdel Haleem.

273. I.e., the two root letters *h* and *q*.

274. I.e., with the name 'Alī.

275. I.e., *w-ṣ-y*.

276. For this phrase, see Q53:15.

277. Cf. al Ghazālī, *Ihya'*, vol. 4, p. 325, who argues that the greatest of all

animals only man, who possesses a rational soul, partakes of laughter. The philosopher-sages have posited one definition of 'man' as 'living-laughing', and laughing is a manifestation of happiness. This particular human trait of laughter stands as proof that ultimate bliss is proper to the intellect.²⁷⁸

[114] Regarding eternity, they say that it is the continuance of the eternal substance. The first eternal substance is the Universal Intellect whose continuance is forever. Just as eternity lies within the bound of the Intellect, so does time lie within the bound of the Universal Soul; that is to say, the cause of eternity is the Intellect just as the cause of time is the Soul. We say that the cause of time is the Soul since time consists of the number of movements of the sphere, according to the proponents of both forms of wisdom (*ahl-i har do hikmat*). Transient life is time, as he (Jurjānī) says in these two verses: 'Again, what is the proof, since time passes so fast?' That is, the 'proof' that eternity is deathless continuance is that time goes by day by day and is the continuance of the living and mortal [creature]. If the continuance of the living-mortal creature is transient time, the continuance of what is living and immortal – which is the Soul and the Intellect – must necessarily be eternal, not temporal; and the name for that is 'eternity' (*dahr*).

[115] As a summary statement to explain eternity and time and the distinction between each of them, we say that time is eternity measured by the movements of the spheres, the names of which are day and night, month and year, and the like, whereas eternity is unmeasured time (*zamān-i nā paymūdah*) which has neither beginning nor end. On the contrary, eternity is time continuous (*zamān-i dirang*)²⁷⁹ and duration absolute (*baqā'-yi mutlaq*). The proof that the soul's substance is not mortal and that its continuance is eternal and that that continuance is without beginning or end, is that our body lives transitorily until the life leaves it. We know that our body's life is accidental, and yet, we hold that any attribute which appears in a thing as an accident may occur in some other thing as a substance. But that thing in which that attribute is essential is prior in existence to that in

pleasures lies in knowledge.

278. See Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, 673a8 and 28.

279. De Gastines translates this (p. 139) as 'suspended time' ('le temps suspendu') but it seems that the opposite is in fact meant: a 'time' without divisions or suspensions; cf. Shatā (p. 243) who renders it as *mustamirr* ('uninterrupted, unceasing'), which seems to me more accurate.

which it appears as an accident. So we observe that heat exists as an accident in iron but when fire, whose heat is its very substance, stays in contact with it, an accidental heat comes out of the iron, and as long as the fire stays joined to it, the accidental heat does not dissipate from the iron. Now that we have shown that an accidental attribute occurring in a thing may come from another thing in which that attribute is essential, and that our body's life is accidental, the conclusion to these logical premises follows, namely, that that thing from which our body lives with an accidental life is alive with an essential life. And that which has life essentially may not die. Hence, the soul, through which our body has life, is alive by its very substance and nature, not because of something other than itself. And since it lives by its very substance, it never dies and its continuance is eternal, just as the body's continuance – being a thing whose life is on loan – is temporal. On the plane of being, the soul necessarily precedes the body just as fire is prior in its existence to iron. They hold further that the Intellect is one with eternity; that is to say, neither Intellect nor eternity has a before or an after; and the soul lies within the horizon (*ufuq*) of eternity just as time lies within the horizon of the soul.

[116] With regard to 'perfection' (*kamāl*), they hold that everything is deficient (*nāqis*) in some way. The body is deficient inasmuch as it must be linked with the soul; the soul too is deficient since it must be linked with the intellect. The body's perfection occurs necessarily through the soul by which it becomes a living thing, as we noted earlier with respect to the philosophers' teachings. The soul's perfection occurs through the intellect by way of that mighty construction which is the world itself. The proof that this is correct is that the culmination (*ḥaṣil*) of the existence of plants and animals is the existence of man, the sovereign of both plants and animals. Man's dominance over plants and animals and the world itself is proof that the Creator's purpose in the existence of plants and animals is human existence. Since man has a sensory soul in addition to a rational soul, it follows of necessity that the perfect man is he whose rational soul has reached its full perfection. But the perfection of the rational soul comes through knowledge, and knowledge comes to man only through language; there is nothing superior to man except man's Creator. So it necessarily follows that man's perfection comes through the word of God, and not through anything else. Since man utters meaningful discourse, spoken and written, it also follows of necessity that within the human species, issuing from its Creator, there should be some individual who is a perfect spokesman and who speaks on God's

behalf. And that one person must predominate over his own species, and necessarily so. The Creator's very purpose in creating humanity lies also in that one individual who holds sway over his own species, in just the same way as the Creator's purpose in creating the animal genus lay in creating the human species which has dominion over the animals. By virtue of this attribute of God's Emissary,²⁸⁰ and in accordance with God's command, he made knowledge a solemn duty (*taklif*) for people. Hence, He says, '*Summon to the way of your Lord with wisdom and with fair admonition.*'²⁸¹

[117] We have established that the soul's perfection occurs through knowledge by way of this tremendous construction (i.e., the world). For a human being to move from deficiency to perfection, he clearly must arrive at a stage at which a connection with Universal Intellect in its entirety takes place. This universal cycle with its universal and equal motions has been established in order to bring forth that specific process of individuation (*tashkhiṣ*). During the long interval while the sphere revolves, a few entities²⁸² become apparent. The proof that such a person of whom we are speaking exists – which, except in the case of long lives, is not possible – is that during the space of almost seven thousand years, only six persons – namely, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad – have thus appeared who were capable of leading a part of humanity. And if they could lead through that connection with the Intellect which accrued to them and yet, could not lead all of humanity, that is only because no one – and of this the human condition stands as proof – has yet received the complete perfection of the Intellect. It is also because that day has not yet arrived when command will belong to God, as He says, '*on that Day, command will belong to God*'.²⁸³ That there are many ignoramuses and few intelligent men, that there are many insects and animals but few humans, that there are many plants but few animals and humans, that there are many waste lands but few growing plants, stands as proof to us that this construction (of man) was possible only in time, and indeed, by means of a 'respite' (*muhlat*), just as God told His

280. That is, presumably, by virtue of his primordial pre-eminence within the human species.

281. Q16:25, tr. Jones.

282. Literally, 'bodies' (*chand tanī*).

283. Q82:19.

Emissary, 'So give respite to the unbelievers; deal with them in a leisurely manner.'²⁸⁴

The self-sufficiency²⁸⁵ of the Universal Soul from any neediness of its own occurs through that individual who can receive the connection with the Universal Intellect in its entirety and become the leader of all humanity, the final leader of all leaders, and so bring the cycle to its close. Every group has a name for him. One group calls him 'Messiah', who will return; another calls him 'Mahdi', and yet another, 'Qā'im'. God the Exalted says of him, 'About what are they questioning one another? About the awesome tidings, concerning which they differ.'²⁸⁶

We now pass from this question.

284. Q86:17, tr. Jones.

285. Reading *ghana-vi naḥs-i kullī* instead of 'mavat i naḥs-i kullī' ('the providence' [or: solicitude] of the Universal Soul), as the printed text and the MS Aya Sofya 2393, fol. 28a, line 7, have it; for this emendation, see W. Madelung, 'Abū Ya'qub al-Sijistānī and the Seven Faculties of the Intellect', in F. Daftary (ed.), *Mediaeval Ismā'īlī History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 85–89.

286. Q78:1–3, tr. Jones.

On Universal Nature

*Should you speak to me of Universal Nature in the first principles
Of its state, then will I know that you are among the just.
Tell me yet again of both its form and its attribute,
For I prefer this a hundred times more than the music of flutes.*

(Jurjānī, verses 12–13)

[118] This man asks what 'universal nature' is. The term is pointless without further elaboration. First, he who hears this term – namely, 'universal nature' – which 'is a hundred times dearer to me than the music of flutes', should know what the meaning of this term may be. Does this term make any sense or not? If there is a universal nature, there must be a 'particular nature' as well. Unless the meaning of this term is known, how can any explanation of that other term be heeded? The ancient philosophers and the 'partisans of natures' differed over this term and its meaning. We shall say first what the meaning of the term is, so that intelligent readers of this book may know that this verse, in the absence of the explanation which we will make of it, is sheer nonsense; only the term is there, not the forms of knowledge underlying the words.

[119] We say further that when the wise observe this dense and close-packed earth just as it is and in the form which it possesses, separated from water; and when they observe the water, flowing and tossing, pouring downwards from on high, just as it is and in the form which it possesses, utterly distinct from both earth and air; and when they observe air and fire, each of which also has its form by which they are distinguished from their counterparts; and when they also look to the spheres and the stars in the forms into which they have been cast and from which they do not diverge; and [see that] the entirety of this substance forms a single body, inseparably joined and intermingled, one part with another, such that they may never be scattered or diffused –

then the wise say that the parts of this 'body' must necessarily have a guardian (*hāfiẓ*) who watches over each part of its form, for each of the parts of this body has many components, none of which is worthier than another to maintain its counterpart in its proper form; and since each of the parts – as distinct from their totality – needs to be watched over, a guardian is required for them all.²⁸⁷ This protector of the parts of the universal body they call 'Universal Nature' (*ṭabī'at-i kullī*). They differ, however, as to what it actually is.²⁸⁸ First of all, we accept the argument for the existence of [Universal] Nature. We shall therefore discuss the disagreement of the philosopher-sages over what it actually is, and then expound the teaching of the sages of religion as to what nature is; and in this way, we will be able to express what Universal Nature may be according to both schools of wisdom.²⁸⁹

[120] We say that beyond these parts of the universal body – by which I mean earth, water, air, fire, the spheres, and the stars – there are 'matrices' (*mawālīd*).²⁹⁰ Of these, there are mineral essences, both soluble and insoluble, and which take many forms, each of which serves to distinguish it from the totality of existing things, both generated and elemental. The plants and the animals too – from the gnat to the elephant, from the leek and the onion to the walnut tree and the teak – each have different forms. For the earth and the water within these generated forms there must be a form-giver (*ṣūrat-garī*),²⁹¹ all the more so because of the

287. This long, quite magnificent sentence, with its clauses and sub-clauses, provides a good example of NKh's mature philosophic prose style; such sentences are characteristic of much philosophical prose in Arabic – particularly in the work of Ibn Sīnā – but here NKh assimilates it into Persian discursive prose.

288. I.e., what its quiddity is: *cheh chīzī-yi ū*.

289. This discussion provides a good example of NKh's attempt to reconcile the 'two wisdoms' by showing the harmony between philosophy and Ismaili spiritual hermeneutics.

290. By this term he designates the three 'kingdoms' of minerals, plants, and animals.

291. De Gastines translates this (p. 145) as 'painter' (*peintre*), but this does not seem quite apposite. NKh's phrase may be his Persian rendering of the Arabic *wahīb al-ṣuwar* (the 'giver of forms'), i.e., the *donator formarum* or Agent Intellect of Neo-Platonism, though adapted for quite different purposes in the Ismaili context; see H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, pp. 118ff. NKh discusses the Agent Intellect below in 12:150.

huge diversity we see amongst them. Take wood, for example, which is a type of natural thing: some of these are softer in form, like willow and fig, while others are harder, like teak and ebony (*ābnūs*). So, too, among individual animals there are many forms: the skin, the hair, the flesh, the bones, the head, the foot, etc. Each of these beings so formed is preserved in its particular form while the plant or the animal is alive. Only after the separation of the vegetal and animal soul from it – whether wood, bone, or skin – after the death of the plant or animal, does that form no longer remain. Every one of these is made up of components of earth and water, and the like; and each one, whether of wood or anything else, needs a guardian who keeps watch over those components, both in the form that they assume and in their aggregate. I mean, for example, that a piece of stone has a guardian which watches over it in its form as stone and preserves those hard particles within the piece of stone lest they crumble away. It is not possible that every particle of that [stone] by its own power attach itself to another particle which is beside it, because the power to act does not reside within the nature of that body; it is a substance which accepts agency but it is not itself an agent. The process of preserving things endowed with form in their various and divergent forms is what we call ‘nature’.

[121] Now that we have established the meaning of the term ‘nature’, we may proceed. The philosophers and the ‘partisans of natures’ disagree about what this ‘nature’ is. In his book *The Physics* (*Sam’ al-kiyān*), Aristotle has said that ‘nature is the beginning and the end of movement’;²⁹² that is, when the body’s substance comes to be, it does so together with the individual natures, all at once without any interval or delay.²⁹³ When these first accidents unite with the material substances, the beginnings of movement and of rest in space occur from this starting-point (*wahlat*); in other words, when these individual natures – heat, cold, moistness, and dryness – are united with substances receptive to them in the proper order that exists, the beginnings of motion occur. One part of the body grows heavy and sinks to the centre, while another part becomes light and rises to the edges; and so on until the world out of this substance by which nature comes to be takes the form that it has.

292. See Aristotle, *Physics*, 200a 12.

293. Reading *muhlat* (‘delay’) instead of *wahlat*, as the text has it, and which appears in the sentence that follows.

[122] This is an excellent, a reasonable formulation. Nevertheless, [Abū Bakr] Muḥammad-i Zakariyā'-yi Rāzī has not deemed it acceptable.²⁹⁴ He has stated that if such were the case, it would necessarily follow that these natures came into the body from the Creator; but if they had come from the Creator, nature would exist within the Creator, and this cannot be true. It has long been Muḥammad-i Zakariyā'-yi Rāzī's custom to stand in opposition to the philosophers' doctrines. His sole purpose in this is to demonstrate his own brilliance, the superiority of his own thinking, and the acuteness of his own insight.

[123] A group of the partisans of nature claims that nature – that is, the force that maintains these natural form-endowed entities in their proper forms – is a divine power entrusted with the preservation of the world.

[124] Another group argues that the preservation of the world in the form in which it is, in this universal body, is the void (*khalā*); in other words, beyond the sphere there is no place whatsoever. The void draws the body; the place in which the world is situated draws the body by its very nature and maintains it, so that it cannot move away from it. It is like a pitcher which potters make, on the underside of which they pierce little holes and on top of which they place an opening; when one stops the pitcher by the top and puts it into water, it fills with water, and when one keeps a finger on its top and pulls it out of the water, despite the many holes no water pours out because that void, which is within the pitcher, keeps the water inside. Since no air is allowed to enter, no water escapes from it. But when the finger is removed from the top, the water runs out of the holes at once, since the air rushes in and takes the place which the water occupied. Hence, those who claim that 'the world's order comes from the void' offer the non-dispersal of the world's parts as their proof.²⁹⁵

294. The philosopher and physician (d. 313/925), a major opponent of the Ismailis, who had debated with Abu Hatim al Razi a century earlier. For an Ismaili critique of Abu Bakr's views on prophecy, see Hamid al Din Kirmani (d. after 1020), *al-Aqwal al dhahabiya*, ed. Ṣalāh al Sawī (Tehran, 1397–1977). NKh attacks him at length in his *Zad*, pp. 73–118. Cf. also C. Baffioni, *Atomismo e antiatomismo nel pensiero islamico* (Naples, 1982), pp. 116–119.

295. *paragandah-i na shudan-i ajza' yi 'alam*. The argument seems to be that the void which surrounds the universe holds it in place, just as the air surrounding the filled pitcher keeps the water from pouring out, as long as the stopper is kept in place.

[125] Another group says that this universal body is maintained as it is just because there is no void and no void attracts it. In other words, since no void exists, it is like a piece of a reed which one sticks into water by one end and then puts the other in his mouth so that when the air within the reed is drawn out, the water comes in – since the place of the air inside that piece of reed is empty – and reaches the lips of him who sucks on it. On the strength of this argument they argue that the universal body is not dislodged from its place just because there is no void.

[126] Yet another group holds that everything in nature, whether a person or a piece of wood or anything else, has moisture within it; it is moisture which compounds the soil and as long as the moisture does not leave it, the soil is not scattered. Accordingly they state that 'nature' is moisture for moisture joins everything together.

[127] Still another group says that the 'protector' in each thing is either moisture or heat. They add that if the moisture does not occur together with heat, when the moisture departs from the thing – as we observe that moisture does indeed depart – the thing inevitably falls apart. Nevertheless, when heat is present in it, for every part from which moisture has evaporated, the heat supplies some other part to replace it since heat acts to retain moisture.

[128] Some philosophers claim that it is God's will which maintains things, and that the name of that will is 'nature'.

[129] The response of the practitioners of hermeneutics (*ahl-i ta'wīl*) – upon them be peace – in affirming 'nature' is to say that Nature is, as it were, the deputy (*nā'ib*) of the Universal Soul, and delegated (*muwakkal*) to maintain the parts of the body in their proper forms. They reject the doctrine of those who say that Nature – which is the conservation of things endowed with form – is moisture or heat, arguing that heat and moisture are themselves forms rather than formative factors (*muṣawwirān*). Moisture is an essence proper to water and requires something to preserve it within the essence of water, as does heat within the essence of fire, because both of these – moisture and heat – are accidents (*a'rāḍ*) and no accident subsists in itself (*be-dhat-i khīsh*); whatever does not subsist in itself has no power of action.

[130] They also reject the doctrine of that group which claims that the void is what preserves the world on the grounds that each thing endowed with form amongst created forms possesses a preserver for its

bodily form which we cannot see. Hence, if it is the void which holds the world in its place and water in its form, why are air and water and earth and fire not one and the same rather than being sharply distinct from one another? If that piece of wood is a totality of parts, none of which is better suited than its neighbour to hold it together, why does it not crumble away?

[131] They reject as well the doctrine of the faction which holds that Nature is the Soul itself. They do so on the grounds that in the vegetal kingdom (*mawālīd-i nabāti*), certain plants have a seed while others have neither seed nor root, such as the truffle and the mushroom.²⁹⁶ Amongst the animals too, there are some produced by a male and a female while others are not engendered but are spontaneously generated, such as the fly, the gnat, the mouse, and the like. For those which are engendered Soul is the agent, whereas for those which are generated Soul is not the agent, since their existence does not follow the same course as that of the engendered. Since the agent from which these entities are generated is not Soul, there must be a substance the action of which bears upon the body in its essence, and this is Universal Nature. In this world, the dwelling place of Universal Soul, [Nature] is like the person charged with spreading the royal carpets out; from the mixture into which the elemental components tumble, [Nature] composes now something vegetal, now something animal, and in the proper measure, as needs must be. [And it is like] the sweeper who keeps the dwelling clean, winnowing out the natural dispositions from which man is composed and by its action warding off destructive impurities from man – God's supreme creation – just as [Nature] protects him from vile, stinking, noxious dispositions – the mouse, the snake, the scorpion – by driving them underground. It is by means of the activity through which Universal Nature proceeds that the deleterious effects of these evil principles are kept far from man. Nature brings forth the fly and the gnat from fouled waters and wastegrounds in cane-brakes and marshes in such a way that the pollution and defilement of these places are averted and their effects dispersed by the air. These dispositions become salubrious in their forms, for when these insects die, their bodies revert to their natures but are now modified and made more receptive to better forms than they previously had.

296. Literally, 'raisin' or 'currant': *kishmish*. De Gastines (p. 149) renders it as 'truffle' and I follow her version here.

[132] This is high wisdom. It is clear proof that Universal Nature continually cleanses and purifies the world from its contaminants and mingled impurities for the sake of the activity of the Universal Soul. Those flooded fields which have become dry and fit for planting through this activity are evidence that this Universal Nature acts as the servant of Universal Soul. Universal Nature it is which preserves each and every one of the various natures in its form so that none of them falls asunder, expires or decays. This is a substance which belongs to the entirety of the components of the physical world; for this reason it is called 'the world of Nature'. Through the connection of its own actions, coming to be in the body, with itself, as well as through its connection with that primary action which becomes manifest in the physical world through the mediation of Universal Soul, it preserves the world. In as much as it sets the spheres in motion, it is neither heavy nor light. In as much as it sets fire in movement to the edges of the world, it is light. But in as much as it propels earth and water to the centre of the earth, it is heavy. In as much as it is [nature] which makes plants grow tall, it is called 'the growing soul'. And because it is what moves the sensual soul in search of the pleasures of the body, it is called 'the sensory soul' (*nafs-i ḥissī*). In that it is what stirs the human soul to acquire knowledge of existing things, it is called 'the rational soul' (*nafs-i nāṭiqī*).

[133] The entire world in all its parts has a single nature because there is a single agent for all the world's components. Every one of these may have another name in accord with the activity which it performs. Even so, the soul within the microcosm is one, although its actions are many due to the instrumentalities which it uses. It is like a carpenter who makes a different use of each of his tools. The specific works of Universal Nature are like counterfeits (*muzawwarāt*)²⁹⁷ of the Universal Soul's productions – by which I mean with respect to the substances of those things produced by the Universal Soul, such as gold and silver and the like, whereas Universal Nature has iron sulphate, vitriol, arsenic, and the like. And so too, in correspondence with the primary plants, nature has the mushroom and the truffle, and the like. Also, in relation to the birds and the quadrupeds in nature there correspond the flies, the mosquitoes, the ants, the frogs, and so forth.

297. De Gastines renders this as 'imitations' (p. 151), while Shata has *muzawwarāt* (p. 253), 'counterfeits' or 'fakes'. Perhaps what is meant is something along the lines of 'replicas'.

[134] For this reason the sages of true religion, the adepts of metaphysics, say that Universal Nature is the pupil (*shāgird*) of Universal Soul. The specific activity of Universal Soul is the creation of the rational soul in the human temple. Its action on bodies in individuals occurs by the imposition of form. The transformation of the vegetal into the animal in individuals, as well as all other alterations and transformations, is proper to Universal Nature which in this world is located between the sphere of the moon and that point which is the centre of the universe. The 'kingdoms' and the spheres have their support in it. The world is filled with Universal Nature, though it occupies no place whatsoever within it, for it is a substance without spatial location (*jawhari-yi nā jāyi gīr*).

[135] As for this man's remark alluding to Universal Nature 'in the first principles of its state', that is a reversion to the search for the existence of Universal Nature at its first beginning in the substance of the body. To this we reply that the existence of Universal Nature in the substance of the body – which is the shadow of the Universal Soul – in its initial state arises from the Universal Soul's contemplation of its own shadow, just as the existence of the Universal Soul arises from the contemplation of the Universal Intellect of its own essence. If anyone should object to this notion, asking how anyone's contemplation of anything might produce an active agent, and then inquire further, 'How does Universal Nature come to be from the Universal Soul's contemplation of prime matter, which is its shadow?', our answer to this is to say that if the contemplator (*nāẓir*) is noble (*sharīf*) and that which he contemplates is equivalent to him in genus and ipseity, then an active substance results from that contemplation. There is a clear example of this in the world: when the sun, which is a noble substance, looks upon a clear crystalline ball – that pure round ball being a substance of the same genus as the sun – it produces a fire within that ball, and [that fire] is an active substance. The Universal and exstantiating (*ibdā'ī*) Soul is noble and its shadow is congeneric with it. When it contemplates it, Universal Nature becomes manifest in matter, for active agency appears in its shadow, fulfilling its intentions and performing certain of its actions just as the fire which the sun brought forth in the crystal performs certain of the actions of the sun. When Universal Nature comes to be from the Universal Soul's contemplation of its own shadow, at the very outset four individual natures are united in the body's substance, since it is the fourth existent after primal creation out of nothing – that is, Intellect, Soul, prime matter, and the fourth is Universal Nature. One part of matter grows heavy and

sinks down while another part becomes light and ascends. Since there is no measure to this substance – indeed, it is infinite – that which is heavy and falls to the centre becomes mixed, while that which is light and returns to the outermost edges becomes vertical (*rāstī*). When it is once again vertical, a circle forms, just as a stone flung into still water occasions when a circle appears from the spot where the stone fell and extends in every direction, as we explained earlier.

[136] The proof that the sphere comes to be through Universal Nature is as follows. If purely as supposition, we mix together and confuse all these matrices and spheres until they are wholly mingled, and then we desist, it must necessarily be the case that this world will again have the very same form which it has at present. To take an analogy from our observation of the world in support of this argument: we know that if we take a glass with a capacity to hold one *man* of water²⁹⁸ and we toss ten *sittirs* of dirt into it so that a part of it remains empty since it is filled with air, and then, if we stop up this glass and shake it hard so that it all mingles until it foams and the water, dirt, and air mix together and become one; then, if we set the glass down, the dirt must settle below the water and the air stay above it. This is partial proof, drawn from experience, that Universal Nature governs these components of natures and preserves them in their original forms. Following upon severe force, such as we have mentioned, they return to their first forms. If these bodies become mixed together by something which forces them to mingle, as soon as the force of that agency abates, the world returns to the form which it has: the earth stands in the middle of the world, the water stands beneath it, the air stands above the water, and the fire above the air, while the spheres encompass them. This is because original Universal Nature does not change its state; it is not possible that air become heavy or earth light or that the air be located at the centre while earth ascends. I have demonstrated to thinking people that Universal Nature in its initial state results from the Creator's command – glory be to Him – by the mediation of Universal Soul, whose contemplation occurs by means of Universal Intellect and its support of the Soul. We have stated its likeness and its attributes through the magnanimity of the treasurer of the knowledge of God's Book – He is exalted. Success comes only from God. And may God's blessing be upon His prophet Muḥammad and all his family.

298. A Persian unit of measure, as is *sittir*.

On Angel, *Parī*, Demon²⁹⁹

*Angel, parī, demon – I know that they exist and indeed,
That they must exist, but tell me yet again
Of the what and the how: give me demonstrative proof
If you want this discourse of yours to emerge from its veil.*

(Jurjānī, verses 14–15)

[137] This man states that he accepts the existence of the angel, the *parī*, and the demon, but that assertion without demonstration is not enough. Say what each one of these is and how it is. As he says, ‘Speak of the what and the how and give demonstrative proof.’ The quiddity (*māhiyat*) of a thing is what a thing is; that is, the investigation into the genus of a thing. Its qualities constitute its howness, that is, its form and colour if it is a body, its active attributes if not a body. Thus, if someone says, ‘a tree’, for example, and someone else asks, ‘what is tree?’, this is an inquiry on his part about the genus of ‘tree’. And the answer might be – if there is some herbage there – that they say, it belongs to the genus ‘tree’. But if nothing [green] is there, they might answer ‘tree’ is the genus of something which grows and changes water and soil into other forms. If then he says, ‘How is it a tree?’, the answer might be that one end of it is in the ground while another end is in the air, and it has many branches and leaves. This is the meaning of ‘what’ and ‘how’ which he has asked about in these verses.

[138] An intellectual and philosophical answer to somebody who asks ‘what is an angel?’ might be to say that the starry bodies of the heavens are angels, that they are living and endowed with articulate speech, and that they act within the cosmos by God’s command. Thābit b. Qurra

299. Cf. Peerwani (pp. 318–323), for another translation of 11:137–144.

al-Ḥarrānī,³⁰⁰ who translated philosophical works from Greek language and script into Arabic language and script, held that the spheres and the stars are living and articulate. He made a proof of this, saying, 'Man has life and speech because his body is the noblest body; into the noblest body, which is the human body, the noblest soul has come down and that soul is both alive and endowed with speech.' This proposition is true. He went on to say, 'The bodies of the spheres and the stars are exceedingly noble and subtle and of the utmost purity.' This is another true proposition. The conclusion drawn from these two propositions is that the spheres and the stars possess utterly noble souls. Since a soul that is thoroughly noble is a rational soul, the spheres and the stars have rational souls, and they are both living and endowed with articulate utterance. This is a proof which this philosopher has made that angels are the spheres and the stars and possess rational speech.

[139] The philosophers do not recognise [the existence] of the *parī* but they do affirm that of demons. They say that the souls of ignorant and evil people remain in this world after they have separated from their bodies. This is because they leave their bodies with regret for their sensual appetites, and these desires draw them so that they are unable to move beyond their natures. Such a soul enters an ugly body and passes through the world, tricking people and teaching them wicked deeds; it leads people into deserts where they lose their way and die. In his *Metaphysics*,³⁰¹ Muḥammad Zakariyā' al Rāzī has stated, 'The souls of the wicked who become demons show themselves to a person in one form and order him, "Go! Tell people that an angel has come to me and said God has conferred prophethood on me and I am an angel." In this way dissension occurs among people and many people are killed, and all through the arrangement of that soul turned demon.' We have already refuted the teaching of this demented and shameless man (*in muhawwes bi bāk*) in the book *Bustān al 'uqul*.³⁰² We won't concern ourselves with

300. On Thabit b. Qurra (d. 289/901) of Harran, one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers – as well as a prominent translator from Greek and Syriac into Arabic – see *FI2*, vol. 10, p. 428, and *GAS*, vol. 3, pp. 260–263.

301. *Kitab-i 'ilm-i illah* in the text; cf. al Rāzī, *Rasa'il falsafiya*, ed. P. Kraus (Cairo, 1939), pp. 165–190, including an excerpt from *Zād* from the same (lost) work, pp. 172–173. The present excerpt was not available to Kraus.

302. A lost work; see Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 122, no. 15. See also note 294 above.

a response to this nonsense [*havas*] here since it would divert us from our objective. This then is the position of the philosophers on the angel and the demon.

[140] As for the response of the *ahl i ta'vīd* to this question, it is to state that – on the command of the treasurer of knowledge of the Book of God and the Law of His Emissary – peace be upon him and upon his representative – an angel is a separate spirit which God – glory be to Him – has brought eternally into being from Intellect, Soul, *Jadd*, and *Fath*, and *Khayāl*, known outwardly in the Book and the Law as the Pen, the Tablet, Israfil, and Michael, and Gabriel. Such instantiated beings have two roots, Intellect and Soul, and they have three branches: *Jadd*, *Fath*, and *Khayāl*. Created corporeal things have two roots too, their 'fathers' and their 'mothers', by which I mean the stars and spheres and their 'natures'. From these three, minerals, plants, and animals – the last of which is man – come to be through generation. In the microcosm two roots obtain in religion: the Emissary and the *waṣī* (Legatee). And there are three branches: the Imām, the *hujjat*, and the *dā'ī*. The branches born of each of these three born figures are numerous.³⁰³

[141] Thus, angels as originated are pure of all matter and their existence is their act. Their action is made manifest in the spheres and the stars, the light and power of which – since they are visible but not audible – come from those angels of origin (*fereshtigān-e ibdā'ī*). The divine purpose in ordaining these visible and created angels is to bring these angels potentially to be in human beings. The Emissary and his *waṣī* bring these potential angels into actuality by means of the Book and the Law. Just as the stars, visible angels as they are, serve as intermediaries between those angels of first origin, who are angels in actuality, and humans, who are angels *in potentia*, in order to make them manifest, so too do the prophets, the *waṣīs*, and the Imams act as intermediaries between the angels in potentiality who are human beings and the angels in actuality who are primordial and instantiated, in order that through the Book and the Law they may make them into actual angels. Whoever is capable of transforming someone from an angel in potentiality to an angel in actuality has reached an angelic rank; he is God's representative on earth. It is as He has said, 'If it had been Our will, We could have made

303. See 13:154 and Fig. 2 below for NKh's elaboration of the 'roots' and 'branches' of religion; cf. also his *Wajh-i din*, especially Discourses 11 and 13.

*you angels, succeeding one another on earth.*³⁰⁴ It is for this reason that God has commanded us, after having faith in Him – glory be to Him – that we should have faith in His angels, His Book, and His emissaries; it is as He says, *‘They all believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers.’*³⁰⁵

[142] God the Exalted mentions two groups of His creatures ‘which I created so that they might worship Me’. One He calls the *jinn* which are called *parī* in Persian, and the other is *ins* which is humankind. God says, *‘I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me.’*³⁰⁶ He does not say, ‘I created the demon’ (*div-rā āfaridam*). Rather He says, ‘The demons were *parīs* who became demons through disobedience to their God.’ As this verse states, *‘We said to the angels, “Bow down before Adam”, and they all bowed down, except Iblis: he was one of the jinn and he disobeyed his Lord’s command.’*³⁰⁷ Thus, the reason for the existence of demons, on the authority of this verse, is the existence of humankind. Does not God say that Iblis, before He commanded him to be obedient to Adam, was one of the *parīs*? So the creature was of two types, one humankind, the other *parī*. And the *parī* is of two types, one an angel, the other a demon. By this I mean that those who remained obedient were the angels while those who were disobedient became the demons. In the Book God makes no distinction between the angel and the *parī* except to say that when a *parī* turned disobedient, it became a demon, and if not, an angel. He placed the *parī* at the same level, as when He said, *‘When We said to the angels, “Bow down before Adam”, and they all bowed down, except Iblis: he was one of the jinn ...’* That is, ‘When We said to the angels, “Bow down before Adam”, they bowed down except for Iblis; he was one of the *parīs*.’³⁰⁸ In other words, ‘one of the angels’. Thus, it is clear from this verse that Iblis was a *parī*. Those who were not disobedient became angels; those who were disobedient became demons. It therefore becomes clear too that the cause for a *parī* to become an angel lies in

304. Q43:60, tr. Abdel Haleem. This translation seems closer to NKh’s way of understanding the verse; however, Jones translates: ‘Had We wished, We could have appointed angels among you as successors in the land.’

305. Q2:285.

306. Q50:56.

307. Q18:50, tr. Abdel Haleem.

308. In his Persian rendering of this verse, NKh here translates ‘one of the *jinn*’ as ‘one of the *parīs*’.

obedience while the cause for a *parī* to become a demon lies in disobedience. Obedience and disobedience cannot occur except through the mediation of the Prophet with God, as is said in the Tradition of Adam: 'Since Iblis did not make obeisance to Adam, he became a demon after he had been an angel.'³⁰⁹

[143] It follows necessarily then that the Emissary was an emissary both to the *parī* and to humankind, just as it says in God's Book, 'Say, *It has been revealed to me that a group of jinn once listened in and said, "We have heard a wondrous Qur'ān, that gives guidance to the right path"*'.³¹⁰ And in another passage He says to His Emissary, 'When We sent a group of *parīs* to you so that they might hear the Qur'ān, they said, "Listen!" And when they had heard they went to their own people and said, "O our people! Respond to God's emissary (*dā'ī*)". As He says, 'We sent a group of jinn to you to listen to the Qur'ān. When they heard it, they said to one another, "Be quiet!" Then when it was finished they turned to their community and gave them warning.'³¹¹ In another passage He says, 'Say, "O people, I am God's emissary to both of you"',³¹² that is, to humankind and to *parīs*. The word 'all of you' encompasses both *parīs* and humans.³¹³ This word is proof that *parīs* are part of humankind. When he says, 'O people, I am God's emissary to you both', he means humans and *parīs*, as God says, 'Say, "O people, I am God's emissary to all of you." Also, in *Sūrat al-Rahmān* He says thirty-one times by way of rebuke, 'O people and *parīs*! About which of the blessings of your Lord do you accuse the Emissary of lying?' His verse: 'Which then of your Lord's blessings do you both deny?'³¹⁴ It is evident from these verses that the Emissary was an emissary to both mankind and *parīs*.

[144] It is necessary to know that people fall into two categories in the world of religion: one of *parīs* and another of humans. The *parīs* are in two categories. Whoever amongst them remains obedient goes

309. For this Tradition, see al-Kulaynī, *al-Rawḍa min al-Kāfī* (Tehran, 1389), vol. 8, p. 274 (no. 413).

310. Q72:1–2, tr. Abdel Haleem (not Q70:1–2, as in Peerwani, p. 321).

311. Q46:29, tr. Abdel Haleem.

312. Q7:158.

313. The gloss is needed because the original Qur'ānic verse says 'all of you' (*jami'an*), not 'to both of you', as NKh gives it here solely in his Persian rendering (*sūyi shomā her do*).

314. Q55:13.

out of this world as an angel; whoever turns away from obedience goes out of this world as a demon. Among the common folk it is well known that the *parī* is lovely of countenance while the demon has an ugly face. Since the demon's ugliness is a result of disobedience, the beauty of the *parī* must necessarily come from obedience. This beauty and this ugliness both result from belief (*i'tiqād*), and its form is spiritual, not physical. The *parīs* amongst people are concealed from the common folk. The word '*parī*' is *jinn* in Arabic and [the verb] *janna* means 'to hide'.³¹⁵ Thus it is clear that amongst the community of the Emissary, there is a group which is hidden. Those who are hidden are the potential angels; whoever amongst them leaves this world in obedience becomes an angel in fact, but whoever turns away from obedience becomes a potential demon, and when that demon leaves this world, he becomes a demon in fact. Those who are manifest (*āshkār*) are potential angels; unless they become *parīs* in actuality they do not become angels in potentiality. Whoever is not an angel in potentiality cannot become one in actuality. And so whoever amongst this group is manifest as a *parī* becomes hidden from others until, having become a *parī*, he can become an angel. What we have said is an analogy for the practitioners of the *zāhir* and the *bāṭin*, for whoever progresses from the *zāhir* to the *bāṭin*, is like the man who becomes a *parī* and is beautiful in form.

In each of these two communities there are demons, according to the Emissary. There are those who pass from hiddenness to manifestation; these are the *jinn*-demons (*dīvān-i jinn*). And there are those who pass from visibility into hiddenness; these are the devil-humans (*shavāṭin i insī*). God the Exalted says, 'Thus We have appointed an enemy for every prophet: devils from both men and jinn.'³¹⁶

[145] We say that the rational soul in every human being is a potential angel, and the potential angel is a *parī*, as we have said. The concupiscent soul and the irascible soul in every body are two potential demons. Everyone whose rational soul brings the irascible and the concupiscent souls to heel becomes an angel. Everyone whose concupiscent and irascible souls subjugate his rational soul turns into a demon in actuality. The Emissary, the Chosen One, says that each human being has two demons who dupe him constantly, as the Tradition says, 'Every man has

315. The primary sense of the verb; cf. F. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984; repr. of 1863 edn), p. 462.

316. Q6:112, tr. Jones.

two devils who entice him.’³¹⁷ From this Tradition it is clear that man has a rational soul which is one and two demons, one of which is the concupiscent soul, the other the irascible. They asked him, ‘O Emissary, do you have these two demons too?’ And he replied, ‘I have two demons but God has given me victory over them and I have brought them into submission.’ The actual wording of the Tradition is that he said, ‘I have two devils but God gave me victory over them and so they surrendered (*fā-aslama*).’ Hence we have demonstrated that within the human being there is both an angel and a demon, but he himself is a *parī*. The demons are not God’s creatures; rather, the demon’s existence occurs as a result of disobedience. The *parīs* are angels in potentiality; they become angels in actuality when they proceed obediently. The demons too become actual when they are disobedient. Human beings are angels and demons in potentiality. That world beyond is filled with angels and with demons in actuality.

This is a detailed exposition of the subject.

317. *Li-kull insān shaytānan yughwiyānihu*. For this see Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, p. 364 (I thank Professor M. A. Amir-Moezzi for this reference).

A Commentary on 'One'

What is the One in whom the many exist, absolute in uniqueness?

Why do you call Him Creator and Compeller?

One whom neither doubling nor halving affects;

Who neither increases nor lessens in number?

One by necessity or by approximation, not by exactitude –

How can such statements be understood?

(Jurjānī, verses 16–18)

[146] Amongst the ancient philosophers and sages, Pythagoras was a master of the science of numbers; he was the lord of arithmetic. Here is what this wise philosopher had to say: 'The sensory world is imagined (*mutaṣawwar*); the order of the world rests on number. The world has its beginning from One and that One is the world's maker who brought the multiple world forth out of his One.' And he continues, 'Just as one does not need number by its very nature – for if there were no other numbers, there would still be one – all other numbers stand in need of one for their very existence. If one were not, no other number could be; every number from which one is taken becomes non-existent.'³¹⁸ God too, who is One, has no need of anything created. If this multiple world did not exist, He would still exist; however, if He did not exist, the world would not exist. In the same way, if there were no one, there would be no multiplicity.' And he states: 'The emergence and the existence of number come by means of the number one; it is the cause of number. The meaning of number is that which can be counted (*ma'dūd*), and such is this world which is a divisible substance. Divisibility implies multiplicity; hence, the emergence of a world which is quantifiable and multiple comes about by means of the One, who is both its cause and its creator.'

318. The argument is found in Plato, *Parmenides*, 164–165.

[147] None of the philosophers denies that God is One. All of them offer the multiplicity of the components of the world as proof of God's oneness. They say that the units (*yekî-hâ*: 'the ones') which make up the world, and through which it exists, are all proofs that its Creator is one. They argue further that if somehow the nature of the Creator was to be more than one, it would follow necessarily that there was yet another creator before him who was in fact one and from whom the world-order of this 'multiple creator' (*ṣānî'-yî mutakaththir*) in fact came. Moreover, they say, 'Since the world itself is multiple and the existence of the multiple is due to the One, it follows of necessity that the Creator of the multiple world preceded its existence.' They say further, 'By its very nature the One accepts neither halving nor doubling (*nah taṣṣif ... ve nah tad'if*).' And further, 'A half is still *one* half. Three times one equals *one* three times. One does not become less through division since one is not divisible; indeed, by its very nature it subsists as indivisible.

This philosophical notion is excellent; and yet, God alone knows best what is true.

[148] In reply to the questions 'What is the absolute One?' and 'What is the multiple one?', the *ahl-i ta'yîd* – upon whom be peace – reply that the One from which the order of numbers comes, and which is multiple, is composite, formed of oneness and of that substance which is receptive to oneness. In other words, the 'One' which is termed *waḥdah* in Arabic is prior to the 'one' which is called *wahid*, just as 'blackness' is prior to 'black' or 'sweetness' prior to 'sweet'. And they hold that just as the black exists by virtue of blackness and the sweet is characterised by sweetness, the 'multiple one' – which is the starting-point for numbers – exists also by virtue of the One. The One was prior to it in every sense and unites with its essence to become the leaven of both numbers and of quantifiable things. In fact, if that multiple one were not to exist, the multiple – and, in fact, most things – would not come into existence through it; so whatever lacks sweetness would not become sweet, or whatever did not have blackness would not exist as black.

[149] They state too that oneness, though it be the cause of the one, does not exist in itself. The one as well is not one without oneness, just as sweetness does not exist except in what is sweet and the sweet cannot be known in the absence of sweetness. Both of these, which are causes of the multiple world, require each other in order to exist. Then the intellect affirms necessarily the existence of that which caused these two to need each other, so that through the existence and

the bringing-to-existence of one another, multiplicity might come to be, and through multiplicity, the multiple would exist. They call that which brings oneness into existence and manifests the one through it *mubdī* (original cause of existence); it is that which makes oneness to be the cause of the one by creation out of nothing (*ibdā*), not out of something, so that the one, through the existence of that oneness, could be a one and oneness itself be fixed in the one. Both become one substance just as, for example, form and matter are united and come to exist, both of them, through this union, even if it is known and understood that form is other than matter.

[150] They hold further that the First Existent is that essence with which oneness is united. It is the Universal Intellect which the philosopher calls 'the Agent Intellect' and which is the beginning of all beings. They term this Intellect 'one-being' (*wāḥid*) since it is the *nomen agentis* (*fā'il*) of [the noun] 'oneness' (*waḥdat*) and its designation is by virtue of the 'oneness' of the 'one-being' – that is, it is made-one together with oneness.³¹⁹ Since the one is one by virtue of oneness, it is not an absolute one but rather, a multiple one in its very nature and essence, and it is the root-principle (*aṣl*) of multiplicity and the first multiple; the Soul emerges from it through the power of oneness, for the Soul is the very substrate of 'two-ness'. From that we know that the Soul emerges from the oneness of the First Intellect; that it is the substrate of 'two-ness;' that the Soul is receptive to the effects of the Intellect. Since the multiple one comes to be through the oneness of the Creator, those assisted by divine revelation, the *mu'ayyadān-i ilāhī* – upon them be peace – state that it follows necessarily that the Originator of oneness is superior to oneness itself; that what is closest to Him is oneness, in the approximation of the imagination, just as the thing closest to oneness is the one, and the thing closest to one is two. And since the Intellect by its very nature cannot go any higher than oneness in affirming the divine attributes, the Originator (*mubdī*) – glory be to Him – is perforce called 'One'. It is as God says, 'Say: He is God, One.'³²⁰ So Ja'far al-Šādiq – upon him be

319. The discussion here turns on the fact that grammatically *waḥid* has the form of an active participle derived from the same root as *waḥdat*, as though it might be glossed 'one-er' in analogy with 'writer' (*katib*) or 'doer, agent' (*fā'il*: which, to complicate matters further, is also the grammatical term for 'agent').

320. Q112:1.

peace – recited *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* with such exaltation.³²¹ Intelligent men, drawing as close in their minds as they can, call the True Originator the ‘One Absolute’. Since that multiple one can be divided into ‘oneness’ and ‘one’, one part of it has ‘oneness’ and the other ‘essence’, in the order of things, and it can be brought forth out of nothing. It can also be multiplied by two in the order of things. And they say that while the multiple one is subject to division and multiplication, the Absolute One suffers neither of these. This is because one half of the ‘one-being’ (*wāḥid*) – that is, oneness – is His deed (effect: *athar*), for oneness is the Creator’s work – glory be to Him.

[151] They say that the proof for the twofold nature of the First Intellect is that it is of two kinds. One of these is innate (*gharīzī*); it is a fundamental aspect (*aṣl*) of man. The other is the acquired intellect (*‘aql-i muktasab*) which is acquired through study. Its existence within the twofold nature of the Intellect is established. The Universal Soul, in relation to the ‘one’ of the Universal Intellect, is at the rank of ‘2’, and in terms of its own doubleness, it comes at the rank of ‘3’. It is for this reason that the species of Soul in generated beings are three in number: one, growing; two, sensory; three, rational. Thus, after the Soul, matter comes to be by the command of the Creator – glory be to Him – by the intermediary of the Soul and the Intellect. A fourth rank belongs to matter; this is because the Intellect has the second rank, and the Soul has the third, and so matter is necessarily at the fourth rank. And so matter is of four types: first, creative matter; second, natural matter; third, total matter; and fourth, prime matter, matter without form. Next, after matter, Nature comes to be, at the fifth rank, and so the natures themselves are five in number: four of these are simple – earth, water, air, and fire – while the fifth is the sphere. Then, out of the union of the natures with matter, the body comes to be, and in the sixth rank; that is why the body has six sides, to wit, upper, lower, right, left, before, behind. The form of the sphere is at the seventh rank, for the spheres themselves are seven, and the planets are seven too, as is well known. The order of the elements (*arkān*) on the inside of the sphere is eighth in rank; this is because each of these elements has two natures; thus, fire is both hot and dry; air, hot and soft;

321. Ja‘far al-Šādiq (d. 148/–65), the sixth Shi‘i Imam, renowned as an exegete, traditionist, legal scholar, and on some accounts an alchemist; see Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs*, pp. 79–84 and *passim*; for a bibliography of his writings, see GAS, vol. 1, pp. 528–531.

water, cold and moist; earth, cold and dry. Then, the three realms born of the 'mother-natures' and the 'father-spheres' – namely, the minerals, plants, and animals – are of three sorts; and each of these is of three sorts, such that these realms are at the rank of nine in the order of existing things. So minerals are of three types. One type is earthy, it melts and burns, e.g., iron sulphate, collyrium, and the like. Another type is airy, it neither melts nor burns, such as [...] ³²² A third is watery, it boils but does not burn, such as sulphur, pitch, and the like. Animals too are of three sorts. One type begets and nurses its young, such as man and four-legged animals, and the like; another type lays eggs and does not nurse, like birds and fish; a third type creeps out of dank places, like mosquitoes and flies, and such. ³²³ Plants also are of three sorts. There is one which is planted and remains for several lifetimes, like the walnut tree and the date palm, and their like. There is another sort which every year is sown and then dies, like wheat and barley, etc. A third type has a seed which grows for years, such as those plants without roots.

Thus we have shown clearly that all existing things fall into nine levels, and it is because of this that the body of necessity has nine accidents, as we explained earlier in response to this man's (i.e., Jurjānī's) question. With respect to the three 'kingdoms' (*mawālīd*), there are numerous causes, including matter and form and their combination (*ta'lif*); substance and accident and the compound of the two; or body and spirit and their union; the body's three dimensions of length and breadth and depth; the body's accidents, its line, surface, and volume; and the three phases of time, past, present, and future. But we pass on from this now.

322. There is a lacuna in the text here.

323. This passage on the three sorts of animals has been omitted without explanation from the Arabic translation of *Shatā* (p. 268).

Of Species and Genus

What is genus, not species, and species, not genus?

What is it that is now one genus, now another species altogether?

(Jurjānī, verse 19)

[152] The Greek sage has already answered this question. Aristotle, the lord of logic, says: 'I consider the world and I see nothing nearer to myself than man, and in every man I see a different individual. I ask about their names. One has the name Zayd, another is called 'Amr, yet another is Ja'far, and so on. Out of all these names not one does not belong to a particular person. And yet, I am seeking a name which can comprise all these individuals, such that when I say that name, I include them all. I find that the name "humankind" applies to these human individuals – the Ja'fars, the Salihs, the Hamdans, and all the rest. I consider the world once again. I see cattle, donkeys, horses, and the like. So I say that there must be a name which groups together these four-legged beasts with humankind, such that when I utter that name, I designate both human beings and those others, and so I come upon the word "animal". Among living things humans and non-humans are all animals. But then I see other things in the world, such as trees and plants. And I reflect that a name other than that for animals must gather this group together and find "increasing" (what in Arabic is termed *nāmī* – that is, "growing"). But I also observe rocks and clods of earth, and the like in the world and I reflect that there must be yet another term which accurately designates these. I come upon the term "body" (*jism*). Then, however, I see that in the world there are also spirits and I know that they are not corporeal, inasmuch as they exert an effect on bodies. And so I begin seeking a name which will encompass both spirits and bodies. For that I find the term "substance" (*jawhar*). And since I observe no further entity I conclude that "substance" is the supreme genus since there is no genus that

is higher than it [see Fig. 1].³²⁴ Body and spirit are species within it since each of them is substance within absolute substance, and is cognoscible and not an object of sense perception. Nevertheless, body, which forms a species under substance, itself serves as a genus for minerals – stone, dirt-clods, and the like, and for plants – shrubs, trees, and the like, while “the growing” (*ravindeh*), which form a species under body, stands as a genus for both plants and animals. Furthermore, “animal”, which is a species of “the growing”, becomes generic with respect to cattle, donkeys, and humans, and the like. But the human being is the “species of species” and does not serve as genus for anything else because below the human category there are only individuals named so-and-so and so-and-so.³²⁵ Hence, the wise philosopher says that man is a species with respect to the animal, the animal is a species with respect to the growing, the growing is a species with respect to the body, the body is a species with respect to substance, and substance is the supreme genus in the order which we have delineated here. Substance is the genus for the two species, one of which is spirit while the other is body. Body is species with respect to genus but serves as genus to two species, one mineral, the other vegetal. The growing is a species of body but it serves as a genus to two species, that of the plants and that of the animals. The animal stands as a species of growing thing but is itself a genus to two species, one of which is non-rational and one of which is rational. The rational is a species of the genus animal but it stands as a genus to two species, the angel and the human.

Such is the philosophical answer which we make to the question contained in this communication.

[153] The response of the *ahl-i ta'vid* to this question – as well as to what the metaphysical philosophers have said concerning the fundamental principles and the ramifications of existing beings in this world in both their general order and specific details – is to say that there is no difference of opinion about what the philosophers hold, and yet [they note that] the foundation (*wad'*) of God's religion is analogous to that of the world, because the world has its existence by virtue of the Divine Intellect (*be 'aql-i khodāy*) while religion was established by virtue of the

324. *Jins al-ajnas*, the *summum genus*, or highest category, which no higher genus comprises.

325. *naw' al-anwā'*, the *infima species*, i.e., the species under which there are only individuals and not further species.

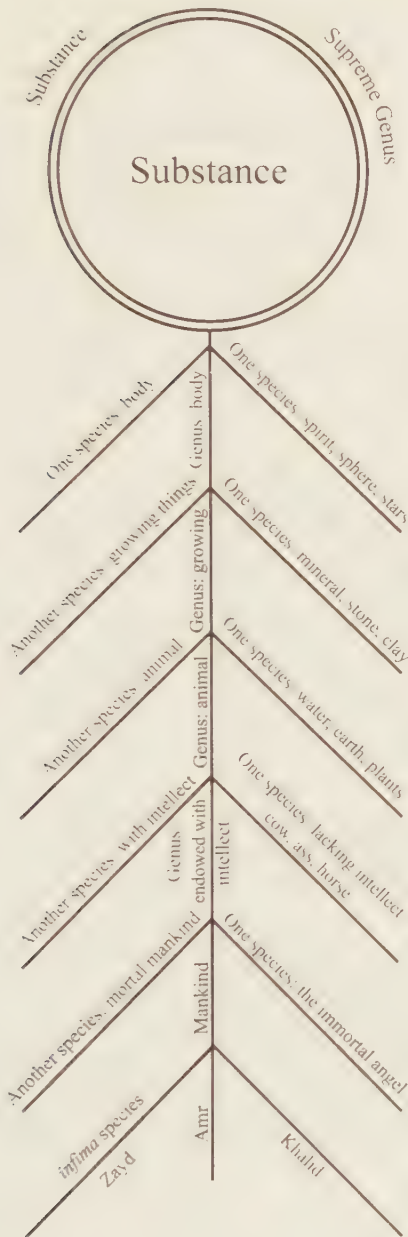


Figure 1: General Order of Species and Genus



Figure 2: Roots and Branches of Religion

Divine Command (*be-firmān-i khodāy*). Both creation and command are His, as He says, 'Do not creation and command belong to Him? Blessed be God, Lord of the worlds.'³²⁶ It behoves man to know the levels of creation because by that knowledge he may acquire a knowledge of the levels of the command, and so derive proof from this world rather than contemplate and ponder it in vain. There is a Tradition from the Emissary which says, 'God the Exalted established His religion on the analogy with His creation of the world so that one might be guided from His creation to His religion and from there be led to His Oneness (*yegānegī*).'³²⁷ And so everyone who knows the levels which correspond to existing things in creation will be guided to the levels of religion, for the levels within the world of religion all stand in a relationship of analogy with this world, for this is its archetype (*mithāl*).

[154] Religion which is one in its root has two branches; each of these is also a branch with regard to what is above it but a root to that which is below it [see Fig. 2]. Thus, the Prophet is a branch in relation to it (i.e., religion) but a root to his designated *waṣī* (Legatee). The *waṣī* is a branch in relation to the Prophet but a root with respect to the Imam. The Imam is a branch in relation to the *waṣī* but a root for the *ḥujjat*. The *ḥujjat* is a branch of the Imam but a root with respect to the *dā'ī*. And the *dā'ī* is a branch in relation to the *ḥujjat* but a root for the members of the *da'wat*.

Another aspect of the root is this. The Intellect, which is equivalent to the Prophet, is a branch with respect to the [Divine] Command but a root-principle for the *waṣī* and for the Soul. The Soul is a branch vis-à-vis Intellect and a root with respect to *Jadd* and to the Imam. For the soul *Jadd* is a branch but it is a root-principle for *Fath* and the *ḥujjat*. *Fath* is branch to *Jadd* but root to *Khayāl* and the *dā'ī*. And *Khayāl* is branch to *Fath* but root to the members of the *da'wat*.³²⁸

Those who have responded to the call (*ahl-i istijābat*) occupy a place in the world of religion equal to that of humankind in this world. Just as man is the 'species of species' with respect to substance, the supreme genus, so he who responds to the call is the 'branch of branches' with respect to the true religion, which is itself the 'root of roots'.

May the intelligent ponder this correspondence (*muwāzanah*).

326. Q7:54.

327. I have not been able to identify the source of this *ḥadīth*.

328. On these terms, see 8:105–106 above.

On Happiness and Unhappiness. And on Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

*What was the world at a time when it was gladness entire
And those two ominous stars had not delayed in their course?
Now the whole world is an evil star while those two
Benignant stars keep rising and setting, moving, and circling.
And tomorrow will be just like yesterday, as it has been
Handed down by prophets and sages and illustrious dhimmīs.
What is 'yesterday', what 'today'? And 'tomorrow' – what's that?
From such as these, what direction: from such as these, what deed?*
(Jurjānī, verses 20–23)

[155] This question appears to be incorrect since he says, 'Why was everything happy in the world before this time since the two malign stars – that is, Mars and Saturn – were not idle overhead and yet, no misfortune befell? Nowadays the entire world is catastrophe. The two auspicious stars – Jupiter and Venus – are at work and yet no felicity follows. Tomorrow, once again, the world will be altogether happy, as it was yesterday. The sages, the prophets, the non-Muslim subjects are all of one mind on this.'

[156] We declare that this question is plainly wrong for never have we heard – and it is not possible that we would not have heard – that there was once a time when people were not needy, when all were healthy in their bodies, when they were sovereign and prosperous. when there was nobody poor in this world, no one sick; no underling, no slave; when death was absent along with pain and distress, such that one might say that 'before this' those two malign stars were present and yet, the world was entirely happy, as has indeed been said, because this is impossible. Likewise, the present time is not such that there is nobody in the world who is happy, nor are all people poor or sick or enslaved, such that it

could be said that those two auspicious stars are at work in the heavens and yet, there is no felicity on earth. Quite the contrary. For some there is always misfortune, distress, lowliness, and poverty, while for others there is happiness and ease, dominance and glory. This is God's decree. It is right that people's circumstances in this world be characterised by this disparity which has been established by the wisdom of the wise and knowing God, just as God has decreed in His own everlasting speech, '*We are the ones who give them their share of livelihood in this world and We have raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others into service.*'³²⁹

This is to say that some are kings while others are subjects; some are masters and some are slaves. And if anyone, thinking it unjust that one person be a lord and own a hundred slaves, should say that all people ought to be equal in ease and fortune, this notion of his is absurd and false, since this will never come to be. Do not you see that if it were this way, there would be no one to give anyone orders and everyone would have to do his own work? If all men were equal, all would be in turmoil (*ranjeh*); there would not even be anyone to give another person a glass of water! Were this to happen, all men would become like beasts, and everyone would be in a state of wretched upheaval, with no rest for anyone. Hence, we think it obvious that all of this is wrong. These feeble notions (*'ilal*), which beset the imaginings of petty spirits, are base and despicable with respect to the acquisition of wisdom.

[157] We say furthermore that just as circumstances in the world stand at a remove of two extremes, with people at various stages of either misfortune or felicity – one is a sovereign, prosperous, and with his treasury filled, with troops and horsemen, enjoying property, status, and renown, the other is a slave, destitute, naked, powerless, isolated, a menial, lowly, and despised – with most people somewhere between these two extremes in the world, so too in matters of religion there are two contradictory extremes and people fall at different levels between them. One stands at such a level that all people have hope through his intercession, and by praying for him his community comes closer to God, just as God the Exalted says, '*God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe, bless him and salute him.*'³³⁰ Another is at such a level that it

329. Q43:32, tr. Abdel Haleem. For a comparable argument by al-Ghazali in justifying the disparities in the world, see my *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, pp. 200–202.

330. Q33:56, tr. Jones.

is considered obedience to curse him like Iblis, and right belief to shun him and declare him an unbeliever. Thus God says, *'So whoever rejects false gods and believes in God has grasped the firmest hand-hold.'*³³¹

[158] If anyone should entertain the notion that the Emissary and his faithful followers experienced nothing but happiness in their lifetimes and did not suffer distress at the hands of the hypocrites and unbelievers, his opinion is dead wrong. Quite the contrary. During his lifetime the Emissary experienced hurt, discouragement, and duress, just as God the Exalted says to him in this verse by way of consolation: *'We are well aware that your heart is weighed down by what they say. Celebrate the glory of your Lord and be among those who bow down to Him: worship your Lord until what is certain comes to you.'*³³²

[159] Having established that this question is badly posed on the face of it – that neither bliss nor misery befalls the totality of humankind either in this world or in the world of religion – we now add that the question, however, is correct in this respect; namely, that bliss and misery occur necessarily in the microcosm, now at this time, now at that, to the intelligent (*uqalā*), who occupy the rank in the microcosm which man at large holds in the macrocosm. By this I mean that the man of intellect stands in relation to the common man at the same rank as humankind itself stands in relation to the brute beasts.

[160] The point which this man makes at the third one of these verses, which we are now explicating, namely, 'and tomorrow will be just like yesterday, as it has been handed down by prophets and sages and Jews and Christians', etc., demonstrates that by 'bliss' he means knowledge of religion (*'ilm-i din*)³³³ and by 'misery' he means the misery of ignorance (*shiqāwat-i jahl*). By a world in which this bliss and this misery exist he means that 'world of religion'³³⁴ which exists among human beings. He says that *previously* knowledge of the real *da'wat* was diffused among

331. Q2:256, tr. Abdel Haleem.

332. Q15:97–99, tr. Abdel Haleem.

333. De Gastines (p. 181) renders the simple phrase 'knowledge of religion' as 'le règne de la Connaissance, la hiérosophie', but it isn't clear what she intends by this portentous phrasing.

334. De Gastines (ibid.) renders 'world of religion' as the 'hiérococosmos', but such a term doesn't quite work in English. The '*alam-i din*' is that suprasensual, transcendent realm of which our physical world is a mere shadow.

men of intellect despite the fact that those two malign stars – comprised of perfidious utterances and discord – were present among men and the imams of dissension and ignorance (*imāmān-ı nifâq ve jahl*) – the Saturn and Mars of the microcosm – were in operation. But *now*, when the two auspicious stars – faith and Islam – are in place, and the Venus and Jupiter of the world of religion are in place, why is the bliss of knowledge not manifest?

[161] The answer to this question is as follows. The foundation of the sacral realm is analogous to the foundation of the world itself, as we have previously affirmed, in two earlier passages of this book, in accord with a Tradition of the Prophet. Man, who has both a sensual soul and a rational soul, stands in need of two sorts of sustenance: first, bodily nourishment which comes to him from the earth and is a divine creation, and comes about by the concerted operation of the spheres and the stars; and second, intellectual sustenance which comes from the Qur'ān, itself wholly God's word, by the concerted mediation of the Imams and the *hujjats* who have been set as the spheres and stars of the sacral realm. Worldly sustenance among people is abundant at some times and scarce at others, in proportion to man's worthiness; sometimes there is abundance and ease and sometimes hardship and famine. The cause of abundance and ease is the rains which pour down at times from the skies and which the earth receives, so that humans become more numerous and stronger as a result; the cause of hardship and famine is the retention of the rains in the skies; because they are so numerous, these corrupt and useless people suffer bodily death as a result of scarcity. Their wickedness is lessened only because they dread the death which they see multiplied around them. This is a trial (*āzmāvesh*) sent by God upon people in order that those who use their intelligence may be edified, as God says, '*We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives and crops. But give good news to those who are steadfast.*'³³⁵

[162] Knowledge is man's spiritual food. This too has an analogical sense in that sometimes knowledge is on the increase among people and at others it is on the decrease. When the sensual and concupiscent forces predominate among men, when ignorance holds sway over them, when the rational soul grows feeble and they no longer set out in search of knowledge, when they are no longer even worthy of knowledge, the guardians of the knowledge of God's Book – those who are the clouds of

335. Q2:155, tr. Abdel Haleem.

divine mercy – withhold even the least rain drops of their learning from them. This is because they know that if they speak to them, those ignorant men – may God curse them – will not listen, just as God Himself says, *'The wickedest beasts in God's view are those that are deaf, dumb, who do not reason. If God had known that there was some good in them, He would have made them hear and yet, even if He had made them hear, they would have turned away for they are disinclined.'*³³⁶ In this withholding (*bāz istādan*) of droplets from the heaven of this world lies the death of the body for man, but in withholding droplets from the sacral heaven (*āsmān-i dīn*) lies the death of man's soul. Whoever accuses the true Imam of lying will suffer the death of his soul and everlasting torment, just as God the Exalted says in the *sura* 'The Poets' in this passage, *'They called him a liar and so We destroyed them. In this there is a sign and yet most of them do not believe. Your Lord is indeed the Mighty, the Merciful.'*³³⁷ Whoever gives credence to the Prophet – upon him be peace – and to the Imam and to his Legatee but rejects the traditions of the Imam is an oppressor (*sitamkār*); to him the grace of guidance is not given. It is as God says, *'How would God guide a people who deny the truth, after they have once believed, and attested that the Emissary was true, for clear proofs came to them? But God does not guide the unjust.'*³³⁸ In this verse there is a justification for the true Imams – upon them be peace – when they hold back the knowledge of the truth from those who they know will deny the truth, who do not listen when they are spoken to, and who if they do listen do not act accordingly.

[163] As for the answer to the question, 'What is yesterday, what today? And tomorrow – what's that?', we reply that time is divided into three. One is always median; the two others are marginal. That which is median is the present time, e.g., 'today' and 'now'. That which is at the anterior extreme, such as 'yesterday' and 'that hour that is past', is prior to 'now'. That which is at the posterior extreme, such as 'tomorrow' and 'in the next hour', is anticipated and to come. For man this world is the abode of today; anybody's life is his 'today'. The world that abides is man's abode of tomorrow; his continuance in that world is his 'tomorrow'. This is as God says, *'O you who believe, fear God; and let every soul*

336. Q8:22–23.

337. Q26:139–140.

338. Q3:86.

observe what it has sent on for the morrow.³³⁹ Thus we have now established that for humans 'tomorrow' is really what comes after death and that everyone's life up to the moment of his death is entirely his 'today'.

[164] Furthermore, the cycle of every prophet is his 'day'. The time in which we are now – I mean, the time after the Emissary, the Chosen, was sent forth up to the time of the Resurrection – is the 'day' of our Emissary. The days of Moses, Jesus, and the other prophets are past. God the Exalted created this world in the space of six days. This statement is written in several places in the Noble Book. Thus, He says, '*It is God who created the heavens and the earth and everything between them in six days, then He established Himself on the throne.*'³⁴⁰ The crude literalists of the community³⁴¹ say that at that time the heavens and the earth were not but that then God created this world in a space of time amounting to six days and then, afterwards, He went up to His throne. They hold that this 'going up' (*istiwā*) has the meaning of 'domination' (*istilā*); in other words, when He had created the world, He took possession of the throne.

The practitioners of exegesis (*ahl-i ta'wil*) say that God's Book has been sent to us to guide us rightly; the fact that we know that God created this world in six days does not add to that guidance at all. For in the interpretation which this group makes of the verse is an explicit declaration that almighty God is unable to create this world in one instant (*be-yek lahẓah*). God's own statement – He is exalted – invalidates this interpretation, for He says, '*When We will something, We only say to it, "Be!", and it is.*'³⁴² Furthermore, when He says, '*Then He established Himself on the throne*', it means that after He created the world in six days, He took His place upon the throne, and by this an interval (*dirangi*) is necessarily implied between His creation of the world – glory be to Him – and His establishing Himself upon the throne. Now if the sense of *istiwā* (establishing) were *istilā* (domination), it would imply inescapably that prior to the creation of the world, God did not have dominion over a throne, that in fact He did not possess a throne. This is impious raving (*hadhavan*) even worse than the interpretation we considered earlier! Quite the contrary, say [the adepts of spiritual exegesis]. The inner

339. Q59:118, tr. Jones.

340. Q32:4.

341. The *hashwiyān-i ummat*, on whom see 3:28 above.

342. Q16:40.

elucidation (*ta'wil*) of this verse is that God the Exalted created the life-time ('*umr*) of this world during the span of the prophethood of His six prophets, each of whom had his cycle (*dawr*) and his mission (*da'wat*) in his 'day' (*rūz*), and during his day the Emissary summoned people to God. When this day has passed, another prophet's day arrives and it is incumbent upon people to follow this other prophet. If people were to examine this interpretation, each prophetic community would occupy the position which it indeed occupies: the Christians established on the fifth day, the Jews on the fourth day, the Mazdeans on the third day. In addition to which, in all the scriptures of God which have come to His prophets, these same words are mentioned, as God the Exalted says, '*This is in the ancient scrolls, the scrolls of Abraham and Moses.*'³⁴³

[165] The interpretation of 'establishing Himself upon the throne' is the execution of the command of God by the *qā'im al-qiyāmat* ('Master of the Resurrection'), which is the throne of God and which will be manifest after his six days have passed, at which time God's command will be forcibly imposed upon mankind, as He says, '*Whose is the sovereignty today? It belongs to God, the One, the Mighty.*'³⁴⁴

[166] And so we have established what this man intended by these verses. 'Yesterday' denotes a cycle that is past. 'Today' is the present cycle. 'Tomorrow' is the cycle to come. That 'tomorrow' in which the wise take such delight is the day of True Resurrection, when the shadows of ignorance will be lifted from humanity by the light of His knowledge, just as God says, '*The earth will be illumined by the light of its Lord.*'³⁴⁵ From this verse it becomes clear that in the present day the earth is dark, but when the Resurrection comes the earth will be illumined. If from today until the day of Resurrection, the earth shines, that circumstance is proof that that 'earth' is not this earth which shines today. On the contrary, that other earth is now darkened until it shines. That other earth is that of which it is said that the community has been established upon it by the soul's conviction, not by the body. That earth is dark now but it will shine forth, and in its shining all the obscurity of conflicting interpretations will be dispelled. This is the Book of God upon which our community is established. Here is a subtle intimation for those who think. And we pass now from these verses.

343. Q87:18–19, tr. Jones.

344. Q40:16, tr. Jones.

345. Q39:69.

Properties of Minerals, Animals, and Places

*That lead breaks diamond, that the magnet draws iron –
 What is the cause for each of these, and how do they work?
 How is it that the ruby wards off cholera?
 How does the emerald pluck out the serpent's two eyes?
 If a leopard bites a man, why does a mouse
 Spring from the roof and the wall with many wiles?
 In the city of Ahwāz, nobody is free from fever and yet
 In Tibet, no inhabitant experiences its miseries – why?
 It is not because of its nature. What is its property? asks one;
 What, asks the astute observer, is this property's 'root'?*

(Jurjānī, verses 24–28)

[167] There are seven questions in these five verses about the properties of things. These seven questions fall into three divisions. One is about well-known things, another is about obscurer matters, and a third is simply absurd. As for the well-known, there are two: the magnet's power of attraction over iron, and second, that the mouse urinates on somebody bitten by a leopard (*mizīdan-i mūsh bar gazīdah-i palang*). There are two that are obscure: first, that the ruby wards off cholera, and second, that emerald can pluck out the serpent's eye. As for those that are absurd, there are three: first, that diamond can be broken by lead; second, the inevitability of fever in the city of Ahwāz; and third, that in Tibet nobody experiences its agony. Because these questions fall into these three types, some believe that somebody has added these verses to the poem; indeed, these are not questions proper to sages and this fellow ought not to try his contemporaries with such absurdities. In any case, we shall say something about each one of the three sorts of questions which have been tossed out, if God the Holy and Exalted grants us success.

[168] As for our response to the question concerning the property of the magnet that it draws iron, we say that from this stone there comes

a sticky (*lazij*) vapour (*bukhār*) which attracts only iron; this vapour is quite different from iron by its very nature, even though it clings to it; just so the moisture in the air stands opposed to cotton and paper and yet sticks to them both. When the vapour from the magnetic stone reaches the iron, it attaches to it. But since it stands in opposition to it, as soon as it reaches it, it turns about and retreats, dragging the iron with it. The proof that this is correct is that whenever bits of iron – what are called filings – come close to that stone, those bits of filings race towards it; the vapour is diffused until it gathers together the scattered filings. But if that stone is rubbed with crushed garlic it does not attract iron at all. Garlic is an obstructive substance; when one rubs it on something, it becomes a kind of skin or covering which holds the vapour back; just so, fishermen in winter rub crushed garlic on their heads and hands up to the forearms so that their pores are sealed and the vapour cannot escape; since the vapour stays confined (*paykhasteh*), it grows warm and the fishermen can withstand the cold water. Since that stone when rubbed with crushed garlic no longer attracts iron we know that the vapour, which was coming from the stone until now, when the holes were blocked by the garlic, has in fact been obstructed by the garlic and no longer attracts iron. The magnet's non-attraction of iron after garlic has been rubbed on it furnishes us with the evidence that a vapour is continually emanating from it and that the vapour attaches itself to the iron and then emanates from it until it draws the iron towards the magnet; it gives us the proof as well that the magnet draws the iron towards itself, not that the iron pulls the magnet towards itself – which is a matter of dispute among some natural scientists, that is, whether the magnet attracts the iron or the iron the magnet. In just the same way, amber, which is the resin from a tree, has the property that it draws straw towards itself. And from amber too there emanates a vapour which diffuses only around straw; when it reaches the straw and is suspended above it, it retracts and draws the straw towards the amber which then springs from it (the vapour) to the amber.

[169] It is also a property of vitriol (*zag*), a kind of earth,³⁴⁶ and of gall-nut (*mazu*), which comes from a tree, that they are both yellow but when mixed with each other, turn a deep black. Natural scientists can find no explanation for this other than to say that both vitriol and gall-nut have an acrid and gripping flavour, which is why they turn black. This is a

346. That is, a sulphate of minerals such as copper or iron.

flimsy argument. The two flavours remain the same when tasted; the change in them becomes apparent after they are mixed, but it is a visual not a gustatory change (*didanī ast ve chashidanī nīst*).

[170] An answer to this question: If it is right to inquire after the property, it should also be right for us to ask and seek out what property it might be in the pit of the date such that when it is planted in a clump of soil and watered, one end of it goes down into the earth while the other end rises up in the air. And that part which goes down into the earth draws soil and water to itself, and out of that dirt and that water it makes the forms of wood and leaves and fibre and it pierces the air towards that other extremity, becoming a tree tall as a minaret; and every year it turns five hundred *man* of water and air, more or less, into delicious dates and into wood, and does so for over a century. The pit of the apricot (*zard alū*) does not have this property; rather, it has another property: it turns soil and water into apricot, just as the magnet has the property of attracting iron whereas the crystal does not; rather, its property consists in producing fire from a ray of sunlight. If it is not surprising that the pit of a date has the property to draw water and earth from the depth of the soil and to grow from the surface of the ground to the height of a minaret and to stand upright for a century and each year to turn huge donkey-loads (*kharvār*) of earth and soil into dates, within each one of which not a smidgeon of water or soil remains – what wonder is it then that a stone, having a property lodged within it since its very creation, should draw a bit of iron to itself without changing its state or turning it into something other than itself? What question comes out of all this? The same may be said of everything from the seed of plants to the sperm of animals or the eggs of birds: each thing possesses a craft and a property before which man, for all his superiority, stands powerless (*‘ājiz ast*). And no one has the right to question this, but if someone should ask, the answer to him must be: ‘That is God’s work. Do not speak of it in vain. Show some spirit!’ How can anybody raise a question which is the very basis of his own being?

[171] To the question as to why the mouse urinates on prey the leopard has bitten, we say that people’s surprise at this is due to the fact that the matter is not what they assume it to be.³⁴⁷ We say that between

347. The ninth-century physician ‘Alī b. Sahl al-Ṭabarī, in his *Firdaus al-Hikma*, reports that ‘in the mountains of Tabaristan, the panther often beats a man with his paw. Then mice gather round him from all sides and the men and women must

certain animals there is a friendship and between certain others an enmity. Thus, there is hostility between the crow and the owl because the owl can see by night and not by day, while the crow sees by day but not by night. At night the owl comes among the crows who are gathered in the trees, seizes them one by one, cracks their heads and flings them down while they are unable to see him. The monkey has a fondness for the cat; he clasps it to himself and kisses it. But the dog is hostile to the cat. This friendliness and this enmity are innate; they have no cause. Thus, in the same way, there is a natural affection between the leopard and the mouse. The mouse does not seek out the prey bitten by the leopard because it wants to urinate on it – not at all. It wants to lick the slobber (*ālūdagi*) left by the leopard's mouth; when it is prevented, the mouse deploys a stratagem: it runs about on the wall and terrace trying to find that odour. When it finds that bite and comes upon that smell, it sprinkles urine on it out of sheer joy, for it wishes to leave something of itself as a mark where the saliva was. Just so, when dogs want to copulate, the male who desires a female comes to wherever the female dog has urinated, and he too urinates on the spot where her urine has fallen. This is something well known and often confirmed. In his *Kitab-ī maḥṣūl*, Shaykh Nasafī³⁴⁸ has said that if you put a leopard's teeth in front of a mouse-hole, the mouse comes out of the hole backwards, first the tail, then the head; if a piece of the leopard's fat is put in the room of a house, the mice come from all around and can be killed; they fling themselves into this trap just as the crows fling themselves before the owl and so fall into the trap.

[172] This is no marvel and yet, when the common people hear that a mouse wants to urinate on the leopard's prey, this statement leaves them in a state of perplexity. If you release the mouse so that it can come close

ensure that the mice do not reach him, since if they urinate on him, he must die.' Cited in Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 108. For a report closer to NKh's version, see Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405), *Havāt al-hayawān al-kubrā* [197/139-], vol. 2, p. 365: 'For whenever a leopard bites a man, a mouse comes looking for him to urinate on him; and if it does that, he dies.'

348. For this lost early work, by Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (executed 332/943) – not Najāshī, as our text has it – see Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 42; also, Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature*, pp. 23–24, and Daftary, *Ismaili Literature*, pp. 29, 125, 148. It was reportedly through this work that Neo-Platonic teachings were introduced into Ismaili thought.

to the prey and lick it, it will not urinate on it. If the mouse, which has a strong affection for the leopard, seeks out the scent of the saliva from the leopard's teeth, what wonder is there in that? We all see that the cat searches out the mouse's scent, for between cat and mouse there is also an inborn affection; it is out of such affection, not out of enmity, that the cat eats the mouse; in just the same way does the cat devour its own kittens, out of affection. Everything that eats, eats its own food out of liking, not out of aversion. Someone who is famished for food and thirsty for water slakes his hunger or thirst out of liking and affinity (*dūstī ve muwāfaqat*), not out of hostility and divergence (*mukhālafat*).³⁴⁹ If it could do it, the mouse would eat the leopard in the same way that it races towards its own destruction at the scent of the leopard's saliva – out of affection. This is the answer to the two questions about properties, such as are known to both common folk and the elite.

[173] The response of the *ahl-i ta'yīd* – upon them be peace – to the question of the magnet's property of attracting iron stands apart from other responses. In their view, the stone is the *qibla* of the adherents of the religion of Islam, the name of which is 'the station' (*maqām*), as He says, 'Take the spot where Abraham stood as your place of prayer.'³⁵⁰ The place where Abraham – peace be upon him – stood is the station of prophecy. Abraham's descendant Muḥammad, the Chosen, stood in that place where his ancestor had stood and he followed in his footsteps along the path, just as God says, 'Then We revealed to you, "Follow the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith who was not an idolator".'³⁵¹ The interpretation (*ta'wil*) of this verse which says that they should take the station of Abraham as the direction of prayer is that they should follow the Prophet and offer him obedience. For he designated this stone for mankind that they might know that the magnet stands as an analogue (*mathal*) for him, and so that other worshippers of God might become his followers, not only those who have already turned towards him, as He says, 'who follow the Emissary, the unlettered Prophet ...'³⁵²

349. The terms translated here as 'affinity' (*muwāfaqat*) and 'divergence' (*mukhālafat*) correspond to the ancient notion that love and liking denote an inner sympathy or affinity between the soul and what attracts and pleases it, with a corresponding aversion for, or disharmony between, hateful things and the soul.

350. Q2:125, tr. Abdel Haleem.

351. Q16:123, tr. Abdel Haleem.

352. Q7:157.

[174] Iron is the strongest of minerals; the weapons of war are made from it. There are many benefits for mankind within it. As God the Exalted says, '*We also sent iron, with its mighty strength and many uses for mankind.*'³⁵³ Its strength is war and hardship. This war and hardship, which God the Exalted placed within iron, refers to the Prince of Believers 'Ali b. Abi Tālib – upon him be peace – whom God's enemies dread, as both the elite and the common folk affirm. The Emissary chose 'Ali from amongst all people and drew him to himself, marrying him into the family (*muṣāharat kard*), with the result that today his offspring are the offspring of the Emissary of God, and he made him his Legatee (*waṣī*) at Ghadir Khumm and informed his companions of his designated spiritual authority (*wilāyat*).

[175] We have made it clear that the station of Abraham, which is that stone (i.e., the magnet), is an analogue for the Emissary of God, who stood where Abraham stood. It is fitting that the Emissary be represented as this stone. And we consider it correct that the 'mighty strength' pertain to the Prince of the Believers, for God the Exalted says that that mighty strength is in the iron, and the Emissary drew 'Ali to himself out of all mankind both by matrimonial ties and by legacy, and so it becomes clear that the Prince of the Believers 'Ali is analogous to the iron. Just as it is right to say that the Emissary of God stands at the rank of magnet of the sacral realm (*'ālam-i dīn*) and the Prince of the Believers at the rank of the iron of the sacral realm, and just as the magnet amongst all the metals draws only iron to itself, so too the magnet of the sacral realm draws no one out of the multitude of the community to itself but this iron. They add that in this world the sensual soul is the magnet for the pleasures of the senses, and that these pleasures exist in the world only for its sake. Only mankind can attain all the pleasures of the senses; hence, we know that all of these pleasures come on his behalf. The Prophet was the magnet for God's manifold wisdom which it drew towards itself out of the realm of the Intellect.

[176] As for the interpretation of the property which is the affinity between the leopard and the mouse leading to human destruction, the *ahl-i ta'yid* – peace be upon them – state that the leopard is an evil beast and of all the animals the one of the least benefit to mankind, and thus at the opposite extreme from iron, most beneficial of metals to man. The leopard's spotted hide is the sign that it is analogous to a man whose heart is

353. Q57:25, tr. Abdel Haleem.

speckled and ornery. The mouse is the rodent most destructive to man. These two animals symbolise the man of God's – that is, the Prophet's – two enemies. Between them there exists an accord in opposition to the Prophet, just as there is a working sympathy between the leopard and the mouse to harass and vex mankind. And just as it is incumbent on man to guard against this sympathy between leopard and mouse in this world, so is it also incumbent on the godly (*parhīzgārān*) to know both leopard and mouse in the sacral realm and to keep a distance from them. Every animal on earth is the speechless analogue of the varying characters which exist among mankind. Just as it is necessary to be on guard against animals which are at odds with man in this world, it is also necessary to beware of people who are like these animals in the sacral realm, as God the Exalted says, 'There is no beast on the earth nor bird that flies with its wings but they are communities like you.'³⁵⁴ Thus it behoves those who use their intellects to recognise the leopard and the mouse in man, to know the serpent and the scorpion which take on the human form, and to beware of them. If it is incumbent upon us to kill the snake, by general consensus, it is also incumbent upon us to kill the ungodly (*kāfirān*), by command of God the Exalted. The ungodly is more of a snake than the snake itself (*mārtar az mār*) since he must be killed by God's command, and to refrain from performing God's command is disbelief (*kufr*), whereas not to kill a snake is not disbelief. The hypocrites and those who disbelieve are on a single level, as God the Exalted states, 'O Prophet, struggle against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh to them.'³⁵⁵ These are some verses of mine on the resemblance between humans and other animals:³⁵⁶

O you who have grown old in the pavilions of delusion,
 O you eaten away by many years and months!
 What do you know about what the purpose
 Of the world's Creator – the Unique, the Forgiving – may be?
 Since the world is meant to be shattered, why
 Are the heavens seamless and without a rift?
 You, what do you say as to why there must be
 This measure of dust and water, darkness, and light,

354. Q6:38, tr. Jones.

355. Q66:9.

356. The lines are excerpted from NKh's longer *qaṣīda*, in his *Diwan*, pp. 76–78; the lines quoted here are nos 1 and 13–32.

Just so a camel or a donkey or a cow may come to be –
 A snake or a fish, a scorpion or a wasp,
 Or that one which skips like an ape
 And taps his feet to the beat of a drum?
 Or yet this other one who for fifty years
 Has lived his life without ablution or prayers?
 Yet it is you whom they refuse a refuge,
 These vile partisans of wickedness!
 How can you go on saying that for these
 The Loving and Generous One made heaven and earth?
 You who wouldn't give them so much as an endive,
 How is it that God gives them castles and courtesans?
 No! Keep away from this wrong-headed notion,
 Stay far from this bad conjecture, stay far!
 If you have understanding and heart, my son,
 Lend your ear well to your old father's words!
 There is another world for humankind,
 A strong realm hidden from the ignorant,
 Where in the likeness of the savage beasts
 Are men who live in loathing of the learned.
 But God's true purpose lies with the wise,
 Those base men are nothing but stalks and straw!
 These robbers are just like the mice,
 These fools are just like the birds.
 Upstanding men are like the fish: they're mute.
 But blabbermouths twitter like sparrows!
 Wisdom and learning always prevail
 Over lies and absurdities, like incense over chaff.
 Silence is superior to idle palaver;
 This maxim is inscribed in the Psalms.
 Your job is to till and its seed is the word;
 Reap like one who's compassionate as he cuts.
 If you are afraid of being wrong in your reply,
 Be patient when it is time to speak, be patient!

[177] Our opinion on the question and answer which this man poses concerning the two unknown properties – one of which concerns the ruby's property of warding off cholera and the other the power of the emerald to pluck out the serpent's eye – is to say that both of these are quite unknown. If the question concerned the well-known fact that the ruby cannot be warmed to redness by fire, that would have been more

apposite than its prevention of cholera, which is an unknown property – all the more so since in his own time many people were saved from cholera without any ruby; but if it were so that no one was delivered from cholera apart from those who possessed a ruby, the question might be apt.

[178] We have never heard that someone placing an emerald in front of a serpent bursts its eyes. Something along these lines is stated in these verses:³⁵⁷

If the serpent's two eyes are destroyed by the property
Of an emerald, at the moment it is brought close to them,
I myself have never witnessed this; and yet, I have seen
That when the prince puts his hand on my heart
The eyes of my poverty burst into smithereens!

Still, we think that this discussion is good and apt for interpretation. Every dictum which is well known to the multitude has a figurative sense for the sages; it has fallen into this world among the masses, but it may be uttered in the form of a riddle by those who are in search of wisdom. Thus, the story of the Simurgh is well known. The common folk say that it is from beyond Mt. Qāf and when the Last Day draws nigh, it will come forth. They also say that when the sun goes down it goes under God's throne. For the sages, God's throne is the sphere of the zodiac (*ḥalāk al-burūj*) which the sun is under. They say too that the *parīs* have lovely faces but they remain hidden to mankind; these are the knowledgeable, the form of whose knowledge is lovely, but the ignorant are unable to see this form of theirs.

[179] The response of the *ahl-i ta'yīd* to these two questions is to say that amongst the cold indissoluble minerals (*fusardah-i nāgudāzandah*),³⁵⁸ first the red ruby and then the emerald are superior to other minerals;

357. These verses are ascribed to Munjik Tirmidhī, i.e., Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Tirmidhī, a much celebrated eleventh-century Persian poet active at the court of the Āl-i Muḥtaj, rulers of Chaghāniyan; see F. de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. 5, part 1, pp. 197–198; also, G. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 1, p. 14.

358. For the medicinal properties of gems, see Ullmann, *Die Natur-*, pp. 138–140; for the emerald's effect on serpents, see p. 399.

in just the same way, amongst meltable minerals gold is superior to silver. Among animals, two are superior: first the camel, then the horse. Among plants, two are superior as well: first the date, then the grape. Two places are superior: first Mecca, then Medina. Amongst heavenly bodies, there are two which are grander: first the sun, then the moon.

[180] They say that these two categories are analogous for the two men amongst all mankind who are noblest. Within each category of existent, there are two which are better and nobler than others, and so it would not be right if two men were not nobler than other men; because man is the greatest of existing things. God's purpose in the creation of existing things is wholly man. They say further that amongst men two are noblest: first God's Emissary, and then his Legatee (*waṣī*). As proof for the superiority of these two individuals over all other humans, they give the fact that all the noblest people are also their offspring. Moreover, there is no one from amongst all those who profess the religion of Islam who does not hear the call to prayer – which is the call to God – who does not utter, following upon the profession of God's oneness, the mention of these two individuals; the muezzins sound the call to prayer five times by night and day, declaring that these moments are of all times the noblest, and from the summits of their minarets they give voice to 'Muḥammad is the Emissary of God, 'Ali is the Friend (*walī*) of God.'

[181] Hence they say that amongst the minerals, one the ruby, and another the emerald, stand as figures for the two men chosen by God. And the meaning of the deflection of cholera from someone who possesses a ruby is a metaphor for the deflection by the Prophet of God's wrath, which is more terrible than cholera, away from someone who shares his religion. They say further that the meaning of emerald's ability to extract the serpent's eyes – for it is man's enemy, and the common folk say that it had Adam, upon him be peace, driven out of Paradise – is also figurative since when the serpent of religion gazes upon the emerald of religion, the emerald of religion destroys its divining eye (*cheshm-i baṣīrātesh*) so that the serpent does not see the true way and remains blinded. Should it appear before the Prophet he would not be able to show it the way after it had rejected the truth, as God says, 'But can you guide the blind if they will not see?'³⁵⁹ This is a reply in accord with both religion and hermeneutics, but only he whose spiritual understanding has been opened wide will be able to hear it.

359. Q10:43, tr. Abdel Haleem.

[182] Regarding our response to the three other questions – namely, that lead is said to break diamond or that in the city of Ahwāz nobody is free from fever or, third, that in Tibet nobody is troubled by it – we say that his object in posing these questions was apparently so that those who are shaky in their knowledge of the natures of things might be beguiled and indulge in giving an answer to this. The proof that lead does not break diamond can be obtained from polishers and piercers of gems who work with diamonds. Lead does not break diamond; on the contrary, they place a flattened out (*pahn kardeh*) piece of iron on the anvil and they set the diamond on the iron; there, by the use of a tempered steel (*pūlād-i ābdār*) and a blacksmith's hammer (*khāyisk*), they break it upon the iron in such a way that when it is broken it remains strewn on top of the iron, for this is a dry gem (*gawhar-i khushk*) and hard to shatter. If it were broken directly on the anvil, it would scar the anvil (*rish konad*). Maybe somebody heard about this or witnessed it from afar and assumed that the iron broke the diamond. But there's no great mystery here: the question clearly is without any significance whatsoever; it is unfamiliar to people and no interpretation is called for. Enough on this matter!

[183] The proof that it is untrue that in a city like Ahwāz in Khūzistān, in which there are thousands of people, all of the inhabitants suffer from fever – quite apart from the fact that I myself have been there and did not suffer from fever, nor did those of my acquaintance – is that fever is caused by an imbalance in the equilibrium towards either excess or diminishment. For this reason a man is stricken and cannot eat; whether he is a child or an adult, he wastes away. Now, if there were such a place in which no one was sound of body, the children there would not grow up, no one there would be strong or happy, and no one would wish to go there for fear of illness. But this is absurd. On the contrary, in Ahwāz there are people who are healthy, robust, and happy, as well as free of fever. If there were such a city whose inhabitants were forever ill, [it would mean that] there would be neither doctors nor medicines there. This too is absurd. No such city exists or has ever been known to exist. To think that this man (Jurjānī) practised medicine! His remark is absurd – nay, rather, coming from a physician it is utterly preposterous!

[184] The proof that it is absurd to say that in Tibet nobody is troubled by cares is that if there were a city in which none of its inhabitants was troubled, there would be neither bonds of relationship or friendship, nor of strife or hostility, amongst these people; they would have no property, no wives, no children, no passionate aspiration (*hamiyat*). Rather, they

would be like beasts. For anyone whose brother or son or father dies and who feels no sorrow, anyone whose wife or children are taken from him and who feels no grief, anyone whose property is stripped from him and who experiences no distress, is not a man but an ox! Tibet is not so distant from us that we have to accept such an absurdity about the condition of its inhabitants on the random say-so of a single individual. On the contrary, Tibet is a huge region. It has a sultan and an army; it has sages. Wherever there is an army and a sultan and people who pay taxes, it must necessarily be the case that the inhabitants are not like beasts. Furthermore, wherever there is grief, there is also merriment, for happiness occurs when something is found, while grief comes when something is lacking. How could anyone not be sorrowful if his son dies or his property is seized? And how too could anyone not be glad when a son arrives or property is granted? Must it then be that the people of Tibet experience neither joy nor sorrow? This is not the pronouncement of a wise person – no, it is raving!

On Language, Discourse, and Speech

*What is the distinction between rational discourse, speech, and talk,
Since in Persian there's only one word but its meanings are many?*

(Jurjānī, verse 29)

[185] Rational discourse (*nutq*) is an essential attribute of the rational soul; it is something known and intelligible, not something sensed or implied (*mushār*). Speech (*qawl*) is its effect; it points to it (*bar-ū dalīl ast*). Thus, when we see an infant nursing, we say that it possesses rational utterance, even though we may not have heard a single word from it. And when we see a calf, we say that it does not possess rational utterance. This, despite the fact that both are animals and neither one nor the other has uttered a word. An intelligent person will say that he who says that the child possesses rational discourse speaks truthfully, but that whoever says that the calf has rational discourse is a liar. But if someone claims of a small child that it has rational speech or this is discourse, he errs. We will explain the difference between 'speech' (*qawl*) and 'discourse' (*kalām*).

[186] Rational utterance is neither Arabic nor Persian nor Hindi nor any language whatsoever. On the contrary, it is one of the faculties of the human soul by which a human being is capable of conveying some meaning which lies in his innermost mind to others by means of his voice, written letters, and speech. The sages of religion and of philosophy call this faculty, which man manifests in his action, 'speech' (*nutq*).

[187] With respect to utterance, a word may be brief while its signification may be long. Nay, in fact, the term 'utterance' (*qawl*) has several senses. First, a vocable which somebody utters may be termed 'his word'. Thus, the chamberlain says, 'Summon the wazir, for this is the word of the prince', that is, the prince says what I am saying. Second, it may also be predicated of a statement of opinion, as when it is said, 'That is the view of Abū Ḥanīfa that anyone who opens a vein spoils his ablution,

but al-Shāfi'ī's view runs counter to this.' And third, they call an inclination and a desire which someone has for something 'his *qawl*' as well; for example, they say, 'So-and-so speaks for women or so-and-so speaks for young boys (*ṣibyān*)', and the like.³⁶⁰ And fourth, whatever word somebody says to which a meaning attaches, whether it is true or false, is an utterance coming from him in whatever language it may be expressed.

[188] As for 'discourse' (*kalām*), it is a collection of utterances (*majmū'ī qawl-hā*), the meaning of which is not conveyed except in these phrases and in this arrangement. For example, someone says, 'Today I went to the court of the prince and requested an audience. I thought that if I had not requested an audience before appearing before the prince, it would not be right and he would hold me in contempt. But when I requested the audience, the prince knew that I respected proper etiquette (*adab*) and he called me into his presence, was gracious to me, and commanded that my request be granted.' They term this 'discourse' (*kalām*) because the sentences uttered by the voice have been combined in a definite order. Each of the sentences has a sense, but only in the combination of their meanings does that sense become evident.

[189] First of all, then, is language; it belongs essentially to the soul as a virtual faculty. When it comes into practice, that is, when the developed human being wishes to say something, he first produces [it] from himself in an arrangement of words that follows the order in his mind; then he expresses that by means of his voice, just as God the Exalted tells of the prophet Solomon – upon him be peace – who said to humankind by way of expressing his gratitude to God, 'O men, we have been instructed in the language of the birds.'³⁶¹

[190] From this it is clear that language and discourse (*manṭiq ve nutq*) do not depend upon the voice, while utterance and speech (*kalām ve qawl*) do. Thus, God the Exalted relates in an account that 'I said to Jesus, "You address speech to men in the cradle"', as He says, 'You spoke to people in your crib as a grown man',³⁶² that is, you uttered words with your voice. When Solomon says, 'We have been instructed in the language of the birds', that means, 'We know', even though [this language]

360. De Gastines translates this as 'petites filles' (p. 204), though the text (p. 185) clearly says 'boys'.

361. Q27:16.

362. Q5:110.

has not been spoken. And so language is speech known but not uttered, whereas discourse is what is uttered, and speech is the components of discourse, each one of which possesses a sense and the totality of which is joined to convey a single meaning, and without which the individual components would not communicate.

On Pre-Eternity, Duration, Eternity, and Eternity without End

*Beginningless eternity, continuing time, eternity, and everlastingness –
What is the distinction a clever man makes between each of these?*

(Jurjānī, verse 30)

[191] In the view of the philosopher, the 'pre-eternal' (*azalī*) is distinctly defined as that the existence of which is uncaused; indeed, it is something which exists without any cause. The contrary of this quality is the 'temporally occurring' (*muḥdath*) which is that which does have a cause for its existence. Since, as they say, the temporally occurring is present – it is this variegated, mobile, and divisible world, the hues, movements, and parts of which testify to its contingency – it follows of necessity that the maker and producer of this be pre-eternal, and that His existence be without cause, and that He possess neither hue nor motion nor parts whatsoever. They argue that if there had not existed, prior to the temporally created, something which was the cause of the temporally created, and if that something was not the cause of its existence, the temporally created would not be present at all. But since the temporally created is present, it follows necessarily that there is a creator who is uncaused and who has neither beginning nor end. They say further that these terms – duration, eternity, eternity without beginning or end – all have one and the same meaning. Such is the response of the philosophers as to what this question means.

[192] The *ahl-i ta'yīd* respond to these questions as follows. There is a distinction between *azal* and *azaliyat* and *azalī*. In the same way, someone might say 'iron' and 'made of iron' and 'iron-bearing' (*āhun/āhunī/āhunīn*), or 'earth' and 'earthen' and 'earthy' (*khāk/khākī/khākin*). Everyone knows that what is made of iron contains iron and that it is midway between iron and the iron-bearing. In just the same way, the

verbal noun (*fi'l*) stands midway between the active participle/*nomen agentis* (*fā'il*) and the passive participle/*nomen patientis* (*maf'ūl*). The passive nature of the passive participle (*maf'ūlī-yi maf'ūl*) lies in the action which devolves upon it from the active participle. So too, the pre-eternal (*azalī*) is pre-eternal by virtue of that pre-eternality (*azalīyat*) which comes to it from pre-eternity (*azal*). They term the Intellect *azalī* since it is eternal by virtue of pre-eternality. It is the first of created existents. Its cause is one with its existence. The cause of the continuance of substance is the Intellect ('*illat-i baqā*'-i *jawhar aql ast*). Eternity (*dahr*), which is its continuance, lies within its horizon. They hold that eternity is on a par with Intellect, that is, on the same plane. In just the same way, if there were not something enduring (*bāqī*), there would be no enduringness (*baqā*); if there were no Intellect, there would be no eternity. So too, if there were no Soul, there would also be no movement, and if there were no movement, there would be no time.

[193] They call the True Originator the 'eternally-existing', since eternity is made manifest through His act of origination (*ibdā*), and through that eternality the eternal is eternal. So too action has no basis within His essence; rather, before it (i.e., action) reaches the object of action, it is already present in the agent – without there being any difference between it and the agent – and after it has become manifest from the agent, it is realised in its object – without there being any diminishment in the agent through the exteriorisation of this action from him. On the contrary, the action is the trace of the agent, established firmly in this object of his action. Hence, the eternality which comes from this act of origination from the True Originator, who is Himself eternal, is a trace which when it is made manifest renders the eternal, eternal through Him. This is fixed in the eternal without becoming a part of the eternal; rather, it is a trace of Him – glory be to Him – in just the same way as a book is a trace of the writer by whose act of writing the book comes to be.

[194] Duration (*daymūmat*) is that through which something which endures does endure. It is a vocable coming from the [Arabic] word *dawm* ('lasting'), 'Permanence' (*dawām*), just like 'eternal', comes from what is eternal; and yet, endurance is at a more elevated level than eternality (*azalīyat*). It is synonymous with eternity (*dahr*). I mean that it is the life of that which is living through its own very nature, just as time is the life of a thing whose life comes to it from another. *Daymūmat* comes from an inflection of the Arabic language, as when we say: *dama*, *vadumu*, *dawaman*, *daymumatan*, and *daymūmat*, from

[the root] *d-w-m*, just as *ṣayrūrāt* comes from *ṣ-y-r*. There is nothing obscure in this for scholars of language.

[195] Among the metaphysicians, 'endurance' is the continuance of a cause, perpetuity (*khulud*), the persistence of a thing in an everlasting place. This vocable is established in something which is permanent in such a way that, having become permanent, it may be called 'perpetual' (*khālid*), as God the Exalted says concerning the characterisation of somebody who kills a believer intentionally, that is, that he remains eternally in hell, as in this verse: '*If anyone kills a believer deliberately, the punishment for him is Hell, and there he will remain (khālidan fī-hā): God is angry with him.*'³⁶³ To the believers He says that you will be eternally in Heaven because of good deeds, as in this verse: '*... there to remain forever (khālidīna): God is pleased with them and they with Him.*'³⁶⁴ Elsewhere He says, '*That is the reward of the enemies of God – the Fire will be their lasting home (dār al-khuld), a payment for their rejection.*'³⁶⁵

[196] *Abad* they call continuance without end, just as they call *azal* continuance without beginning. Everything which is from always is also for forever. This is because the eternal is that which is unchanging, unmoving, unalterable; whatever is unchangeable remains untouched by annihilation, since mutability is one of the effects of annihilation, and if there is no alteration, there is no annihilation. Since there is no annihilation, there is continuance; whatever does not suffer annihilation endures forever; by which I mean that its continuance has no end. They hold too that man's essence is eternal; that is, his continuance is without end. But his existence is not without a beginning. [However,] certain of the worthiest amongst the *ahl-i ta'yīd* affirm that the soul's essence is eternal and without beginning (*azalī*), for if it were not eternal from always, it would not be eternal for ever after.

This is a response to these questions. Praise be to God. May this suffice.

363. Q4:93, tr. Abdel Haleem.

364. Q5:119, tr. Abdel Haleem.

365. Q41:28, tr. Abdel Haleem.

On the Moon's Properties

*A solar eclipse certainly occurs because of the moon's mass,
But why does the lofty and luminous moon then turn black as pitch?
Why does the light not pass down from the sun to the moon
Like the glass which the light from a fire passes through?
Since the moon is clearer than any glass, why does the sun
Find it so difficult to pierce it with its rays?*

(Jurjānī, verses 37–39)

[197] In this question he seems to be saying, 'I affirm that when the sun revolves around the earth, it sometimes happens that the moon's mass interposes an obstruction between the earth and the sun.' And he asks, 'Why do we perceive the moon's mass as black at such a time, given that it is a lofty and luminous substance? Why does the sun's light not traverse the moon's mass just as it passes through glass?' He asks this with some dubiety, because if the moon's substance is more transparent than glass, why does sunlight pass through glass which is lacking in this translucency but does not pass through the moon's mass, even though it is far more translucent? This is the question.

[198] The response of natural science to this question is that they - by which I mean the philosophers - state that the mass of the moon is similar to the substance of the earth. To prove that this assertion is correct, they argue that the masses of the spheres and the heavenly bodies are the purest essences (*ṣafwat-hā'i ṭabā'i'*)³⁶⁶ of their natures, since when Universal Nature at the beginning of its existence set original matter in motion, all that was fine and subtle in it rose upwards while what was

366. De Gastines (p. 211) translates this as 'les attributs', as though the original read *ṣifāt-hā* rather than *ṣafwat-hā* (and indeed, this would be perhaps a better reading).

dense and heavy amid it remained [below], as we have explained earlier in this book.

[199] They also say that the moon is closer in mass to earth than the other celestial bodies, since its substance is dense and heavy; it is below the others because of the heaviness, density, and darkness that are within it. Another proof which they adduce to show that the moon's substance is earth-like is [to say] that there are five sorts of heavy bodies: first the body of the sphere, then the region of the ether, third the air, fourth the water, and fifth the earth. None of these five, except for earth, keeps the light of the sun from passing through. For we all see that the sun's shining passes through these four – the sphere, the ether, air, and water – until it reaches the earth. Nothing blocks the sunlight from these four.

[200] Furthermore, these philosophers say, since we all see that the mass of the moon also does not let the light of the sun pass through but rather, reflects it back, we know that the mass of the moon is an earth-like mass, that it is hard, that it is heavy, that it is opaque in relation to those other masses which are superior to it. They say too that since reflected light falls from the moon to the earth, we know that that light does not reach into the interior of the moon, just as the light reflected from it does not reach the interior of the earth; the surface of the earth is not luminous but rather, it is reflected light which illumines bodies there.

[201] They go on to say that if the substance of the moon were such that sunlight could pass through it, that light would reach the earth in such a way that it would be warm and dry, just as when it passes through a glass it is also warm and dry, and would remain just as it is [without any alteration]. Now if that were so, there would be no benefit in the creation of the moon. The wisdom that lies in the fact that the moon's substance is not transparent like crystal but rather luminous like a mirror-glass – because of the iron which carries the light in its body and reflects it back – has as its effect that by means of this very wisdom that radiance which is hot and dry turns into a luminosity which is cold and moist, quite unlike that of the sun itself. The moon's light acts like water on ripening things, whether seeds or fruits, and saturates things as they grow; the sun's light acts like fire. It is due to that very wisdom that flavour and colour and fragrance develop in those unripe things of all sorts; through the cool, moist water, which is the moon's light, and the hot dry fire, which is the sun's, they all come to ripeness; and the aspects (*ma nā-hā*) of taste, colour, and scent, etc., thus come to be present.

[202] If the moon's substance were transparent and the light passed through it, the light of the sun would not become moist and cool; unripe things would be burnt by the sun's light; nothing would be soft (*narm*), nor would taste, colour, and fragrance be present, as in some unripe thing which is hurled into the fire to be burnt. Now, those things, plants, and animals, which undergo generation ripen in that water and that fire, as we have explained; they are like something raw which is placed in water upon a fire so that it may become food for man.

[203] They say further that we see that the moon's substance is not luminous during the two or three nights when only a portion of its face reflecting the sun's luminance appears to shine while the rest of its surface remains dark, since the light does not penetrate it. Anyone who says that the moon's substance is supernal speaks the truth; however, if he claims that the moon's substance is itself luminous, he speaks incorrectly, as observation makes clear.

[204] To speak in logical terms of this matter, we note that whatever receives a quality (*mā'nā*) receives that quality only because it lacks it. Since the moon receives light, it follows necessarily that it is lacking in light. We say further that not every substance which is supernal is also luminous: for example, the heavens are supernal in substance but not luminous, nor do they receive luminosity. In fact, we observe that the sphere is dark by day and by night. Saturn's light comes to earth from the seventh heaven and Capella's light from the sphere of the zodiac.

[205] If the heavens were luminous, no star would be visible in them as well; quite the contrary, night and day would become one. All the parts of the earth would be constantly illumined, for the simple reason that the earth is situated at the midpoint of the sphere. Luminosity comes to [earth] from the sun and from the moon, but that of the moon and other heavenly bodies comes from the sun: their lights are borrowed (*'āriyatī*), not essential; they shine from without. Light from the sun's disk spreads in all directions. The light of the stars proclaims to us that the source of that shining is entirely the sun's disk.

[206] Since it is obvious that for the most part the heavenly bodies are without light, and that they compose the totality of the spheres, it should not occur to anyone to ask why the spheres are in their very essence dark or why the light that traverses them does not illumine them. Nor should it occur to anyone to ask why the moon's substance is dark or why the light of the sun does not penetrate it.

[207] Nevertheless, were this question to be posed, the answer would be that the Creator of the world created the moon's substance in such a way that the light does not pass through it but rather is reflected back from it. A similar reply may be made to anyone who asks why the heavens are not luminous, even though they are supernal, or how light traverses them since they are not receptive to light? That is, this is due to the creation of the substance of the spheres with the qualities which we have mentioned. It is necessary to know that the bodies of the revolving spheres are bodies brought together in close proximity and firmly fixed – they are not dispersed, like the substance of air – so that they all revolve and cause the stars above and below this dark centre to revolve in an even fashion. If something which turns in an even and regular orbit were not a body which is stable (*ustuvār*), solidly established, and with all of its parts closely joined one to another, it would be scattered. Anything which rotates without scattering apart – a ring, for example, or a wheel or a hard flask (*qarābah-i muḥkam*) – and which may be spun with force, has to be fixed and solid and hard, and can afford no access within it to any other body.

[208] Since the bodies of the spheres must be solid and hard, so that when they revolve they do not scatter away, we cannot imagine any other body which is solid and hard and does not disperse when moved, except for the body of the earth itself. For nothing can possibly be found in the essences of water or air or fire which does not scatter when set in motion; and there is nothing else apart from these four substances. Hence, since it follows necessarily that the spheres' substances be hard, they must be earthen; since they are earthen, it follows necessarily too that they are heavy. If they were not heavy, they would not turn; on the contrary, they would tend towards the centre and go downwards.

[209] The philosophers have stated that the spheres' substance is the fifth nature by virtue of its motion which is at variance to that of the other four natures. And so what would he who claims to have investigated the mysteries of the world's creation be saying when he asks why the sphere's substance, despite its heaviness and its hardness, has been set at the margins of the cosmos (*bar ḥawāshī-yi 'alam*)? We have shown by means of rational proofs that the spheres are hard, and since they are hard, they are heavy. Who amongst our contemporaries is capable of refuting this argument? On this subject we have nothing more to say.

[210] Nevertheless, we do say that certain philosophers – among whom is Plutarch – have stated that the substance of the spheres is a substance

like ruby: clear, firm, and transparent, which turns and does not retain light. Others argue that the substance of the spheres is hard but without weight, and that their rotation, which is through a motion counter to the motion of other, and lesser, heavenly bodies, is proof – so they claim – that they are not of the same substance.

[211] We have shown that the higher bodies are not all luminous; rather, they fall into three categories. First, there is a category which is luminous and gives light continually; that body is the sun. A second category is without luminosity but receives light; this body is the moon, and the masses of the other heavenly bodies. A third category is neither luminous nor receptive to light; that is the spheres in their totality, and they are transparent. I mean by this that they let the light through without retaining any of it whatsoever.

[212] It is not for anyone to pose questions as to the manner of creation; it is not for anyone to ask why the substance of the sun diffuses light, nor for anyone to ask why water is heavy in mass while air is light. As for the moon's colour, we say that it is as it is so that we can see it during a solar or a lunar eclipse because at both these times we see it devoid of light.

[213] To somebody who asks us why the moon's bulk is so black during a solar eclipse, we reply that it is because such is its colour. If he asks why the sunlight does not pass through it when it does pass through crystal, we answer that crystal is transparent but the moon's mass is not. And if he says that the moon's mass is purer than crystal, we reply that if by 'purity' he means the passage of light, he errs. The fact that the moon's mass is impenetrable to sunlight while the sunlight traverses crystal is proof that when you say that the moon's mass is purer than crystal, you are mistaken. This is the answer to that question. We have expatiated at length on this question for the benefit of the students of scientific truth, so that they may know that we are well informed in this science.

[214] The response of the *ahl-i ta'yid* to this question is as follows. Light, they say, is an analogue of knowledge. In proof of this affirmation, they say that man – who is the whole goal of the Creator in creating the world – possesses a double vision. One of these is exterior (*zāhir*) – and this is eyesight (*başar*) – and the other is interior (*bâtin*) – this is insight (*başîrat*).³⁶⁷ Eyesight is the human activity by which man is

367. This contrast between sight and insight occurs often in Sufi literature; for example, it runs through much of Ghazālī's Sufi works; see my *Ghazālī: The*

able to see perceptible things with the aid of light. His insight is the activity by which he is able to see conceptual objects (*chīzhā-yi ma'qūl*) and veiled meanings with the aid of knowledge. Hence, it is clear, they say, that knowledge stands with respect to insight at the same rank as light does to eyesight. Just as there is a source for that light by which one sees visible things with his eyes – and that source is the sun – it follows necessarily that there must be a source for that light of insight – which is knowledge – which is also the source for the sun and the moon. Just as a sighted person sees the earth of this world and its paths by the indications of the sunlight, so too must the possessor of insight see the world beyond this world by the light of his own inner sun. He who has shown this world to humankind is the Prophet.³⁶⁸

[215] The Emissary of God the Exalted is the sun of the world of religion. His knowledge is the light of those endowed with insight. Their light is in God's Book which comes from this sun which is the light of knowledge. As God says, '*Clear proofs (baṣā'ir) have come to you from your Lord. Those who see clearly (man absara) – it is to their own advantage. Those who remain blind – it is to their disadvantage. I am not a keeper over you.*'³⁶⁹ They say further that since the Emissary is the sun for those human beings endowed with insight, there must also be a moon to this sun, as evidenced in the world's creation – for religion stands in an analogous relationship to the world – and so the moon of the world of religion is the Legatee (*waṣī*) of the Emissary who is the master of exegesis of the Book and the Law.

[216] The moon is to the sun at the rank in which the Legatee stands to mankind. A man gives over his property to his legatee so that when he departs from this world, his legatee gives that property which he has received from him to those persons who remain behind so that they are not left destitute. Such is the state of the sun with both the moon and with mankind, for the sun continually gives its own light to the moon and then it sinks in the west, just like that man who passes away; then

Revival of Islam (Oxford, 2008), pp. 121–123, 137. For the 'inner eye' of prophecy, see also my 'The Poor Man's Prophecy: al-Ghazālī on Dreams', in L. Marlow (ed.), *Dreaming across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands* (Boston, 2008), pp. 142–152.

368. The same analogy appears in al-Mu'ayyad, *Diwān*, tr. M. Adra, *qaṣida* 1: 5–9.

369. Q6:104, tr. Jones.

the moon sends down the light which it received from the sun upon humankind, who are left in darkness after the sun has set.

[217] From this logical explication it is clear that, with creation itself as evidence, the Legatee of the Emissary – vis-à-vis the sun in both this world and the world of religion – is at the rank of the moon in the world of religion. In just this way, when the sun's light, which is hard and dry, arrives at the moon, the moon turns it soft and moist, so that unripe things, lacking taste, colour, and scent, in the vegetal and animal realms – and which supply nourishment to human beings – turn ripe and gain taste, colour, and scent, and then human beings can consume and digest them. So too when the exterior aspect of the Book, full of parables and enigmas, comes to the Legatee from God's Emissary, and the Legatee, he who is the moon of religion, transforms it, moistening the dry parable with the dew of sense, making it juicy (*tar*), embellishing it in such a way that when intelligent men hear it they can understand it and not fall into doubt. Just as fruit that is unripe and tasteless and which has not ripened through the hot dry light of the sun and the cool moist light of the moon and gained colour, scent, and taste, can produce bodily ailments in human beings, so too, from the metaphors and mysteries which are contained in the Book and the Law – analogous to unripe fruits lacking in flavour – spiritual ailments can appear in those who hear them. It is only when the Emissary's Legatee, he who is the moon of the world of religion, imparts the flavour of sense, the hue of interpretation, and the aroma of exposition to these green words that they may prove nourishing for those who reflect.

[218] When the sun undergoes eclipse, people see the sun as black; that is because the moon has covered the sun's body and its light cannot reach them. In just the same way, if the Legatee stands in front of the Prophet, the meaning of revelation, which is the sunlight of religion, does not reach the community, and without light, they cannot see the sun of religion and do not discover its sense. Just as without the light of the sun the moon is not luminous, the soul of the Legatee as well, without the example of the Prophet's revelation, is unable to interpret its meaning. So too, as long as the moon's mass remains indistinct from the sun, so that the sun cannot give it its light, people cannot see the light of the sun. Likewise, as long as the Prophet has not put his Legatee in place and imparted to him a portion of the divine assistance in the interpretation of the Book, the community cannot see the Prophet's knowledge in its full radiance and significance. The glass – through which the sunlight passes

as it is – is an analogy for the man who hears the science of revelation just as it is and transmits it, just as he heard it, without altering in any way the sense of it which came to him.

[219] The moon is an image of the Legatee: he receives the knowledge which comes with revelation but does not pass it on as it was, the way light passes through a crystal; rather, he transforms it (*begardānīd*) from its figurative state (*az ān mathal*) and draws forth its meaning. Glass, which is a lowly substance and man-made, cannot transform the sun's radiance from what it is; and yet, the moon is able to transform the sunlight from what it was before, because the moon is close to the sun in its essential nature: both have been originated by God's primal creation; they are not man-made. The fact that glass placed in sunlight does not darken but lets the light pass through does not enhance its nobility. Quite the contrary: this comes from the very imperfection of glass that light passes through it, as if through the air. Conversely, the nobility of the moon's mass is due to the very fact that it does not absorb the sunlight.

[220] Thus we have shown that true purity is that belonging to the moon's mass, not to glass. Glass cannot receive the sun's light because of the meanness of its own substance, not because of any purity. It is due to the moon's own magnificence, and not any meanness, that it retains the sunlight. The *ahl-i ta'yīd* – peace be upon them – state that glass, which is a human product, is a metaphor for an imam whom people install by their own free choice in the Prophet's wake; the moon, originated primordially by God in its very essence, as was the sun, is a metaphor for the *waṣī*, the Legatee, who himself is of the same substance as the Prophet, and who is installed by God the Exalted in succession to the Prophet in order to explicate the Book. And this is what is meant by 'divine assistance' (*ta'yīd*). 'O you who are endowed with insight, consider this!'"³⁷⁰

On the Necessity of Human Education

*Stronger is man than animal in every circumstance,
Greater in his stratagems, in his savvy a conjuror –
Why then does man need someone to take charge of him, a nurse
And a schedule, for bedtime and holding him on her breasts and her lap?
The animals, the birds, the savage beasts, are much weaker than he,
And yet he must toil for his livelihood just to eat and to sleep.*

(Jurjānī, verses 40–42)

[221] This question can arise only within the teaching mission of a guide (*da'wat-i hādī*).³⁷¹ What is more, no one can reply to it except for the *ahl-i ta'yīd*. I have never heard the philosophers, who stand at a lower rank than the *ahl-i ta'yīd*, make any pronouncements on the subject. And no one amongst those with pretensions in the world of religion (*mudda'iyān-i andar 'ālam-i dīn*) can furnish an answer, even if they have entered the citadel of religion by coming over the wall, rather like a dog which is refused entry to the citadel but which gets in anyway through the wall, though it does not belong among the inhabitants of the citadel. Thanks to the generosity of the Lord of this Age, we can only say that the young of animals do not need education (*parvarish*), nor to be picked up or set down; on the contrary, as soon as they are separated from their mother, they stand up on their own feet, seek the mother's breast, take hold of it, and suckle; all that sprouts from the earth becomes nourishment for them. There are some animals which do not need milk at all; the baby hare, as soon as it is born, grazes on grass and does not drink milk. As soon as it emerges from the egg, the baby chick pecks grain, runs about, and bewares of predators.³⁷² But the human baby requires much attentive care: it must be swaddled, put to

371. Literally, 'This question is not except within the teaching mission of a guide' (*īn su'āl joz andar da'wat-i hādī nīst*).

372. Literally, 'flying things' (*parandegān*).

sleep in soft covers, rocked, the nipple put into its mouth, washed, kept safe from harm, and educated so that it does not perish. No commentary is needed on this circumstance. This is obvious to all people, high and low.

[222] But it is also necessary for humans to know that man's state, once he has reached bodily maturity, is always thus. His nourishment too is from plants and yet, he requires skilled instruments and well-planned labours to make these spring from the ground in order that they may provide nourishment for his body. Thus, to separate the wheat from its chaff, he needs to use agricultural implements and orderly processes like harvesting, cleansing, winnowing (*gharbīl zadan*), and the like. Then he must make flour from that grain; for that he needs to construct a mill, a construction which requires many different sorts of knowledge and various tools, proper order and measurement, together with a familiarity with all kinds of metals and the sawing of rare woods – the two great arts of the blacksmith and the carpenter with their numerous implements. Then that flour has to be sifted using tools, and so sifters too must be made with exact knowledge; what has been sifted must then be kneaded (*barashtan*) in things made skilfully out of tile (*tāveh*) and basin (*tasht*), and the like, and that kneading too must be carried out with knowledge and order. What has been kneaded must then be baked using instruments based on knowledge, such as an oven, a brick, or the like, in such a way that the heat of the fire reaches it but does not damage or burn and destroy it. The baker has to cook the bread with knowledge and sound method so that it comes out well, neither undercooked nor burnt and so indigestible to man.

[223] Hence, so that a plant which sprouts from the earth may become fit for people to eat, many tools, skilfully designed and based on knowledge, as well as knowledge and design themselves, are required. If an account were to be drawn up of the foods which man prepares – stews in pots (*dig-pokht-hā*), fried foods (*qalvah*), roasts and sweets – it would be quite lengthy. If we were to give an explanation of all that man has to do to ward off the cold and the heat and other such matters, we would be diverted from our purpose, which is to respond to this question.

[224] For animals other than man, all that sprouts from the earth is food; they need no specialised tools for their nourishment. Man loses his way in a dark night while an animal sees the path by night. A man who has not learned to swim drowns in the water, but as soon as it is born an animal can swim. The education which a person, who has reached physical maturity, possesses merely to continue to survive must be added to those difficulties he experienced in his childhood training.

[225] It remains for us now to explain why the human condition is what it is while that of the beasts is very much the opposite. But first let no one take exception with us when we maintain that the Creator's objective in creating the world was the creation of man and that a providential care (*'ināyati*) has come to him from God in which the other animals have no share. When we observe that animals seem more abundantly favoured in life (*firākh-rūzītar*) than humans, in that everything that grows from the earth is their food and they are free from the pains and toils which are man's lot in finding their food, it might appear that the Creator's providential care is directed to animals, not to man.

[226] Our reply to this objection is to say that it is well known that our creator and the creator of the animals is God – He is mighty and powerful – who is sovereign over all. In this world sovereignty over the animals belongs to us; they are our servants and workers. It is evident that we are closer to God, the first sovereign, than the animals are. This dominance over the animals comes to us from God – glory be to Him. Man is like God's guest: the benefits of this world come to him. The other animals are like spongers (*tuḡaylān*) on man; all that comes to them, whether straw, bran, fruits, or the like, comes from man's leftovers (*pīshṭī*).

[227] Our forcing the animals to work and then giving them those things which we do not need is proof that this subjection of them to our advantage has fallen upon them from our Creator. The fact that whatever grows on the earth comes to them as food – whether thistle or weed or leaves from a tree – signifies God's providence to us, not to them because they are under our control, and yet we experience no hardship in providing them with food.

[228] We say further that the fact that animals do not need specialised tools and methodical knowledge to get their food is proof to us that they have no access to the realm of knowledge. This is why their actions are always readily carried through (*sākhtah āmadah*); in other words, their hides are their garments, their hoofs are their boots, the plants are their food, they recognise their enemies, and they know how to seek out their mates.

[229] Man's need for these special tools and discerning competencies in the quest for food proves to us that within him there exists a substance receptive to knowledge and that his return is to the realm of knowledge. Since his appearance in the world depends upon foods acquired by rational methods and measured training, it is so that he may know that this abode is a passage for him; he should not live like the beasts; he should

seek knowledge in order to arrive at that higher world with its everlasting bounty. Since animals do not have a soul receptive to knowledge, they do not need to exert themselves over specialised tools, either as infants or as adults, to get their food. Since man does have a soul receptive to knowledge, it follows of necessity, by rational demonstration, that his condition, both in his education and in his quest for sustenance, must be the opposite of the animals', such as it is. This difference is fundamental to these two animals, that is, between the bestial soul and the rational soul, one of which is noble while the other is base, one of which is exquisite while the other is mean, one of which is knowing while the other is unalterably ignorant. By virtue of these differences which we have shown to exist between the rational soul and the bestial soul, it follows necessarily that that noble substance, the human soul itself, is immortal whereas that base substance, vile and unalterably ignorant, will perish.

[230] The *ahl-i ta'yid*, keepers of the knowledge of the Book and the Law – upon them be peace – state that it is because man has a soul receptive to knowledge that his body, in which this noble soul is lodged, needs such exertions as well as such finesse for its subsistence. This particular condition of the human body is proof that his soul too needs the same care and attention in order to be nourished with knowledge, as God says, '[*Had he wanted to change the like of you*] and recreate you in a way unknown to you. You have learned how you were first created: will you not reflect?'³⁷³

[231] ³⁷⁴ Just as our bodies are nourished by a mother, along with a father's strength, so too do our souls have a mother and a father. The spiritual father of mankind is the Prophet of God who is by Divine Command their teacher, as God says, '*and he teaches them the Book and Wisdom, even if before that, they were in manifest error*'.³⁷⁵ Our spiritual mother is the *waṣī* of the Prophet, as the Prophet himself said to his Legatee, 'I and you, O 'Ali, are the father and the mother of this community. May God curse those who revile their parents!'³⁷⁶ Just as a child newly born of its mother's womb cannot tolerate the food which its father brings it but rather its mother must first consume that food and transform it

373. Q56:61–62, tr. Abdel Haleem.

374. On the numbering of sections from 231, see note 26 above.

375. Q3:164.

376. For this tradition, see al Majlisi, *Bihār al anwar* (Tehran, 1376/1956), vol. 9, pp. 84–85, as cited in the notes to the Corbin/Mu'in edition, p. 209.

into good sweet milk, which she then gives to the child, so too, what the Prophet says in revelation to the community is not suitable for a fresh – and fragile – believer unless the *waṣī* has first extracted it from the metaphors and riddles through interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and turned it into pleasing precepts which that shaky new believer can both hear and accept. Just as a newborn is swaddled, so too is a fresh initiate held and wound about through that which they let him hear; the ear stands in the same relation to the rational soul as the mouth does to the animal soul; and for the rational soul, revelation and interpretation stand in the same relation as food and drink stand for the body. Just as it is necessary to swaddle an infant so that its limbs are not crooked and it grows up straight, so too with him who enters into the covenant and responds to the summons so that his judgement and thinking not give rise to the least doubt or uncertainty and he proceeds along the straight path. And just as a mother washes her child's body of defilements with pure water so that it will not come to harm and will grow up healthy, in the same way the *dā'ī*, who is the initiate's mother, purifies his spiritual child from defilements of the soul – such as ignorance and doubt, as well as anthropomorphism and the denial of God's attributes – by means of rational discourse, so that he may come quickly to maturity. Just as through a loving mother's tutelage, a human being comes to know and appreciate all the suitable pleasures and delights of this world to the full, the adept too, thanks to the tutelage of his spiritual mother, gains access to interpretative knowledge and to everlasting favours. For these two stand in the same order, one with the other.

About *ibdāʿ* (Origination)³⁷⁷

*If I were to ask you for a proof of creation (ibdāʿ),
What would you offer to make it plain in my sight?
What is this thing, not from anything, though it seems a thing?
How can you make these secrets plain?*

(Jurjānī, verses 43–44)

[232] They term bringing something not out of something else ‘origination’ (*ibdāʿ*) or ‘invention’ (*ikhtirāʿ*), while they call ‘creation’ (*khalq*) the determination (*taqdīr*) of a thing from another thing. In just this way, the carpenter makes a throne out of wood; he is the creator (*khāliq*) of the throne and he is also the originator (*mubdīʿ*) of the form of the throne. Man does not have the capability to originate the body (*ibdāʿ-i jism*) from nothing. People fall into four groups with regard to the acceptance or rejection of ‘origination’. The first group rejects both origination and creation; they say that the world was not made, but rather that it is eternal and that the creator of the [three] ‘kingdoms’ (*ṣāniʿ-yi mawālūd*) is the world itself. The world has no creator; rather, it is eternal and without beginning, it always was and it always will be. This is the group of the Dahriyān.³⁷⁸

377. It is hard to find a single English translation for this term. C. Baffioni renders it as ‘extra-temporal innovation’, which is precise enough but sacrifices some of its nuances; it is in any case too clumsy to use repeatedly; cf. her ‘The Scope of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ*’, in N. El-Bizri, ed., *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Rasāʾil* (London, 2008), p. 117. I have alternated between ‘creation *ex nihilo*’ and ‘origination’ with occasional use of the unwieldy and opaque ‘instantiation’. See also note 65 above.

378. On this group, see 3:25 above.

[233] The second group says that the primal matter of the world is eternal while its form has been originated; this is a group of philosophers known as the Materialists (*aṣḥāb-i hayūlī*). They say that matter is composed of eternal parts without any composition (*tarkīb*), each of which is separate from the other. It (matter) is the leaven (*māyah*) of the body. All these parts are indivisible, extremely small, without either nature or composition. They say that the Soul is a substance which is eternal and ignorant. They say that the ignorant soul was seduced (*fitna shod*) by matter and that it yearned for the pleasures of the senses; matter entered into it and from that it began taking on the frail forms of lesser animals. And from desiring to experience the pleasures of the senses, when it became joined with matter, the soul grew forgetful of its own proper world. Because God knew that the soul erred out of ignorance, He forgave it. Out of the totality of the indivisible parts of matter, He created this world for the sake of the soul, and He brought forth within it these higher animals so that the soul might attain its sensual yearning while remaining united and intermixed within this indivisible substance.

[234] Then, so they say, God, the Wise, the Omniscient, created man in order to liberate the soul's substance from this wretchedness. He delegated the intellect to him from His own presence so that it might show the soul that these sensual pleasures are nothing other than escape from pain, just as eating food frees one from hunger and drinking water frees one from the pain of thirst, and make the soul understand that pleasure is this.

[235] God then brought forth, they say, the philosopher-sages to make the soul aware in its human form in this world of that mystery, and to tell it that it belongs to another world, that it has been led astray by corporeal matter and has remained captive here through its own mistake, so that it may renounce the pleasures of the senses and immerse itself in the study of philosophy in order to flee this toil and trouble.

[236] Further, they state that the sages have to tell people the good tidings of this mystery so that souls may escape from this world through philosophy, and the soul be utterly free from this world at last. When the soul's substance is wholly separate from the material substance by means of this wisdom, the soul will return to its own proper world where, thanks to God's loving solicitude, it will grow in knowledge to the utmost and take delight in its own tranquillity. At that time, when God's providence is withdrawn from this world, this world will perish;

all those indivisible parts will be again as they once were and return to their places. Such is the teaching of Muḥammad Zakariyā' Rāzī, basing himself on great Socrates, as he has said in his *Metaphysics*, to wit, 'This was Socrates' view' and 'with God's help I have assembled this divine science which had been obliterated (*mundaris shodeh būd*)'. He has stated that nobody can escape from this world except through this philosophy, nor attain to divine knowledge except through this philosophical approach (*tadbīr-i hikmat*).³⁷⁹

[237] A third group says that matter came to be in time but that form is eternal. This is the group of zealous rabble (*hashwīyān*), so called members of the community, who say they are Muslims and claim to be the greatest of sages.³⁸⁰ With regard to the creation of the world, they hold that the form of the world has existed from all eternity within God's essence. They believe the Qur'ān to be eternal, and always to have been so; God in His very essence has been speaking and His discourse is itself eternal. Furthermore, if there had been one time when God spoke, and then yet another time when He spoke, it would necessarily follow that there was a temporal element in His discourse. But God, they say further, in His beginningless eternity knew that He would create such a world. And so He did create it as He knew it. But they hold that He created matter *ex nihilo* (*ibdā' kard*) and brought it forth with all the trappings of Paradise.

[238] A contingent of theologians in the community takes issue with this group, stating that this course which you follow – namely, that God speaks eternally in His pre-eternity – means that when He says, 'O Moses, I am your Lord! Remove your sandals for you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwa', there was [in His pre-eternity] no Moses and no sandals and no valley of Ṭuwā.³⁸¹ The proposition is absurd that God addresses somebody who does not yet exist and from whom no reply can come. It would follow necessarily too from this doctrine that He was eternally

379. Cf. note 294 above. See also al-Rāzī, *Rasā'il falsafiya*, p. 99, where he refers to 'Socrates, our imam' (... *imami-na Suqrāt*), and Lenn E. Goodman, 'Rāzī's Myth of the Fall of the Soul: Its Function in His Philosophy', in George F. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, NY, 1975), pp. 25–40.

380. On these, see 3:28.

381. Q20:11–12.

relating of a pharaoh, who did not yet exist, that He said – without having said it – ‘*I am your Lord the Most High!*’³⁸² The notion of this group, which cannot be right, that God might perform an action which He has not thought about before, or said something which has not yet occurred in this world of His, implies inescapably that God had once been unknowing and then came to know what He did not know previously about His own acts and words.

[239] A fourth group is from the members of the [Prophet’s] household (*khāndān*). They say that the world is ‘invented’ (*mukhtari’*), both in its form and its matter. This is the group of the masters of divine assistance (*khudāvandān-i ta’yīd*),³⁸³ descendants of the Emissary, the Chosen One. Some of the philosopher-sages also hold this view. In one passage Plato has stated that the world was originated (*mubda’*); elsewhere he has said that the world was without any order before it received the order which it presently has. He has said that there is no way around the fact that whatever is in order was originally lacking in order and then someone put it in order. He has said that since the world today is ordered, we know that it had been at first without order and only afterwards was it brought from that [chaos] into order.

[240] A group of his students say that the meaning of the sage’s statement is that the world was disordered matter lacking an inherent nature and that God created the world out of this matter – divisible in itself – on the analogy of the ‘serpent wood’ (*khūb-i mar*) out of which the carpenter fashions polo balls. Other students, however, say that the philosopher’s aim in his statement was not this but that he affirmed creation *ex nihilo* (*ibdā’*), while holding that the world was without order, and that being the case, God imposed an order upon it; that is, the world was not-being and He gave it being. The sage likened chaos to non-being and order to being. Many such riddling remarks (*laḡẓ-hā*) are ascribed to Plato.

[241] Aristotle says: One thing does not come to be from another thing; if it did, it would not be necessary to have a maker. But the world is a stable thing; one must know therefore that it did not come to be out of

382. Q79:24.

383. De Gastines reads this (p. 231) as ‘masters of hermeneutics’ (*ta’wīl*), but the text (p. 214, line 12) clearly reads *ta’yīd*, and is so rendered in the Arabic version by Shatā (p. 220).

something else. The proof of this assertion, he argues, is that even today things do not become manifest out of other things. Thus, not everything which is black comes from black, nor does everything which is white or sweet come from the white and the sweet. If the sweet came from the sweet and the black from the black, what produced the black could not be the black, nor the sweet the sweet. We see all the time that contradictory things do not come to be from those very things themselves. Hence, through the wisdom of rational thought, on the evidence that existing things do become manifest out of their contraries, it follows of necessity that the first thing of all did not become manifest out of something else through its own innate power of origination. Here now is a statement close to the truth which this philosopher has enunciated. But elsewhere he says that the appearance of the world from God did not occur through His will, but rather that it came to be from His very essence (*jawhar*), for it is the very essence of the Creator to draw existing things out of non-being into being. Now this is weak reasoning. It is so because the philosopher, on the basis of his own statements, would be compelled to hold that the Creator's essence, as it was and as it will be, has continually drawn worlds forth from non-being into being, and will continue to do so. Thus, he must affirm that there have been, and will be, worlds without number. But to postulate an infinitude of this sort is an absurdity.³⁸⁴ Aristotle's students say that the sage held that the world is eternal because God's essence is eternal and the world became manifest through God's essence. Such a position is unacceptable to the sages of religion (*hukamā'-yi dīn*).

[242] Socrates held that matter is eternal and that the creation of something not from something else is not possible. He provided proof for this position as follows. We know that if creation from nothing were possible, it would be better to produce a thing from nothing than to compose it, for something originated out of nothing is present instantaneously and remains safe from the ravages of time; by contrast, that which is produced by composition comes to be slowly and is set at great risk by the passage of time. This, he argues, is an incontrovertible premise and a solid proof.

384. The text here is not very clear; the editors have set it off and capped it with a question mark. My translation is conjectural, and is more in line with that of Shatā (p. 221) than that of de Gastines (p. 232).

[243] He goes on to say that the Creator of the world is wise. When a wise person wishes to undertake some action for which two approaches exist, one of which is fast and free of danger, the other of which is long-drawn-out and fraught with great peril before it can be completed, it behoves a wise creator to perform that action in the quickest and the safest way possible, and not to choose the way which is protracted and hazardous. This too, he says, is an incontrovertible premise and a solid proof.

[244] He then says that since we see that the wise Creator makes nothing by 'origination', neither the world itself nor the animals, that He does not follow this course, but on the contrary, proceeds by way of composition, using time and orderly arrangement, the unavoidable conclusion from these premises follows, to wit, that creation *ex nihilo* is not possible.

[245] We state that the main opposition to the notion of *ibdā'* comes from the *ahl-i ta'yid* themselves, especially from the descendants of the Prophet, the Chosen One, of whom this man – I mean Abū al-Haytham himself, may God have mercy on him – had been one of their hangers-on and friends.³⁸⁵ Such being the case, the question as this fellow poses it comes across as tenuous. He asks, 'What is this thing, not from anything, though it seems a thing?' Instead, he ought to have said, 'Since the thing exists, there must be something which made it; therefore, if the thing exists, the maker must exist too, since the thing did not come to be on its own but was made.' But such is his nature that he has expressed himself thus; his goal is to prove *ibda'* and he asks whether there is anyone who can do so, given that the opinions of the sages differ so greatly on the subject.

[246] The reply of the *ahl-i ta'yid* – upon them be peace – by whom I mean the Imams of the community descended from the Prophet, the Chosen One – in affirming creation *ex nihilo* and refuting those who deny it is, first of all, to rebut the doctrine of the Dahriya, that is, the world is eternal, it is the creator of its three realms but is not itself created. They undertake this refutation of the Dahriya by such arguments as that the world is not a creator of the realms but rather, that by its very nature, it is something created. The proof that this is true is that the vegetal and animal realms do not become manifest out of the spheres, the

385. This is, of course, al-Jurjānī himself, author of the poem. The statement that the opposition to *ibda'* comes mainly from the *ahl-i ta'yid* seems to be contradictory, as shown in the following section, 246.

stars, and the elements but instead come to be out of primordial seeds and roots, out of the primordial male and female among the animals. If plants and animals came to be by the assistance of the spheres, the stars, the earth, and the water, there would have to be nothing but gardens and orchards everywhere, and everything that grows would be wheat or barley or rice, or the like. Since no tree sprouts from the earth without a seed and since no animal comes into existence other than through copulation – and these are the very sources of origination – it is evident that there is some participation on the part of the spheres and the stars with the seeds of plants and the originators among the animals. Without the effects of the 'natures', and of light, and of the rotation of the stars and the spheres, not a tree would spring from a seed and not an animal would come to be without the plants. The active participation of various agents in activities, 'natures', and locations flows together in the object of their activity through the command of a single agent, who belongs to a different category than other agents. Just so, the tools of a carpenter, the axe, the saw, the adze, the auger (*sikana*), the gimlet (*barma*), and the like, each of which has a form and function which differs from another, so too the work of the carpenter's apprentices, each of whom performs a job in the process of making something, whether it be a throne or a chair. And all of this is unified under the direction of one man, the carpenter, who belongs to a different category from his tools and who is superior to his apprentices; their very work comes about through his direction and command.

[247] We have established, say the *ahl-i ta'yid*, that the world is not itself a creator; on the contrary, the stars and the spheres are the tools, the seeds and the originating animals are the apprentices of the Universal Soul, while the 'natures' are its matter, all so that this creation may come to be. The proof that the world is made, they argue, is that in its totality it is a single substance divided into many parts, each of which has a different nature and form, and which moves in accord with the nature and the form that it has. One part of this substance – the body – which is cold and hard and heavy, tends towards the centre of the world, accepts form, mixes with water, and is disposed to what the vegetal soul makes. Another part is cold and moist, is located above the earth, accepts form, mixes with earth, and gives nourishment to the vegetal soul from the earth. With the help of fire it rises into the air; when the fire leaves it, it falls back down as it was before; it quenches thirst. The third part is the body of the air which is by nature warm and soft. It is a substance which

is unfettered (*munhall*), becoming warm and conveying light; it is the basis of noises and voices; it is midway between the ethereal fire and the universal water; it allows vapours to escape towards the edges of the world. The fourth part is the body of fire which is hot, dry, and light; it flees from the centre, it is below the air, it makes the water warm, it helps the vegetal soil to grow and draw sustenance from the water and the earth. The fifth part is the body of the spheres which have no nature of their own; their rotation occurs through orbiting around the 'natures'. It is a dark substance which does not accept illumination but rather, lets the light travel down from it; it is the mount (*markab*) of the stars which itself turns in the orbit of the 'natures' and, in dragging the stars with it, causes them to turn in the elements' orbit in one even and uninterrupted course. The sixth part is the body of the stars which are located in diverse positions, all have different natures, with 'natures', colours, and motions that are distinct. Some of these are fixed [stars], the movement of which is the movement of the spheres; others amongst them move counter to the movement of the sphere, as the sages know. Our objective in this discussion is to avoid prolonging this book by [going into] such details as the wandering stars (*kawākib-i sayyārah*) which go from west to east, opposite to the motion of the spheres.

[248] Furthermore, we say that everyone who sees that a single substance can be configured in different forms and in each of the parts of that substance, in accord with the form which it has – one may observe a function which is seen to be distinct from that of other parts – comes to comprehend that someone has intentionally given that substance its forms; it has not become thus through its own nature. As an example of this, we mention the substance of iron. It appears now as a sword, an instrument of war, now as an axe (*tabar*), a tool for chopping wood, now as a needle, a tool for sewing, and now as a shovel, a tool for digging. Everyone knows that this substance does not take on these various forms, each one of which is intended in shape and form for a different function, by itself. On the contrary, an agent has made iron into these forms for his own purpose, and that agent is man.

[249] Now, since we have shown that corporeal substance admits various shapes and forms, and that every form, in that part of the body where it is found, has a different movement, function, and position, we know that a creator has given these shapes and forms to that single substance and, moreover, that this single substance, as evidenced by the shapes and forms within it, is something created.

[250] In rebuttal of the prattling literalists (*hashwiyān*) who state that the form of the world existed from eternity in God's nature before God created the world, they (i.e., the *ahl-i ta'yīd*) argue that if there had been a very long interval during which God the Exalted knew that He would create the world, and this is other than that moment in which He did create the world, it would follow necessarily from this precept that God knows that He will create the world, then that interval passes and at last comes to its term, until the moment arrives when God knows that at that moment He will create the world. Since this span has a starting point for God, the time-between – in the view of these folk – is a span which God lives through. But since the interval has a beginning for God, God is contingent, not eternal.³⁸⁶ This is unbelief, not *tawhīd*.

[251] If, as these literalists claim, the Qur'ān is eternal and God is one, then the Qur'ān and God make two, not one. Since the Qur'ān is made up of these distinct verses which are recited and read, then some part of God the Exalted resides in the sacred pages. If God is not present in those pages, then the rulings made necessary by those words which taken together we call 'Qur'ān' are false, and all Muslims are unbelievers, since they do not enact the precepts enunciated in God's Book; as God says, *'Those who do not judge according to what God has revealed are unbelievers.'*³⁸⁷ And again: *'No new revelation comes to them from the Merciful but they turn away from it.'*³⁸⁸ And so, the pronouncements of the literalists are mendacious and vain.

[252] Aḥmad Yahyā b. Rāwandī has made a subtle point against these clueless literalists.³⁸⁹ This point consists in asking the literalists why they claim that anyone who holds that the world is uncreated is an unbeliever. If they reply that anyone who says that the world is uncreated is an unbeliever, then we ask them further whether God knows a hundred other universes like this one or not. If they reply that He does not, they would

386. In other words, by this reasoning God becomes subject to time, to that future moment at which He knows that He will create the world.

387. Q5:44.

388. Q26:5.

389. This is Abū al-Husayn Aḥmad b. Yahyā b. Ishāq al-Rāwandī (d. 245/859 or 250/864 or 298/910), a Mu'tazilite theologian who was accused of heresy and expelled, later becoming a fierce opponent of the Mu'tazilites; his works survive only in fragments. See GAS, vol. 1, pp. 620–621; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 4, pp. 295ff.

be calling God ignorant; since they do not dare to call God ignorant in such a matter, they say that God knows one hundred thousand universes like this, and maybe even more. Then we ask them whether those worlds are identical to this one without any difference. If they reply, 'They certainly are', then we ask, 'Does God also know that this world is like those numerous worlds which He knows are not yet created?' If they reply, 'He does know', then we say to these numbskulls, 'Since you assert that God knows one hundred thousand worlds that are not created which are similar to this world, then it is established that this world too is uncreated. Since you claim that He knows that this world is similar to those uncreated worlds, this world too by your own assertion must also be uncreated. Why then do you call someone who believes one world to be uncreated an unbeliever, but you do not call yourselves unbelievers, though you claim that there are a hundred thousand uncreated worlds?'

[253] The refutation of a group which denies the invention (*ikhtirā'*) of particular individual beings – which is the source of the 'kingdoms' (*mawālīd*) – and hold that 'invention' and 'birth' go together, is effected by those who argue that composition (*tarkīb*) and birth in the 'kingdoms' occur after the invention of species in the primary originating individuals (*ashkhāṣ-i awwalī-yi ibdā'ī*). We have said that the forms which the primary originating individuals take remain on the same basis, since origination admits no alteration (*ibdā' ra taghayyur nīst*). The proof that this position is correct is that if prior to generation there were not an animal couple which had been 'invented', without being born, it would follow necessarily that prior to any human there would have to be another human, with no one before him whom he would follow, for if there were one before him, there would be no first man at all, and so on ad infinitum, on this side, and the man who exists today would not have come to be.

[254] An example of this is as follows. If the existence of a child is linked to the existence of a hundred forefathers before him, a long time is needed before this child comes to exist. If his existence is linked with the existence of a thousand forefathers, that child takes even longer to come to be. Now, if his existence is linked with that of an infinite number of forefathers, that child will never come to be. But since the child exists here and now, we know that there was not an infinite number of births before him; if there had been, he would not be here. Since the number of the child's ancestors is not infinite, his first ancestor was a 'not-born' (*nāzādā'-ī*) and necessarily so, for generation is linked with him; the

one not born from whom others are begotten is 'invented' in discrete individuals, couple by couple, seed by seed.

[255] The rebuttal of him (i.e., al-Rāzī) who says that 'the Universal Soul was led astray by prime matter and forgot its own proper world and that philosophers remind human beings that the soul's world is not this world until they turn away from matter and slip free of its bonds' is as follows.³⁹⁰ It is the partial souls, the ignorant amongst mankind, who have been seduced by matter. The 'philosophers' who summon them to remembrance of their true world are the prophets, as God says through Muḥammad, His Chosen One, '*People! God's promise is true, so do not let the present life deceive you. Do not let the Deceiver deceive you about God.*'³⁹¹

[256] The obedience of people to the prophets, bearing the yoke which they – upon them be peace – place on the necks of believers through the words of God which they convey, the necessary obligation of the Law which they impose on humans through God's command, these bear witness to the prophets – upon them be peace – and stand as the reasons for their guidance of people from the first to the last. This is not the word of the philosophers who have been the least known and the most slighted of groups to mankind. With regard to affirmation of *ibdāʿ*, if they say, 'We accept the view of those who hold that matter is eternal and is composed of indivisible and scattered parts', we might ask of the [philosophers]: Those parts, all scattered and lightless and denatured – how did God assemble them, how did He set those isolate and individual natures within a totality, how then, and from whence, did He bring forth such effulgence? And they would have to concede that these parts were assembled by His command, and that He placed those varied aspects – heat and cold, dryness, and moistness – within them, taking them neither from another place nor from another thing. All this would amount to an admission of creation out of nothing (*ibdāʿ*) on their parts.

[257] And what affirmation of creation out of nothing could be more evident than to have to acknowledge that these scattered components, lacking soul or knowledge, were assembled and received form and assumed natures and took their place in an orderly arrangement, without

390. See Rāzī, *Rasā'il falsafiyya*, p. 308; also, Goodman, 'Rāzī's Myth of the Fall of the Soul', p. 25.

391. Q35:5, tr. Abdel Haleem.

becoming entangled one with another? And whatever this person (the philosopher) wants of them comes to be without any volition of theirs. The propensity of the substance of matter to accept those varied natures, the establishment of the parts of the body in those natural forms in their locations in accord with order, the emergence of plants and animals out of those natures through the mediation of the vegetal and sensory souls, all that attests that this ferment – I mean this matter – is the fashioner of this made thing (*maṣnū'*) which it has produced by *ibdā'*, because its acceptance of these meanings realises the purpose of its creator. This is a proof of creation *ex nihilo* on the evidence of those created things which have been originated (*mubda'āt az makhluqāt*). Because of these proofs the rational soul, reinforced by the intellect, grasps that the things which exist in the world are created beings. This is why we say that this is an affirmation of creation *ex nihilo* by the evidence of things originated among created things. We shall now offer a detailed explanation and then pass on from this commentary to yet another.

[258] We say that this body – configured, articulated, and mobile, which is constrained and compelled – continually proclaims that someone has made it in this shape, for nothing can configure itself. We call the world constrained and compelled since we see that the earth is made of many parts, stacked up one upon another from the centre of the earth to the sphere of the ether, and that every part which is higher descends to the place of a lower as soon as it finds a way. All the parts are constrained since none can go lower than where it is on its own. Water stays on the surface of the earth unless it finds some way to sink down lower towards the centre of the earth. Do not you see that wherever there is an opening it is flung down into it? Then too, water is constrained by earth to remain on the surface of the ground; and all the parts of the earth are constrained, one by another, by this central point which is the centre of the world in the very bowels of the earth. Air is constrained to remain above the water and cannot sink into it. Do not you see that when we toss a stone into the water, the water provides a path for the stone so that it passes through it even while it blocks the air? Fire too is constrained to remain above air; if it discovers a way it descends until that same air sends it back to the edges of the world. Just as we observe the compelled descent of a lightning flash, so too is fire by its very nature compelled to rise from the earth towards the edges of the world. Or the huge sea, all of whose parts consist of waters heaped up one upon another, with every part striving to surmount that part which is below it. Hence, all parts

of water are compelled too, one by another. The parts of the air as well, from the surface of the water to the level of the ether, are compelled one by the other and all of them strive to hover above the water.

And so we have established that this Universal Body, in the form in which it exists, is compelled in its totality. But for whatever is compelled there must exist a compeller. And he who compelled the world is he who created it.

[259] Furthermore, since we claim that the world's Creator forcibly configured this substance, hurling the components of the various species of bodies one upon the other such that He heaped up parts of earth, water, and air, one upon the other, and then placed the universal species of body upon one another, setting water on earth, air on water, fire on air, and then the spheres, one upon the other, did He perform this action out of his very nature or did He perform it by decree? If we say that He acted out of his very nature, we imply that He is a body; but since God is not a body, we have to say that He exerted this compulsion on these compelled entities by His commandment. Hence we call this command 'creation out of nothing' (*ibdā'*). Nothing could be more marvellous (*badi'tar*) than this act.³⁹² It follows that substance, lacking knowledge or volition, becomes what it is at someone's command.

[260] Then, too, since we see that in the world each individual entity, whether plant or animal or heavenly body, both star and sphere, is at work, we know that they perform their labours at the Command of the world's Creator. It is obvious then that the Command was first to appear. Now let us consider what was the first thing to be manifest out of

392. *Va-badi'tar az inkari nabāshad*. The Arabic word *badi'* has connotations of 'novel, ingenious, original' and was used to designate a new style of poetry in Arabic, as well as a branch of rhetoric ('ilm al-badi'). The formulation here is strangely reminiscent of the later statement by al-Ghazālī, *Laysa fi'l-imkān abda' mim mā kan* ('There is not in possibility anything more wonderful than what is'), which I have analysed extensively in my *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*; on the word *badi'*, see p. 75, note 137. Here, of course, NKh is playing on the term *ibdā'* in its relative form. Louis Massignon may have had something like NKh's formulation in mind when he translated al-Ghazālī's celebrated sentence as 'Rien de plus ne se trouve dans le possible que dans l'existentialisé', i.e., 'Nothing more creatable *ex nihilo* remains in possibility.' See his *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansūr Hallāj* (2nd edn, Paris, 1975), vol. 3, p. 83, note 5.

that Command. We peer into the creation and we see that particular constructions (*ṣanʿ-hā*) arise from particular souls, whether vegetal or animal. Thus, on the basis of this proof, we see that prior to this thing-created (*maṣnūʿ*, i.e., the world), there was the Soul, but prior to the Soul – which is the origin of the created thing – was there something or not? We answer that living creatures with souls are numerous, but they are not able to avail themselves of this faculty of deduction (*istidlāl*) which we use. Then we stop to consider what this thing is which we possess and which the other animals do not, by the power of which we are able to make deductions, and we discover that that [faculty] is such that the nobility of the soul lies within it. It is the Intellect.

[261] Hence, we know that from this Command, the name of which is *ibdāʿ*, the Intellect appears first of all, then the Soul, then this substance of action over which the Soul has dominion. When we consider this created thing, the world, we observe the traces of order and measure and wisdom. We know that this is something which Soul has made with the assistance of Intellect. Next we consider whether something existed prior to Intellect out of this Command, which we have established of necessity. We discover the trace of nothing within ourselves that is nobler than it. And so we say that out of the Command of the Creator – glory be to Him – first Intellect came to be, then Soul came to be out of the Command, with the Intellect acting as intermediary. Intellect's manifestations (*maẓāhirāt-i ʿaql*) to Soul, as well as its ennoblement of it, are our evidence that the Soul is like the child of the Intellect, and its tablet (*lawḥ*) on which the Intellect can display its own beauty to the Soul. The proof that the Soul stands in the position of a tablet is that it is a substance whose nature is open to form (*ṣuri*).³⁹³ and there is no place for forms other than in the Soul: a tablet is something which offers a place to form.

[262] We have shown that Soul is at the rank of the tablet. Since the Soul has the rank of the tablet, the Intellect has the rank of the pen. The pen provides information to the tablet, in the same way that the Intellect informs the Soul. The prattling literalists in the community aver that the 'pen' is ruby while the 'tablet' is emerald.³⁹⁴ But these are the statements of sages who speak in parables. The ruby is the noblest of the gems; the

393. Literally, 'formal' but in the sense of susceptible to form; de Gastines (p. 245) translates it as 'épiphanique', which is misleading.

394. Cf. Q96:4 and 35:22.

emerald is below it. So, too, the pen is superior to the tablet; the tablet is below it. For this reason the Prophet of God has called Universal Intellect 'God's pen' (*qalam-i khudāy*), for everything that is in the mind of the writer comes first to the pen, then from the pen it goes to the tablet: without the tablet nothing would be revealed. And this world itself is in the likeness of a book written by God the Exalted. Just as Universal Intellect stands in relation to Universal Soul in the same way as the pen to the tablet, and just as intelligible forms become manifest within the Soul from the Intellect, so too the Universal Soul is the pen with respect to matter: corporeal forms become manifest in its substance through the pen of the Universal Soul. This is analogous to God's calligraphy on this universal tablet which is the body's essence, through thousands of different forms and divine scripts on this bodily tablet which is the world, all of it green. Hence, the literalists say that the '*preserved tablet*' is emerald-green, and Mt. Sinai (*Tūr*) is this universal body which is like a mountain; or rather, it is the universal mountain itself. '*A scripture inscribed*' represents those forms and shapes traced upon this body, '*unrolled parchment*' (*raqq-i manshūr*) is the air in which this writing gleams; '*the much-visited house*' (*bayt al-ma'mūr*) is this world, a cupola without a crack, like a house which is habitable and without any chink or breach, '*the raised canopy*', the heavens on high, '*the ocean ever-filled*', that immense and endless space which in the mind extends beyond the dome of the spheres' broad and infinite expanse.³⁹⁵ Certain philosophers call this 'breadth without length' (*araḍ bī ṭūl*) and they say that this is the Paradise which God has described as broad, as in this verse, '*... a garden as broad as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who fear God*'.³⁹⁶ And the meaning of the words of God the Exalted are in the explication which we have made, to wit, '*By the mountain, by a scripture inscribed, in unrolled parchment, by the much-visited house, by the raised canopy, by the ocean ever filled*'.³⁹⁷

[263] Just as the Universal Intellect and the Universal Soul are the pen and the tablet of God, in the world of religion the Prophet is also God's pen, who has written on this page of the body, as we see. And the Noble Qur'ān too is the Book of God written by this pen, which is the Prophet, on this tablet, which is his Legatee. As this first book of all (i.e., the

395. These are all phrases taken from the first six verses of Q:52.

396. Q3:133.

397. Q52:1-6, tr. Abdel Haleem.

world) cannot become known to us except through this tablet, so too the Qur'ān cannot become known to us except through the Legatee. The rational evidence that the creation of the world in its corporeal essence is the first of God's books, and the Qur'ān is the second, is God's own statement, when He says in this verse, '*Alif. Lām. Mīm. That is the book in which there is no doubt, a guidance to the God-fearing.*'³⁹⁸ He says *alif*, that is, length; He says *lām*, that is, breadth; and He says *mīm*, that is, depth. This is an allusion to the world which has length, breadth, and depth.

[264] Then He says that in that Book there is no doubt; in other words, it is obvious that it has been made by God; it is the guide of men who are pure towards the truth. If by 'that book' God had meant the Qur'ān, He would have said 'this book', since this verse stands at the very beginning of the Book.³⁹⁹ Since He does say 'that book', and not 'this book', this indication is proof to anyone with intelligence that God is not referring to the Qur'ān here but rather, is referring to the creation itself.

[265] Thus, that book which is to be seen – I mean, the creation itself – and this book which is to be heard – I mean the Noble Qur'ān – are both God's writings, written by two pens on two tablets, with man in view, who has a share in them through his intelligence. Because man, the ultimate offspring of all creation, has a share in intelligence, and because God's Command has come down to him, we know necessarily that the starting-point of creation was the Command, and that from that Command, first of all, Intellect came into existence; that Command was creation *ex nihilo* (*ibdā'*) alone, the root source of all existing things. [And man is like a tree the fruits of which are the command ... We know that his seed has been the command ...]⁴⁰⁰

398. Q2:1–2.

399. The Arabic of Q2:2 reads *dhalika al kitabu* ('that book ...'), not *hādha al-kitābu* ('this book ...').

400. The text here is not intelligible; these last phrases are omitted by de Gastines (p. 247).

On the Emergence of the Species from the Individual

*Is it true that God created a single man and then,
Because he was sad, from his body made a mate?
And then, from these two, that He created a progeny –
Children, a profusion of grandchildren, an innumerable tribe?
If you deny this, the sūrat al-Nisā' is the evidence
That He created a one and out of this, thousands upon thousands.
If you agree, how is it that the individual came first
And then the species? Put that in your pipe and smoke it!
First comes genus, then species, and then the individual;
That is the way of philosophy, indisputably and incontestably.*

(Jurjānī, verses 45–49)

[266] In these five verses there are two questions. One is to ask whether it is correct to say that God created one man first of all and then brought forth a mate from him, and from these two, numerous children and grandchildren came forth and multiplied. If you say that it is not so, *surat al-Nisā'* stands as proof against you, for there God says, '*O people, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and who created its mate from it and from the two of them spread many men and women.*'⁴⁰¹

[267] The second question is this: If you admit that such was the case, and God first created an individual from whom all humankind came forth, then you must be saying that the individual came before the species. But logicians know that the genus comes first, then the species, and only then the individual. Thus, when we say 'animal', all the four-footed herbivores, all the carnivorous beasts of prey, all the birds and the reptiles, as well as all of humankind, are evoked. Then comes the species,

401. Q4:1.

and after the species the individuals, as when we say, 'The man so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so.' Both these questions are of the same order. That is to say, if you deny that there is at first a single being, you also deny what God has said; but if you agree, you set the individual before the species, and such is counter to the philosophers' position.

[268] The response of the sages to this question – namely, was there at the very beginning a single couple or more? – is to say that from the first the originating human being was one couple [in himself] and that it is right to state that he was prior to the first couple. In any case, the philosophers who affirm the creation of the world also affirm the creation of the first human being *ex nihilo* and without birth. But as to the philosophical reply to the question, 'How can it be that the individual precedes the species?', we say that genus and species are cognoscible, not sensorial, entities (*ma'qūl and na mahsūs*). The indication falls upon the individual, not upon either the species or the genus. The first thing to be ascertained about any thing is its sheer existence (*halliyat*), and so we ask, 'Does it exist?' To the reply, 'It does exist', we then ask, 'What is it?' This question concerns the genus of a thing. Then when it is said, 'It is an animal', we do not know from this answer what sort of animal it may be, and yet we do know that it is not a mineral or a plant. Then if we ask, 'Which animal is it?', this question is about the specific difference (*faṣl*) by which one species is distinguished from another. So that when we ask, 'Which animal?' and the answer is, 'One that speaks', the answer applies to both the human being and the angel. But if we ask, 'Which speaking animal?', this question bears on the specific particularity of humankind, and so if the answer is, 'Speaking and mortal', then we know that it is a human being. After this, the question may be 'Who is this?'; in other words, it is a question about an individual, and the answer is, 'It is so-and-so or so-and-so', and we know who this man is.

[269] Whoever seeks out the truths of logic knows that the species is sustained by the individual, the species sustains the genus, despite the fact that the individual is within the species and the species within the genus. In the same way, the whole depends upon its parts, even if the parts are contained within the whole. Do you not see that if the part were not, the whole would not exist, and if the whole were not, the part would not exist? If there were no number one, there would be no number five, and yet, if there were no five, there would still be one. If somebody sees a cow, for example, he cannot deny its existence by saying, 'This particular cow does not exist, for we must first see the species cow, and not individual cows.'

But this would be absurd. A person makes such an incoherent remark because he's ignorant or because he wants to put the dim-witted, as well as the newcomers to this art, to the test⁴⁰² with such questions.

[270] The response of the *ahl-i ta'yid* – upon them be peace – to this question – namely, is it right to say that God created a single man at first and then created his mate out of him and that then many men and women came to be from those two? – is to say that reason dictates that there must have been one; that is the truth beyond any doubt. The rational proof that this view is correct is that today there is a great multitude of people; the intellect avers of necessity that one is the leaven of many, that many begins with two and that out of two a unity emerges, prior to which there is a one not from some other thing, the way two comes from one or three from two. From this primary one, multiplicity comes to be. Since human beings are multitudinous they are countable; what is countable comes under number; this particular property, which we have affirmed, pertains inescapably to number, namely, that the many emerge from the one through the mediation of the two. This stands as primordial testimony for the intellect that the starting-point of this multitude of men is a single man, and that necessarily. And his mate came out of him in the same way that two comes out of one, as we see that from a single seed, itself a sort of couple, many thousands of seeds come into existence through the propagation of plants. If there had not been that single seed, which is a couple, tightly bound together at the very beginning, those many seeds would not have come to be whatsoever.

[271] As for those who hold that his mate came from him, that is, came from the man, just as the Prophet, the Chosen One, at Mecca said to his own Legatee, 'He comes from me and I come from him' in the Tradition "Ali is from me and I am from him", everyone knows that they – peace be upon them – were two persons who did not emerge one out of the other; nevertheless, since both were among the *ahl-i ta'yid*, they did issue from one another. For those who reason there is something to be gained from God's statement, 'I created a mate for Adam out of him', in that they know that the Legatee of the Prophet must come from his lineage, and not from some other.

402. Persian *beyāzmāyad* (here following Shatā who renders it as *yukhtabir*, p. 336).

[272] But returning to our topic, we declare that the multitude of human beings derives from this original couple which constituted the genus with respect to the species of humans – the Indian species, the Turkish species, the Ethiopian species, the Jewish species – in just the same way as the many thousands of ‘Alids throughout the world also derive from a single man whose wife also came from him. I mean ‘Alī and Fāṭima. If over the course of some four hundred years, several thousand men and women came to be from these two individuals such that there is no city in the east or the west – nay, not even a village – in which there is no ‘Alid – and in fact there are many thousands in the big cities – how could it not be right to say that this multitude came to be from a single couple who were the first couple of all? So if anyone should oppose what we have said, that the many came forth from the one, he would be claiming that it is wrong to say that the many come from the one, and this is false. Every one which exists in a tabulated multitude stands as evidence that this multitude has been compounded out of one. All people have come into being out of one person whose mate came to be out of him.

[273] We can give an example of the emergence of species from a single individual in such a way as to expel this doubt from weaker minds. We say that there is no doubt that the ‘Alid genus comes from ‘Alī – upon him be peace – and he is a single individual; his offspring, the ‘Alids, today constitute many species. One derives from Ḥasan, another from Ḥusayn; there are the ‘Aqīlī, the Zaydī, the Bakarī, and so forth. We know that the branch of Ḥasan derives from the individual Ḥasan who was a single person, and the branch of Ḥusayn comes from Ḥusayn, also a single individual, and all the other species, every one of them, derive as well from a single individual.⁴⁰³ In accord with the fallacy (*mughālata*)⁴⁰⁴ which Abū Haytham (i.e., Juriānī) has mentioned, it becomes necessary that there be first of all thousands of ‘Alids in Ḥasan’s branch to make up

403. For a parallel example of genus as ‘family’, cf. Porphyry, *Isagoge* (tr. Warren), pp. 28–29: ‘In this sense the Heraclids are said to be a family [*genos*] because of the relationship of descent from one man, Heracles. The many people related to each other because of this kingship deriving from Heracles are called the family of the Heraclids since they as a family are separate from other families.’ The example is also to be found in Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6:1.3., ed. F. Bréhier (Paris, 1963–1967), 6:61.

404. For this logical fallacy, cf. al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Juriānī, *al-Ta’rīfāt*, pp. 198–199.

the species and only after that would there be Hasan, a single individual. This is not the discourse of a thoughtful man.

[274] We have made it clear that species come from the individual, not the individual from the species. If anyone wonders how it could be that God might bring into being all people, eating, walking, speaking, out of inert natures, and without recourse to birth, well, this reflection of his arises unguided by a mind capable of discerning analogies. The intellect necessarily affirms that this world is a thing created, that this creation has occurred at the command of somebody in order that this divisible, multiple substance which is the body receive the configuration which it has with all its various forms, natures, and movements, some of which we have mentioned earlier. The intellect acknowledges that this earth with its heaviness and vast extent, its great mountains and oceans, its innumerable plants and animals, is set without hindrance in the midst of the thin and empty air; and that the ether, that fiery ball, encircles the air; and that the spheres, aligned one with another, all turn in one direction; and that the stars, moving counter to the motion of the spheres, move from the west to the east; and that the obedience of this immense and configured body is at the command of Him who constructed it. The intellect attests that such is indeed the case, even though it absolutely does not know 'the why' of all this, because He who made all this is higher than human intelligence. The intellect is a trace from Him, but it is incapable of knowing Him who made the trace. It is the same with writing which is the trace of a writer: the writing does not know how the writer produced it or who the writer himself may be.

[275] Hence, anyone who uses his mind knows that this huge world is as it is by the command of a creator. How could it be a source of wonder to know that He who accomplished this great creation without any tool also created that first individual of all, that microcosm, and did so as well by his decree? If that which we consider the 'great man' – by which I mean the world – necessarily came to be, so too did man come to be necessarily, as God says, *'The creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of humans and yet, most of them do not know this.'*⁴⁰⁵ That is, most people do not reflect that since the creation of the world occurred through His command, the creation of humankind also came about that way.

405. Q40:57.

[276] The intelligent man is someone who, when he sees something often which is unknown to him, does not consider it known; and he does not connect that with some other thing because he has not seen it and has forgotten what was previously not known. The intelligence asserts that in the kernel of the date or the apple seed and the like, there is an active substance which, though it has no stomach (*shikam*) nor belly (*mi'da*) nor teeth, consumes earth and water and out of them makes wood, leaves, branches, thorns, and fibres (*layf*) and over many years, brings forth tasty dates, without any understanding at all that the action comes from that thing which is inside the kernel [of the date]. These verses, composed by the author of this book, are an expression of this notion:⁴⁰⁶

What is it in the grain of wheat that so acts
 With soil and dung in a way no one could imagine?
 How is it that without head or teeth, gullet or paunch,
 It can suck up earth which water has moistened (*biyāgharad*)?
 Whoever does not see this marvel of creation and of might
 Must be deemed blind by the man who does see.
 The seed-grains are servants (*pīshkārānand*) for mankind;
 Each one has a job and each one has a function as well.
 If the wise man perceives a creator in each grain,
 He still does not consider or imagine it his God.
 If he remains perplexed (*dar mānād*) in discovering those 'servants',
 He does not grow obstinate or gnash his teeth at what's above his
 intelligence.
 How could anyone thank God enough, to whom a servant has been
 given
 Who knows how to make the date palm spring up from the earth?
 For you, O seeing heart, this servant is in the kernel of the date
 And every year it drops down dates upon your head!
 Everyone who has received this bounty from his God (*kardgār*)
 Should plant the seed grain of thankfulness⁴⁰⁷ in both his two eyes.

406. These are verses 10–18 of the *qasida*, which begins *Kasī kas raz-i īn dawlab-i pīruza khabar darad*, in the *Diwān*, pp. 227–228 (metre = *Hazaj mosamman salem*; cf. F. Thiesen, *A Manual of Classical Persian Prosody*, p. 236).

407. A variant reading has 'love' (*mīhr*) instead of 'thankfulness'. Cf. *Diwān*, p. 228.

[277] The various 'creators', whether vegetal or animal, in the seeds, eggs, and sperm, do not overstep (*nāgadashtan*) that specific act of creation for which they have been given the power; that is, the apple seed has no fruit other than the apple, the sesame seed none other than the sesame, and the ox nothing other than oxen. The diligence (*mulāzamat*) of these artisans in these well-defined acts of creation is a proof to us that a creator, who is the Creator of all, has appointed each one of these particular artisans to the kind of creation which properly proceeds from it. Since we are unable to grasp the way in which the particular 'artisan' enacts its creation, and necessarily so, and must admit that this creation emerges from a substance which is inside the seed, why would we go further than this? Because we see it before us constantly, we believe that we know it. And we say, how did the Creator of all make mankind from the [different] 'natures' without generation? Indeed, the possessors of both wisdoms agree that the existence of the original couple in the animal realm and the existence of the originating seeds in the vegetal realm, together with the whole world's existence, occurred at a stroke without any before or after whatsoever. The original father and mother, who are the human species, and who came to be created, not born, are to be affirmed, and so it is fitting to affirm the spiritual father as the *nāṭiq* and the spiritual mother as the *asās* without any instruction (*ta'lim*).⁴⁰⁸ The origination within the bodies of the species is analogous to the divine assistance (*ta'yīd*) in each of the individuals. The divine assistance without any prior precedence (*taqdīm*) is analogous to creation out of nothing without engendering (*tawlīd*). It is necessary to make these allusions clear so that doubt may be removed.

[278] To the question, 'How can it be that the individual precedes the species, given that in logic genus comes first, then species, and then the individual?', we reply – even though we have previously explained that this statement is untrue, indeed is fallacious – that whoever has not grasped the categories of language thinks when he hears the name for a thing that that name has the same meaning for all such things. Hence, the terms *qadīm* (eternal) and *muḥdath* (temporal) are known to the mass of people; someone who knows that *qadīm* is that which comes

408. In Ismaili terminology, the *nāṭiq* is a 'speaking' or law enunciating prophet and the *asās* is his 'foundation' or successor who interprets the inner meaning of the revealed message. See Dattary, *The Isma'īlis*, pp. 208–209; Stern, *Studies*, pp. 30–32, 34–40.

at a time before *muḥdath* fancies that everything to which the term 'before' applies precedes in time all that to which the term 'after' applies; and yet, that is not so. On the contrary, one must know that the 'before' and the 'after' are of four types, of which only one is temporal while the other three are not. Rather, in another aspect, one thing is prior to another thing and one thing is after another thing.⁴⁰⁹ As for that which is prior in time, it is like the fact that the prophethood of Jesus came before that of Muḥammad or the fact that the Prophet's departure from Mecca was before that of his Legatee – upon him be peace – from Mecca to Kufa. The second of these antecedences is essential, not temporal, like the antecedence of one over two, or indeed, that of animal over man. This does not depend upon time but upon essence. In other words, everything which is in the animal is in man, but in man there is also something else which is not in the animal. A third precedence pertains to rank (*martabat*) like the precedence of letters over words or books, or like the precedence of a spokesman (*sokhangū*) of a tribe over his fellows. The fourth lies in pre-eminence (*sharaf*), such as the pre-eminence of a sage and his precedence over a carpenter or the precedence of a leader over his fellow citizens. Priority in time applies to things in nature; priority in essence to things of intellect, such as the intelligible concepts of genus and species themselves. Thus, it is important to know that the individual stands in relation to the species as the part stands to the whole, and the species stands to the individual in the same relation as the whole to its parts; that the existence of the whole is due to the parts; that the part may exist without the whole, but the whole without the part cannot exist in any way. The species exists because of the multiplicity of individuals, but the existence of the individual is not due to the existence of the species. When we see an individual, we are unable to deny his existence and claim that this individual does not exist on the grounds that the forms of such individuals are numerous. To the contrary, that form in its very essence exists apart from multiplicity, whereas the species is nothing without a multiplicity of individuals. We have thus verified that the precedence of species over individual and of genus over species is not temporal – so that it might be said that the species was first and then the individual – but rather, is essential. It is through the individual that the species exists. Nevertheless, the term 'species' collects the individuals together, not in such a way as that the species might exist apart

409. This sentence is omitted by de Gastines (p. 257).

from individuals. For example, if someone says 'tree', that word collects together all the branches, the leaves, the roots, and the fruits of the tree; and yet, the tree without branches and leaves and fruit does not come first, with branches and leaves, roots and fruits appearing later. Quite the opposite: first are the roots and then a single branch appears, a shoot puts forth, then grows and rises on the branch, roots and leaves appear until it is whole and entire, and then it can be called a 'tree'. This name comprises the tree's branches, roots, and fruits. And this is what we set out to explain.

On Intellect and Knowledge⁴¹⁰

*There is, as in chess, one question which has arisen;
Everyone seeks a solution for it.*

*Namely, whether intellect or knowledge is superior, which takes
precedence?*

What donkey-loads of lavish nonsense have I heard on these two!

How can anyone who has not learned have knowledge?

No carpenter can do his job without a tool in his hand.

No one who has not gained humility through instruction (ta'lim)

Can pass beyond to the glories of knowledge.

Because they do not know intellect's definition – and knowledge,

What's that? – they make asinine pronouncements all unblushingly.

They draw analogies between the Creator's knowledge and their own;

Ineluctably they stray without hope from the right path.

(Jurjānī, verses 50–55)

[279] This question is about the distinction between intelligence and knowledge: which of the two is superior to the other? According to what he (Jurjānī) says, no one who has not endured the ignominy of instruction and training has discovered the real glory of knowledge; in other words, knowledge is something that has to be acquired. But it is a fault for someone to draw a comparison between his own knowledge and that of the Creator, just so that it might not be said to him that because you claim that knowledge is something to be acquired, you must then say either that God is not knowing or that He has acquired His knowledge. But he draws a good result for himself out of this vile opinion (*tahmat*). These six verses pertain to a single question which we shall now elucidate.

410. Again, there is an alternative English translation of this chapter by Peerwani in *Anthology*, vol. 2, pp. 323–326.

[280] The response of the philosophers to this question is as follows. There are two ways of perception. One is to perceive something in its essence; the other is to perceive it by something other than its essence. That which is perceived in its essence is an object of sense (*maḥsūs*). Thus, something visible is perceived by the sight; something audible is perceived by the hearing; a thing with odour is perceived by the sense of smell; something to be tasted by the sense of taste; and something palpable by the sense of touch. That which is perceived by something other than its essence is not an object of sense; it is, rather, an object of intellect (*ma'qūl*). The soul's essence is not perceptible through the senses; this is because it is apprehended by its actions, such as setting the body in motion in various ways, e.g., through putting words in motion, or speaking, or by walking, or by setting to work, and so forth. Because its essence is not to be perceived through its inmost nature (*dhāt*) but rather, through its actions as manifested through the body, we call this essence an object of knowledge (*ma'lum*), a cognoscible thing. They say further that the soul can be known only through the intellect, which is superior to it, for a thing cannot be grasped except by something higher than itself. Do you not see that the soul's existence cannot be proved except by those endowed with high intelligence (*'uqalā*), since it is an active substance (*jawhari-vi fā'il*), unmixed (*niyāmizande*), and everlasting? It is through this very knowledge that the intelligent are kept safe from the soul's annihilation. For this reason the ignorant dread death since for them, after the death of the body, which is the separation of the soul from the body, existence ceases. The [philosophers] also say that since it is true that the soul is an object of knowledge and of intellect, but not an object of sense, and since we can know it by means of intellect, we know that knowledge is the intellect's activity, that [knowledge] is the effect (*athar*) of the intellect, and therefore, that the intellect is superior to its effect.

[281] Regarding God's knowledge and will, Plato said that we do not ascribe will or lack of will to the Prime Mover; this is because it is He who causes will to emerge within the soul. It would not be right to say that God brings forth will by means of yet another will; if such were the case, there would have to be still another will for that first will which brought it forth, and then there would be wills ad infinitum and no final will would appear. Since the will belongs to the soul, and the soul is something knowable, it cannot be right that will, which belongs to the soul, be attributed to the Originator of the soul.

[282] He goes on to say that we do not ascribe that which God does as creator to knowledge. This is because God first conceptualised it, then He made it: Intellect is something intelligible for Him (*'aql ma'qul-i ūst*), while our knowledge all comes from that Intellect. Hence, it is not right to say that God made knowledge by means of knowledge; that is an absurdity. God's knowledge creates things; it is not itself created by [some other] knowledge. Since we have a share in knowledge and our knowledge comes from the Intellect, we come to know that Intellect has been created by Him. These are the views of Plato on the will and knowledge of the Creator as well as on the Intellect.

[283] The Iranian philosopher⁴¹¹ makes a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: *ma'rifat* and *'ilm*. He says that *ma'rifat* is that sort which is in a man from infancy to adulthood in a consistent way; it is his knowledge of thirst, hunger, and fear of what he does not know; it is his knowledge of forms and colours and other *sensibilia*; it is his knowledge of pain and other things which man knows by their natures, the names of which he must learn from others. I mean that he does not know that of this thing which is 'paper' it is said that it is 'white', and that these 'lines' which are written upon it are called 'black', and so forth. Most animals in creation as a whole share in this sort of knowledge with man.

[284] He adds that all that which man acquires out of his own essence by means of thought, such as the arts and crafts, or by means of divine inspiration and revelation, or through the instruction of others, as a result of his own volition or under obligation – all of that is termed *'ilm* and comprises language, the arts, and philosophy. Men differ, he says, in their knowledge and skills. And so he says that knowledge (*ma'rifat*) is the basis of intelligence, the mind (*dhihn*) is the basis of memory, and possibility is the basis of capability (*imkān bunyād-i qudrat*).

[285] The *ahl-i ta'yīd* – upon them be peace – respond to this distinction between intellect and knowledge by saying that the definition of knowledge (*'ilm*) is a simple conception (*taṣawwur*) of a thing just as that thing is; the definition of a knowing person (*'ālim*), the possessor

411. Corbin argues in his note to this passage (p. 248, line 6), basing his case on a parallel passage in NKh's *Khwan al ikhwan*, ed. Y. al Khashshab (Cairo, 1359/1940), pp. 194–195, that this seems to be a scribal error for 'the Greek philosopher' (i.e., *yūnānī* rather than *īrānī*), or Aristotle.

of knowledge, is someone who forms a conception of a thing just as that thing is. They hold that the intellect ('*aql*') is defined as a simple substance by which human beings form a conception of things. They say furthermore that life is the guardian of the body, that the rational soul is the guardian of life, that the intellect is the guardian of the rational soul. It is the intellect which gives the soul its nobility in enabling it to know its own essence. Knowledge is the action of the intellect; through it humans know things as they are. A man is called intelligent because he possesses something by which he knows things in their true nature (*ḥaqīqat*). This trait – that of being 'intelligent' – may not be applied to God for the simple reason that it is He who is the original creator of the intellect (*mubdi'-yi 'aql*); it is knowable only with respect to man, inasmuch as it is said, 'So-and-so is intelligent', while if one says of God that He is knowing it is because knowledge is a characteristic of intellect; it is, by analogy, a divine attribute. God the Exalted describes Himself as '*He who knows what is hidden and what is manifest.*'⁴¹² This is precisely the quality of intellect, that it knows both objects of intellect (*ma'qulāt*) and of sense (*maḥsūsāt*) at one and the same time. Because the intellect has been given by God to us, and it is a nobility denied to other animals, it is not fitting to ascribe to God – glory be to Him, He is exalted – a quality which He Himself has bestowed. Everyone endowed with genuine knowledge who calls God knowing is well aware that it is He who is the creator of the intellect, and that knowledge is the intellect's proper sphere of action. In just the same way they call Him powerful because all the power of powerful men flows from Him, so too it is He who has given being to creatures. '*Blessed be God, the greatest of creators.*'⁴¹³

412. Q39:46.

413. Q23:14.

On the Difference between the Perceiver and the Act of Perception⁴¹⁴

*A distinction must be made between 'perceiver' and 'perception'
If a man means to wake from the slumber of heedlessness.*

(Jurjānī, verse 56)

[286] The question is such that it addresses the difference between the perceiving subject and the act of perception; a third aspect, the thing perceived, cannot be spoken of here. The [Arabic word] *mudrik*, 'perceiver', is he who perceives a thing (*andar yābandah-i chīz*), while [the Arabic word] *idrāk*, 'perception', is his act, that is, of perception (*andar yāftan*).⁴¹⁵ The [Arabic word] *mudrak* means that which is perceived. This is as though someone were to make a [grammatical] distinction between the 'agent' (*fā'il*) and the 'act' (*fī'l*). The agent is the one from whom the act comes forth, as in the case of a carpenter. Carpentry is the mode of action latent in his soul and a throne is that by which his carpentry is made manifest. The philosophers say that the act is intermediate between the agent and the object of its action. The act is always potentially there in the agent's nature or it is there actually in the thing that is made. The act does not subsist on its own within his nature. What I mean is that the carpentry may either be concealed in the carpenter's soul or it may be evident in the very nature of the chair. So too it is with the act of perception, which is the act of a perceiver: either it is hidden within the perceiver or it is brought to be in the object that is perceived. The perceiving subject is the essence of the human soul; its act of perceiving things comes about through five senses, namely, sight, hearing,

414. For another English translation, see Peerwani (pp. 326–328).

415. The fourth form Arabic verb *adraka* denotes direct perceptual grasp of something by means of the senses, as does the Persian *dar* (or: *andar*) *yaftan*.

smelling, tasting, and touching. Thus, the soul possesses five faculties, and it is through the act of perception of these five perceivers – each one of which five faculties has a location underneath that instrument, which is a vein (*rag*) – that perception can occur.⁴¹⁶

[287] The first faculty of the soul is that of sight. Its location is in the centre of the black pupil of the eye beneath that shining covering where everyone can see his own form reflected in another's eye. For this reason the pupil of the eye is called 'the little man' (*mardumak*). The soul's perception of visible things, including the colours and shapes which result from their natures as well as movements, occurs through this faculty which lies beneath the location we have mentioned. That faculty receives corporeal forms and brings them before that universal sense (*hiss-i kullî*) which is the soul. Through the intermediary of this faculty the soul comes to know these; it forms a conception of them and distinguishes amongst them so that it may know what the colour of this thing is, what the shape of that is.

[288] Likewise, another of the soul's faculties is that of hearing. It is located in the opening of the ear in order to perceive sounds, both those which are meaningful and those which are not. The form of sounds and of words is that of a wave in the air which is unseen, in contradistinction to that which is perceived by the sense of sight. All that this sense perceives of its particular *sensibilia*, it too conveys to that universal sense which is the soul so that the soul may distinguish amongst them.

[289] Another faculty is that of taste; its location is beneath the skin of the tip of the tongue in order to perceive flavours. All that this sense perceives is different from what the two senses perceive which we have already mentioned. This sense also conveys the object of its perception to the soul, the lord of all five senses.

[290] The fourth faculty of the soul by which it perceives is the faculty of smell; the location of this faculty is in the nostrils behind a membrane (*pardah*'i) behind which is the brain. This sense perceives odours which are imperceptible to sight and hearing and taste, and all that it perceives of its proper objects of perception, it too conveys to the soul as its universal sense.

416. This part of the passage is obscure.

[291] The soul's fifth faculty is touch (*besavandeh*). It extends over the whole body but is located most particularly in the skin of the fingertips through which it perceives soft and rough, moving and motionless, hot and cold. What this sense perceives differs from what the other senses perceive. This perceiver too conveys its particular object of perception to the soul, the universal perceiver (*mudrik-i kullī*).

We have thus established that the soul possesses five faculties in accord with the five sorts of objects perceived. The action of each of these faculties upon its objects of sense perception is its act of perception (*idrāk*): objects of sense are its objects of perception.⁴¹⁷

[292] We say, moreover, that it is necessary to know that when each one of these perceptive faculties engages in that act of perception which is proper to it, it is affected by that act. In other words, when the eye gazes at a thing which has colour and form, the visual faculty receives that colour and form by virtue of sheer incorporeal receptivity, and unites with that colour and form until it perceives it. And so this gazer is an agent which is affected (*maḥfūl*) by its very own act. The thing gazed at remains as it was in its original state after it has been looked at, whereas the gazer who has received that colour and that form is altered from his original state. Thus, we have shown that the perceiving agent, the *mudrik*, is affected by his own act of perception; his state is altered while that of the object perceived remains as it was.

[293] We note this point because there is a group which holds that if we perceive the Creator of intellect by means of the intellect, then the intellect must be an agent and its Creator – glory be to Him – its object; but this cannot be true. We have demonstrated to men of intellect, using rational proof, that the intellect perceives its Creator by sheer assent, purged of all attributes from the realms of sense perception or cognitive apprehension; that the true Creator – glory be to Him – cannot be an object of the intellect. On the contrary, the intellect illumined by perceiving this receives nobility and radiance through unqualified assent. It is the intellect which is acted upon (*infi'āl*), not the Creator – glory be to Him, exalted is He. This is an incontrovertible reply to this question about rational will.

[294] The philosophers say that time has three categories. The first is the present, such as today or this moment. The second is the past: yesterday,

417. *Ān-che maḥsūs-i ūst mudrak-i ūst* (i.e., the soul or *nafs*).

the day before. The third is the future: tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Temporal things too fall into these three categories. Hence, they say that the eye is an instrument for the perception of something which is present here and now. The ear is an instrument for the perception of something which was yesterday or the day before, a thing that is past. Thought (*fikrat*) is an instrument for the perception of something which will be tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. And the intellect, they say, is an instrument for the perception of things created out of nothing (*mubda'ât*), not for the perception of Him who created them out of nothing. And to God belongs all praise.

On the Creation of Heaven and Earth

*Is it right to say that the heavens appeared first, since they're mightier,
And that then the earth, the mountains and the sea appeared?
Or that earth appeared first, being the centre of the sphere,
While the ecliptic was still but a point in the sphere?
But then, if you reckon thus, how does the earth stand firm
While all around the emptiness of the spinning sphere revolves?*

(Jurjānī, verses 57–59)

[295] He asks whether you can say that the heavens came first since they are mightier, or was the earth first because it is the centre of the sphere of the cosmos? To draw a circle you first need a centre. Still, if you say, 'The earth was first', then the earth was there without the encircling sky; how did it stand in its place? What I mean is that the establishment of the earth depends upon the encirclement of the sky.

[296] The philosopher answers this question by stating that those philosophers who affirm creation out of nothing and the temporal contingency of the world hold that first of all there was Prime Matter (*hayūlī*), something intelligible, not perceptible by sense. When individual natures, such as heat, cold, dryness, and moistness, adhered to matter through the divine decree, each of them – matter and nature – after having been pure intelligibles in isolation, became mingled with the perceptible and began to occupy space. As proof that matter cannot exist without form, nor form without matter, they adduce the fact that nowadays too Prime Matter is not an object of sense perception but of intellection, while form without matter does not exist either except within the mind. So too we say that water is cold, wet, soft, and flowing. Those qualities of coldness, wetness, softness, and mobility, by which water exists, are all accidents. A thing can receive an accident when it is other than the accident. Therefore, it follows of necessity from this rational inquiry (*tajassus*) that whatever has

taken on coldness, wetness, and softness, such that it becomes water, is a substance (*jawhar*). And that is what we call Prime Matter (*hayūli-yi ūlī*).

[297] They say further: If the substantiality (*jawhariyat*) of water consisted of coldness, softness, wetness, and brightness (*khushkī*), it would follow necessarily that whenever water turned hot or solid, its substantial nature would be nullified; but this is not the case. On the contrary, when it is hot, it is still water. When it freezes and solidifies, it is ice but its substantiality remains in place. Thus, we come to understand that these qualities in water are accidents.

[298] They continue and say: If all the natures were to be extracted from matter, such that coldness, wetness, softness, and heat were removed from water, then the substantiality of water would be nullified. This is because there cannot be a body in which none of these four qualities is present. Rather, water is water because of the fact that it is wet; its coldness is natural to it, as is its receptivity to heat. If hotness, dryness, and brightness, its attributes, were removed from fire, its essential fiery nature as fire would be taken away.

[299] Since we have established correctly that water's existence is through its coldness and wetness, and that fire's existence is through its hotness and dryness, that these four are accidents, and that the substantiality of these two substances comes to be by these accidents, then it follows of necessity from this consideration that the substantiality of natures occurs through accidents. We showed earlier that substantiality belongs to matter which has taken on accidents. Such is the case that the coupling of these two – matter and form – is a coupling accomplished by the true Creator; for neither of the two can exist without the other.

[300] [The philosophers] then say: When form became mingled with matter, Universal Nature became manifest in this substance; this was the origin of motion in space which befell these substances. The body's substance was divided by Universal Nature, as we proved previously, into those categories which are manifest.

[301] They go on to say that since Universal Nature set the body's substance, imprinted as it was, in motion, all that is delicate, luminous, and pure within it diffused widely, while all that is turbid, dense, and dark within it stayed fixed and solidified. Whatever was luminous amongst those subtleties turned into stars, spherical in their forms; out of whatever was without light amongst them the spheres emerged by the wise

Creator's decree and the action of Universal Nature. All that remained over from the spheres turned to fire which is denser than the spheres, or to air which is denser than fire, or to water which is denser than air, or to earth, the utmost in density and weight, which stood at the midpoint.

[302] As an example of this work of creation, the philosophers adduce someone who throws a heavy stone through the air onto the surface of a vast body of smooth still water. When that stone plunges into the water, a circle takes shape, small at first – for the centre of that circle is where the stone first fell – but then the circle widens and another circle, and yet another, forms within it in succession; the more the initial circle widens, the more those successive circles appear.

[303] They say that bodily substance was in absolute space and was 'invented' (*mukhtari*); it came from no place (*v'az jā'ī-yī nayāmadeh*). Nor was there any obstacle there to those subtle effusions (*laṭāfat-hā*) which emerged and spread from it, and so they spread out in all directions. Peaks and domes appeared with no fissures. The earth, extreme in its density, remained at the midpoint. Water, which is a bit finer than earth, kept to the surface of the earth. The air, lighter than water, stood above the water. And so, out of those individual natures which accrued to matter, this colossal sphere, the creation of Universal Nature, maker and preserver of bodies, was constructed. The traces of wisdom, fore-ordainment, and design, evident in the natures, the spheres, and the stars, furnish proof that Universal Nature is an actively creative substance, as evidenced by the revelatory signs of the Universal Intellect and the mediation of the Universal Soul, with the result that this thing-created (*maṣnū'*) came forth, in this shape it has, with this rightness, and with this firm fixity.

[304] According to them, it should not occur to anyone to ask why the earth is located in the middle of the sphere. He first has to realise that this would inevitably entail that the earth, notwithstanding its heaviness and the lowly position which it occupies, should rise to the skies on all sides, while the sky would have to become round and take the earth's place. Since the intellect cannot allow (*'aql rava nadārad*)⁴¹⁸ that a stone weighing one *man* move from its location on the ground by itself – rather, it gravitates in a single state towards the centre – how

418. This seems to be NKH's Persian equivalent of Arabic *yajuzu* (or as in the theological construct of *tajwīz 'aqlī*), 'to be intellectually admissible'.

could one even consider the words of somebody who asks, 'Why is the earth located in this place?' If the question were asked, the reply would be to say, 'Because that is the way it is; this is its place; earth does not come from somewhere else to which it might return, like a stone which when tossed into the air does not stay there but falls back to that place from whence it came.' The world's existence in its very totality does not come from 'somewhere'. It is inconceivable that it might be dispersed. The proof that this universal substance does not come from a place is that it does not disperse, nor does it direct itself to any place. The proof that this substance will not disperse is that it has no other place but that in which it is.

[305] According to them, this work of creation has no before and no after. Time began with the turning of the sphere. Before the turning of the sphere, there was no time so that one cannot ask as to which came first (i.e., the heavens or the earth). The proof that the world's existence has neither before nor after (beginning nor end) – indeed, to the contrary, the beginnings of the heavens and the encircling of the earth (*gird shodan-i zamīn*) occurred in a flash (*wahlat*)⁴¹⁹ – is their argument that if we place a handful of dirt together with a bit of water into a bottle, three natures are mingled in that bottle: one is dirt, another is water, and another is air. Then, if we shake that bottle hard so that all three natures in it are mixed and indistinguishable, and set the bottle down, how can any reasonable man tell which of the natures takes first place and which the next? When the three natures, which had been mixed in the bottle, separate again so that each of them returns to its proper place, there can be no before and no after whatsoever; the dirt settles at the bottom of the bottle, the water is above it, and the air is above the water. We know that when those natures that were in the bottle were mixed, every bit of dirt that sank down to the bottom of the bottle separated from every bit of water and of air. Just as the bit of dirt sank down, the bit of water separated from it at that same moment, and the bit of air separated from the water at the same time, and rose as the other sank, without any before or after whatsoever.

419. Everything in creation was originated simultaneously, 'in a single flash' (*daʿʾatan wāḥidatan*) according to the Ismāʿīlī Tayyibī *daʿī* Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmīdī (d. 1162), *Kitāb Kanz al-walad*, ed. M. Ghalib (Beirut, 1971), p. 39, who also cites the almost identical formulation in the *Rasāʾil* of the Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ.

[306] And so we have established that when this substance, impressed with these natures, was mixed together, this turning sphere came to be in a single flash. Every bit of earth moved towards the centre while other parts, of fire, moved in a contrary direction but at the same instant towards the peripheries of the world, and there was no before and no after – quite the opposite: earth sank as air rose, and nothing else. This is a rational, philosophical explanation but it cannot be reached except through pure thought and a sincere desire for these insights and essential truths.

[307] The response to this question of the philosophers amongst the *ahl-i ta'yīd* – upon them be peace – is as follows. There was absolutely no temporal before and after in the existence of the heavens, one with respect to another. Quite the contrary: this creation occurred through *ibdā'*, creation out of nothing, and that is atemporal (*bī zāman*). What comes to be through creation out of nothing does not proceed from one location to another, so that time would necessarily be implied; rather, it appears in the place where it must, in the measure that it must, for the reason that it must, and in the moment when it must.⁴²⁰ So this world appears in this place in the measure (*qadr*) which it has and because of the activity which proceeds from it, just as it is. If it had come from some other place, that place would have remained empty and it would have returned to it. But the world is not heading anywhere; it turns in its own place and will turn until its going hence (i.e., until it ends). The proof for this is that its motion does not come from itself but from another, for everything which moves from its own very nature has a destination it is heading towards, just like the stone's motion from the air towards the earth; this is by its nature and essence, and it reaches its goal by returning to the place on the ground from which it departed. If this world were bigger than it [...] ⁴²¹ a thing given proportion and form in its proper measure and form says that if more or less had been necessary, He who decreed its measure (*muqaddir*) could always make it such as He wishes, as He says, 'There is nothing for which We do not have stores; and We send it down only in a known measure (*bi-qadr ma'lūm*).'⁴²²

420. This is very similar to the formulation of al-Ghazali; see my *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 39 and *passim*.

421. There is a lacuna in the text here.

422. Q15:21.

[308] They say too that heaven dispenses benefits and earth receives them. The heavens are on the analogy of a man, the earth on the analogy of a woman; the plant and animal kingdoms are the children of this man and woman. Wisdom finds it wrong to posit a before and an after in time to the pairing of this couple one with another. It is as God says, *'Of each thing We created a pair, perhaps you will think on this.'*⁴²³ In the world of religion, the Prophet is the heaven and his Legatee is the earth in that world. The rain which falls on this earth is the blessed Book, the Noble Qur'an, and the believers are the plants on the earth in this rain from the heavens. Proof that the Noble Qur'an is on the level of the water of this rain is what God says in this verse, *'We send down from the heavens a blessed water and so We cause gardens to grow and seeds for the harvest.'*⁴²⁴ And He says of His own blessed Book sent down, *'And this is a Book We have sent down – a blessed one – so follow it and be fearful perhaps you will find mercy.'*⁴²⁵

[309] Since He calls both of these blessed in rank, and one of them came down from heaven, as did the other as well, this rain is rightly the divine Book of Muḥammad, the Chosen. And when the blessed heavens and the water appeared – and they were different from these heavens and this water [which we know] – the earth of these heavens and this water also emerged as other than *this* earth. That earth was the Prophet's Legatee upon whom this water came down; he himself makes the explication (*sharḥ*) of this water, just as the earth of this world 'explicates' the rain-water of this world by making the plants come forth.

[310] It is evident as well that the plants of this world are the believers, those who use their intelligence, those who serve God. And the sages of true religion – upon whom be peace – say that the First Intellect is also the heaven for the Universal Soul which stands in relation to it on the level of the earth; and that the two heavens of the essence of Truth (*ḥaqīqat*) are, first, the Intellect and then, the Prophet. The two earths of essential Truth are, first, the Universal Soul and, second, the Legatee of the Prophet. Of these heavens and these earths, which we have mentioned, none is prior to the other in time. Although the existence of the Universal Soul comes to be through the Command of the Creator by the mediation of the Intellect, there is absolutely no temporal interval

423. Q51:49.

424. Q50:9.

425. Q6:155.

of before or after between these two existences. It is not fitting to say, 'The Prophet conveyed a statement from God the Exalted which they did not apprehend.' If that were the case, the Prophet would have spoken in vain, like somebody who utters words of counsel and wisdom in the midst of wild beasts, all the while knowing that not one of those wild beasts can understand what he is saying. Rather, just as there is some man among men who conveys knowledge of the Book, there is also amongst men someone who can receive that knowledge of the Book. It is as God says to His Prophet, *'Those who do not believe say you were not sent as an emissary. Say, "God suffices as a witness between myself and you, as well as those who possess knowledge of the Book"'*.⁴²⁶ We have now shown that between the existence of the heavens – originated, created, and uttered⁴²⁷ – and their earths no before and no after can be. Praised be God.

426. Q13:43.

427. The heavens as regarded under three aspects: created from nothing (*ibdā'i*), created or made (*khalqī*), and 'uttered' (*qawlī*, i.e., the Qur'an).

On the Circle, the Chicken, and the Egg

Who can distinguish the circle's beginning or its end?

Of the chicken and the egg, nothing can be said that's not weak.

(Jurjānī, verse 60)

[311] In this question it is implied that just as nobody knows where the tracing of a circle begins, so too nobody knows which came first, the egg or the bird. If anyone had something to say on this matter, his comment would be weak; that is, because he will be unable to provide a rational proof. This is the question and our reply is as follows. If somebody draws a circle then asks somebody else, 'From where did I begin the line?', the question is pointless (*bāṭil*). This is because the other person could indicate a point and say, 'The beginning of the line of the circle is this point which you made.' But the other could say to him, 'Give me a proof of your statement that the line begins here.' And the other could reply to him, 'Give a proof yourself that the line does not begin from here.' Since both the claim and the denial have no basis in rational proof, the question really is pointless, and yet, the intellect acknowledges that this line [of the circle] must have a beginning and an end. As for saying that the issue of which comes first, the chicken or the egg, is a feeble thing, well, that is not worthy of the wise. This is the talk of common folk who fancy that the chicken cannot appear except from the egg, nor the egg except from the chicken.

[312] Our answer to this question is as follows. An egg is a bird *in potentia*. If a bird gets full nurturing, it goes from that potentiality to actuality. If there is no bird to bring it to actuality, no bird develops from that egg; instead, it is spoiled. Thus, we know that if the egg were first and there were no bird to bring it to actuality, no bird would hatch from that egg. Since the bird is necessary to actualise what is in that first egg, the bird must come before the egg and produce that egg. Still another proof that

the bird comes before the egg is that the egg of a bird is something made, having both form and structure, and within which there are other things placed, one inside the other in various ways, surrounded by a delicate membrane, itself enclosed in a hard shell without any fissure or crack. We know that that is something made by a knowledgeable creator with craftsmanship in his nature, for it is fitting that a body given form show traces of its maker's intentions as well as his design. Hence, the bird's egg, by virtue of the intent and signs of its making, which are evident upon it, is a thing which has been acted upon (*ma'mūl*). To be made actual from that potential state in which it was, it needs the bird. The bird, on the other hand, has no need of the egg. Therefore, it is absurd to say that the bird, which does not need the egg, is something made by that egg which does need it. And so the intellect proves that the maker of the egg is the bird, the egg is its product, and a thing made cannot be its maker.

[313] We have shown that the bird comes before the egg, just as the pit of the date comes before the date-palm, and the animal is prior to the seed which comes from it. So it is because if there were not the bird to hatch the egg, there would be no bird; so too if there were no animal to nourish the seed, there would be no animal. If one could say that the seed came before the animal, one could just as well say that the egg comes before the bird. Since the existence of animals at present comes about through generation, and those individuals that went before [...] ⁴²⁸ implies necessarily that there was some starting-point to generation which has come to an end-point today, for whatever has no beginning cannot come to an end. When we use the intellect's judgement we see that a birth, to-day, is an end [in a sequence], and that our children not yet born will also be the end of the sequence of births; it follows necessarily that there is a beginning to generation. Since generation must have a beginning, there must be one who begot without himself being begotten by another and whose existence, by contrast, occurred without an act of generation. This notion men of understanding ponder as 'origination' (*ibdā'*). This intelligible (*ma'qul*) is incontrovertible and the intellect affirms it without demur. ⁴²⁹

428. There is a lacuna in the text here.

429. An 'intelligible' (Ar. *ma'qul*), i.e., 'an object of intellect' or intellection, is something conceived or conceivable by the mind as opposed to what is perceived by, or perceptible to, the senses (*mahsūs*).

[314] We say that the origin (*aşl*) in plants, such as wheat, barley, and the like, is what produces the trees and plants themselves. Should somebody say that 'The seed of plants and trees stands at the level of the egg with respect to the bird and the semen with respect to animals, because in just the same way the egg comes from the bird as the seed comes from the tree, then it follows necessarily that the date-palm comes first so that the seed may emerge from it and the unripe ear appears first so that the wheat may sprout from it', we respond that this analogy is erroneous. In fact, the pit of the date precedes the date, and the grain of wheat the unripe ear. Primordial origination is in the seed, not the plant. Contrary to what you claim, the plant stands in relation to the seed at the level of the egg in relation to the bird and the level of the drop of sperm in relation to the animal. The proof that this claim is correct is that the seed is a plant *manquë* (*nabât-i nâqış*), but it would not ever occur to anybody to say that the plant is a seed *manquë* because for the sake of humankind – which is after all at the heart of this dispute – the plants, tree, seed, and fruits, develop until shoots and wood and bark and leaves appear. And the seeds of generation are primordial; the emergence of every tree is through that original coupling which pollinated them all. We know that the date-palm was engendered by this male-female [coupling] and that tree's seed is bound together in one place. By way of analogy, every species of plant stands on a level with Adam and Eve with respect to mankind at large; so too with the first couple of horses with respect to the equine species; or to that of heaven and earth with respect to the three realms (*mawālid*). This is because there is nothing that exists which has come into being without a couple which preceded it. In the same way, soul and intellect are from a first couple which came before the entirety of existing things, and the universe itself, this second heaven and earth, came forth from that primary heaven and earth, as we mentioned earlier.

And so, on the basis of these logical arguments, we state that the chicken came first and then the egg. This is what we intended to say.

On the Whole and the Part

*Does being rightly pertain to all while some part is non-being?
If that is right, then furnish me with a proof!
If not, then genus comes first and then species and then,
After both of these, the individual, as in a chain.*

(Jurjānī, verses 61–62)

[315] He asks whether a whole can exist without a part or a part without a whole. Again, if a whole does not exist, is a part non-existent? Or if a part does not exist, is a whole non-existent? Furthermore, if a part cannot exist without a whole, it follows necessarily that first there is genus, and then species, and then the individual; that is, genus stands in relation to species as the whole does to the part, and the species too stands in relation to the individual in this same manner. If the whole did not come first, how could the part exist? It would be absurd for the whole not to exist while the part existed; that is, whoever says that Adam is also a species is claiming that the individual precedes the species; and so is this person also claiming that the part comes before the whole? This is the same question which he posed earlier; he returns to it now and draws it out.

[316] We already gave an answer to this question in the preceding under one aspect. But with regard to the aspect under which he asks it here, we reply as follows. The genus is not all species; rather, 'genus' is a term for a grouping of species. Species too is not all individuals; it is a name for all the individuals. Each one comes to exist when the parts are grouped together; it is not that the part comes to exist with the appearance of the whole: first comes the individual and then, when individuals of similar form are grouped together, 'species' becomes the name of that grouping. In just the same way, there is first a part and then, when the parts are assembled, the term 'whole' is applied to that totality.

[317] Whoever wants to get a start in the science of logic ought first to become acquainted with the teaching of the master of logic (Aristotle) so that he does not make senseless remarks. And the master of logic has said, “Genus” is a term which applies to many things which are different in their forms.’ So when we say ‘animal’, it is a word which applies to the donkey, the cow, the horse, and man, among others, and each of these has a different form.

[318] He then says – and I mean the master of logic – that “species” is a term which applies to many things identical in their forms but differing as individuals’.⁴³⁰ Thus, cattle are all of one form, donkeys of another. So the cow is a species of the genus animal and this name applies to many individual cows. Man too is a species and is numerous; one cannot name them one by one. Hence, one mentions all of them by one name, calling them *mardom* in Persian and *insân* in Arabic. This man, who set logic in order, states that ‘genus’ is an utterance and ‘species’ is an utterance; he does not say that either genus or species exists in concrete reality. To us it is clear that it is the individual to which a concrete reality pertains. So long as numerous individuals of the same form are not grouped together, the term ‘species’ does not apply; unless many species are grouped together, the term ‘genus’ does not apply. As we have said, the origins of the many lie with it (i.e., the individual). We have shown too that it follows necessarily that the animal, procreating and created, must have had the origins of its existence in a primordial instantiating couple, without birth. Each couple of a species has come to be through two individuals; the grouping together of these is a genus, made up of those originating species. Generation commenced after that. The existence of genus, species, and individual occurred at a single stroke. Species neither increases nor diminishes in relation to the increase or decrease of individuals.

[319] In sum, we have established that the individual is first, then the species composed of many individuals, and then there is the genus which encompasses the species; that the part can exist without the whole, and that the whole is the totality of the parts; that a whole without parts does not exist whereas the part without the whole can be asserted as existing. Of somebody who does not own many horses, donkeys, and sheep,

430. For this definition, see Porphyry, *Isagoge*, pp. 29–30: ‘Philosophers explain genus as that predicated essentially of many things which differ in species, as animal, for example.’

it cannot be said that he possesses 'the animal'. For 'animal' denotes a multiplicity of individuals; someone who owns only one horse or one sheep can hardly be called 'an owner of animals', rather he is someone who owns a horse or a sheep. For 'animal' is a term which covers numerous individuals different in their forms; for that reason, for somebody who does not own many animals or who owns a single donkey, this term is not invalid, but it becomes invalid as the name of a genus in accord with this explanation.

On Saturn, Seed of Spring

Why does one speak of Saturn as first of the planets?

Why does the seed of spring have the nature of fire?

(Jurjānī, verse 63)

[320] Is it this man's intention to ask why Saturn (*Zoḥal*) is mentioned first when the planets are named? Or is he asking why this planet, whose name is listed first, is called Saturn? If he is asking why Saturn is named first, we make reply by remarking that it is because Saturn, situated in the seventh heaven, is the highest of the seven stars which rule the cosmos in accord with the decree of the wise and knowing Foreordainer – glory be to Him, He is exalted. This is why it is given precedence, even though the astronomers put the sun first and then the moon in their calendars, for these two stars are the rulers of the spheres (*sultānān-i aflāk*). The sun's sovereignty is due to its great mass and might and influence; that of the moon is due to its closeness to the earth, which is itself one planet amongst others. Then, of the five remaining planets they rank Saturn first, then Jupiter (*Mushtarī*), followed by the other planets according to their location. This is because Saturn has the highest of the planetary positions and also because its mass is greater than that of the other four stars, and so their names come below its name.

[321] But if he means to ask in this question why this star is called Saturn, we answer as follows. The question is one of philology (*lughat*). 'Zoḥal' is a verbal noun (*fi'l*) from [the Arabic verb] *zaḥala/yazḥalu* in the same way as the name 'Umar is a verbal noun from '*amaral/ya'muru* ['to live']. The [Arabic verb] *zaḥala/yazḥalu* corresponds to what we say [in Persian] as *begorikht/begorizad*.⁴³¹ The Arabs have coined a proverb, 'There

431. In both Arabic and Persian, 'to escape, get away'; cf. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 1,220: 'he removed, withdrew, or retired to a distance' and, with reference to the planet Saturn, 'so called because it is remote'.

is no escape (*zahal*) from death.' In other words, from death there is no safe place (*jav i goriz*). Because this star Zohal is outside all the heavens, as if it were outside the cosmos, they call it Zohal, that is, *Gorikhteh*, 'the fleeing one'.

[322] The answer to his question as to why the seed of spring has the nature of fire, we give as follows. His purpose in asking this question is to know why the sign of the Ram (Aries), which is one of the zodiacal signs for spring (*borj ha yi bihar*), is fiery. We reply that of the twelve stations of the zodiac into which the entire sphere is divided, three are of fire, three are of earth, three are of air, and three are of water. The stations of fire are Aries (*haml*), Leo (*asad*), and Sagittarius (*qaws*); those of earth are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn; those of air are Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius (*daly*); those of water are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. The true active agent (*fa'il be haqiqat*) in these natures is fire since its effect on the three other substances is quickening (*ravan*): it heats up, illumines, and sets each one of them in motion. When the sun, the sovereign of the spheres and of the natures, enters into the station of Aries, the plants begin to grow, the earth comes back to life after it was dead. The immense labour, heretofore hidden from the earth, is then made manifest on the earth. We know that this station, which takes its fresh vigour from the sun, has the nature of fire. After it has emerged from Sagittarius and reached the farthest point, it has passed from the equinoctial point to the fiery station. Since the activity which now proceeds from it – which did not occur previously in Aries – and because of the revival of the plants, the sprouting of seeds, and the impulse to mate which takes hold of animals, such that the whole world is experiencing birth, they (astronomers) have established this station as the origin of the others. They say that this station is fiery and it is of spring because the effect of the sun's activity is made manifest in the world when the sun enters Aries.

[323] Someone might ask, 'Since you say that Aries is fiery, and fire is hot and dry, why does the air turn warm and moist when the sun enters this station, although in keeping with the nature of summer, the air should be warmer and drier; that is, now, while the sun has entered the station of Aries, which is fiery, why is it warmer and more humid? Our answer is that in winter the world is cold and humid; since the sun has entered Pisces, which is a watery station, it is cold and humid. But then, when the sun enters a fiery station, such as Aries, and warmth spreads over the world, the sun warms up that coldness in the earth, and then it dries up the humidity in the earth, and this is in the nature of summer;

it is like a garment which has gotten wet and cold and which, when set before a fire, first grows warm and then the moisture evaporates from it and bit by bit (*khush khush*) the dampness leaves it; for a certain time, after the garment has grown warm it remains damp until at last it is dry. So too the world in winter is cold and damp and frozen, but when the sun enters Aries, it warms the world by that fiery power. Then, for three months, the world is warm and moist until this moisture vanishes and, in accord with the nature of summer, it turns warm and dry. This is our reply. To God belongs glory and praise.

On the Houses of the Sun and the Moon⁴³²

*Why is Leo the house of the sun and Cancer
The house of the moon, which form a solid fortress?
Why is a single 'house' enough for these two while
The others all have two, to the right and the left?*

(Jurjānī, verses 64–65)

[324] There are two questions in these two verses. I transcribe both of them because each is linked with the other. This man asks why the house of the sun is placed in Leo and the house of the moon in Cancer, unlike those of the other stars. He asks further why each of the other five planets, which are apart from the sun and the moon in the sphere, has two houses and so why do sun and moon not have yet another house? There is a different answer to each of these two questions.

[325] To the question as to why the house of the sun is in the station of Leo, while that of the moon is in Cancer, the answer is that the sun and the moon have an influence, especially in all of the earth with its 'kingdoms' (*mawālīd*), which is greater than that of the other planets. The greater influence of the sun on the world's 'kingdoms' is caused by the fact that the sun's mass is greater and more powerful than all the other [celestial] masses; its circuit is in the fourth sphere which is the heart of the spheres and the fountainhead of light. The light of the moon and the other stars all comes from the sun. Conditions in the world are evened out by the sun's equinox and reversed by its solstices. The world's entire mass composes a single individual whose spirit is the radiant mass of the sun. The opening of blossoms, the freshening of mountainsides and flatlands, the dazzling adornments of fruits and trees, the awakening of

432. For the zodiac and certain of the points treated in this chapter, see the article 'Minṭaqat al-burūj' in *EI2*, vol. 7, p. 81.

the animals from their slumbers at the very time when the sun begins to rise, all stand as our proof for the statement I have made that the sun is the spirit of this world. As for the greater influence of the moon on this world's 'kingdoms', in the appearance of comets (*madhānib*) and in fluctuations of the weather or in alterations of the causes of the wind (*rūzgār*), that is because, though it is slighter in its mass than the other planets, it is the planet closest to the earth. The influences of the other planets, which are distant from the centre of the universe, that is, the earth, despite the fact that their masses are greater, are themselves changed and modified by the influence of the moon, just because it is closer. Accordingly, the sun and the moon, whose influence is greater than that of the other stars, for the reasons which we have elaborated, have a connection, an affinity, a kinship with one another which the other stars do not have with the sun. Quite the contrary, in fact: at most of the times when the sun has vanished, the moon is, as it were, its caliph or its wazir who conveys its light, after its occultation (*ghayb*), to the peoples of the earth. So it is just because of this connection between these two stars, such that the light of one of them comes to us by day while the light of the other is stronger by night, that the sun is called 'the Sultan of the Day' (*sultān-i rūz*) and the moon 'the Sultan of the Night' (*sultān-i shab*).

[326] As necessitated by the sphere for the balance of day and night, six stations of the zodiac, or half of the sphere, are set under the governance of the sun, the Sultan of the Day, and the other six, constituting the other half, are under the governance of the moon, the Sultan of the Night. This is why they (astronomers) divide the sphere into two parts: six stations on the side of the sun and six on the side of the moon. Necessarily then, the two houses, one belonging to the sun and the other belonging to the moon, face each other, such that the sphere is bisected. For each of these two sovereigns, his house stands at the beginning of his jurisdiction (*wilāyat*) and extends to where the jurisdiction of the other sultan ends. The two houses could not be located in Aries or in Pisces, since these are the beginning and the end of the zodiac, so that it is possible to take the top of the zenith, which is the highest point in the stars' progress from the side of the North Pole, and this is Cancer where the sun cannot go higher in the direction of the North Pole. That is a station which represents reversal; when the sun arrives there, the world assumes a different nature, changing from hot and humid to hot and dry. If the house of the sun had been set in Aries and the moon's house in Pisces, the house of

one sultan would be at the beginning of his jurisdiction and the house of the other at the end. It is not fitting that the house of one sultan be at the beginning of the jurisdiction and the other's at the end. This is why the astronomers make this division from the sun's apogee. From the top of apogee there is Cancer on one side and on the other, Leo. They found it necessary to put the house of the sun in Cancer because Cancer is higher than Leo in the direction of the North Pole and the sun is higher than the moon. A place which is more remote should belong to a ruler who is more exalted and worthier. But Cancer is a watery station while the sun is a fiery star; the moon is a watery star. This positioning does not agree with the dictates of wisdom; a fiery star is in an aqueous house while an aqueous star is in a fiery house. They placed the house

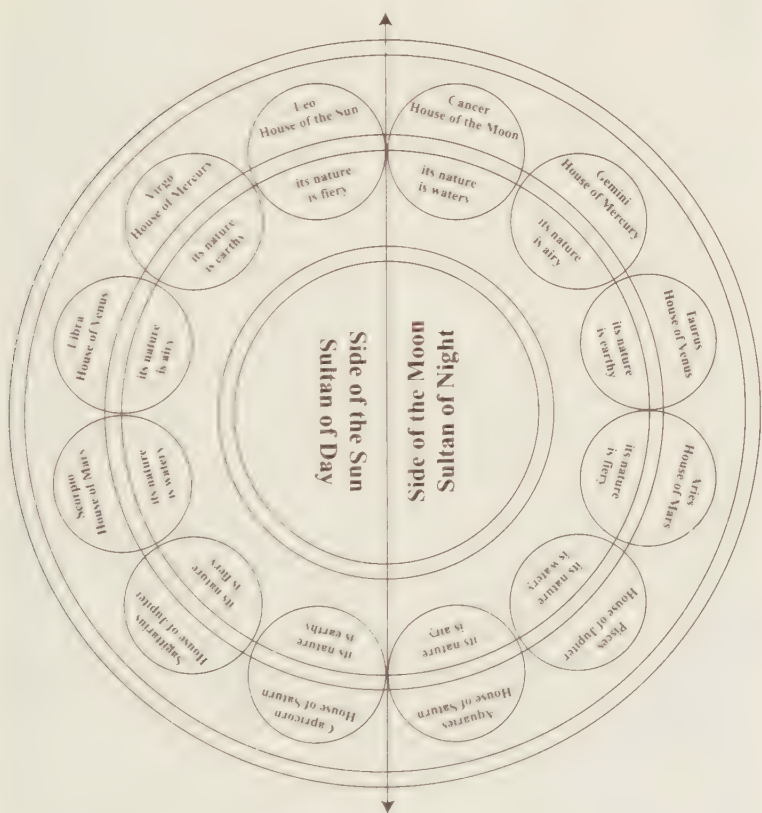


Figure 3: Stations of the Sun and the Moon

of the sun in Leo, fiery like its lord, so that it would be facing Cancer, and they placed the house of the moon in Cancer, aqueous like its lord, where it would be facing the house of the sun.

The jurisdiction of the sphere is divided between these two sultans and the five ancillary divisions, as we depict it here [Fig. 3].

[327] We have explained why the house of the sun is placed in Leo and the house of the moon in Cancer, even though this question is pointless since God has stated that it must be so. In fact, these are only terms which astronomers have devised. The sphere is divided into twelve stations. Still, anyone who gazes with a clear mind at the sphere and sees that the sun's disk – with a surface 164 times that of the earth – is the size of a fist in circumference, knows that there is no figure of a lamb or of a crab (*kharchang*) in the sphere; but rather, that each of the stars which are in the station of Aries has a surface area of thousands of parasangs. Even so, these names are accepted by convention; they correspond to the shapes which astronomers found analogous and so they assigned them. We give the reply to this question in accord with what the precepts of the most pre-eminent astronomers dictate. This is the answer to the question, 'Why do they put the house of the sun in Leo, the house of the moon in Cancer?'

[328] In answer to the question, 'Why does neither of these two sultans, the sun and the moon, have no more than one house in the sphere, while each of the other stars in the sphere has two houses, one on the side of the sun and the other on the side of the moon?', we reply as follows. The seven planets which rule the world stand on the level of tools (*dast afzār-hā*) for the Universal Soul, with the help of the Universal Intellect, for the production of individual members of the [three] 'kingdoms' of this world. The ultimate end in this production of individual form is mankind, the most excellent form of all, just as God the Exalted says, '*And He formed you and then made beautiful your form.*'⁴³³ Two of these seven stars are sultans because their influence on created things is much greater – and we have already mentioned the reason for their predominant influence – while the five other stars are like the servants of these two sultans in carrying out their work of creation. The final result and end is the human body with its implements of discernment and its ability to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

433. Q64:3. The verse is incorrectly given in de Gastines (p. 293) as 11:64.

[329] After the division of the sphere between these two sultans into two parts, as we have stated, with six stations of the sphere within the jurisdiction of the sun and six under that of the moon, the sun gives to Mercury, which is the closest planet after the moon, a place near him, at his side of the sphere: this house is the station of Virgo. The moon too, that other sultan, gives him another house beside him, at his side; that is at the station of the Gemini. Then the sun gives Venus a house alongside Mercury; that is the station of Libra. The moon too gives Venus a house in her own hemisphere; that house is the station of Taurus. The sun then gives Mars, which is above Venus, a house in his own part of the sphere; that is the station of Scorpio. And the moon likewise bestows a house on him in his part of the sphere and that station is Aries. Thereupon the sun gives Jupiter a house on its side of the sphere at the station of Sagittarius. The moon gives him a house too on its side of the sphere at the station of Pisces. Saturn is above that and the sun gives him a house on its side of the sphere at the station of Capricorn. The moon gives Saturn a house as well on its side of the sphere and that is at the station of Aquarius. The division is such that the servants of the two sultans are five and are distributed to each of the two, so that it follows necessarily that each one of them has a house on the side of each of the sultans and the benevolence of both sultans comes to every one of them equally, and by using these instruments and tools, the Universal Soul delineates the human form, the noblest and most perfect of forms.

[330] We say, furthermore, that of the sun's influence on the human constitution, the heart is the ultimate result; it is the source and centre of the spirit. This organ is deep within, in the middle of the body, just like the sun in the interior of the sphere. The life of the world is in the sun just as human life resides in the heart. By nature the heart is warm and dry; it is the source of that inborn vital heat because it results from the sun's influence, itself the leaven of natural heat. Of the influence of the moon, that other sultan, on the human constitution, the brain is the ultimate result; it is cold and moist as corresponds to the nature of the moon. The brain is the habitation and abode of the rational soul; it is the place where imagination, memory, recollection, and discernment dwell. According to the philosophers, the brain is divided into three parts. The anterior part is for the imagination; through it the soul forms visual and auditory images, both of which provide the soul with a way to knowledge, one by sight, the other by hearing. The middle part of the brain is reserved for retentiveness (*hifz*); through it the soul recalls

what has been seen and heard. The posterior part of the brain is devoted to memory (*dhikr*); through this part the soul remembers what it has learned.⁴³⁴ There is a link between the heart and the brain, as there is a link between the sun and the moon. The balance of the coldness and moistness of the brain comes from the warmth and dryness of the heart which is linked with it, just as the light, the action, and the loveliness of the moon come from the sun which is linked with it. Thoughts have their beginnings in the heart, after which the heart exhibits its flickers of cognition (*ḥawāḍith-i jikrī-yi dil*) to the brain; the [rational] soul, which is located in the brain, ponders these by means of those parts [of the brain] which are its tools for action (*afzār-hā'ī fī'l-i ū*) in order that what is correct may emerge from what is false.

[331] In addition, we say that the sun of the macrocosm is at the level of the heart of the microcosm, which is man, and that the moon of the macrocosm is at the level of the brain in the microcosm. The five planets in the macrocosm, which philosophers call 'the great man' (*insān-i kabīr*), are on a level with the five senses in man, whom they call 'the little world'. I mean that Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury in this world are at the rank of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch in man. And since man in his body is the child of the macrocosm and in his soul the child of Universal Soul, then the macrocosm is, as it were, the body of the Universal Soul with all those implements (*ālat-hā*) which we have mentioned. It was with this in mind that Jesus, son of Mary – upon him be peace – said, 'I am going to my father who is in heaven.' What he meant was that 'My individual soul is returning to the Universal Soul which is in heaven.' The ignorant in his community imagined that he said, 'I am the son of God.'

[332] Since the human body is the child of the macrocosm, it follows necessarily that the organs and senses of the two worlds – the great and the small – correspond to each other and are similar. Hence we say that by virtue of divine wisdom, using Intellect and Universal Soul, this constructed thing which is the world must be the utmost in perfection and design. The utter perfection of the world's creation is made known to us through the perfection of our own creation, for the final purpose of

434. Both Arabic words, *hifẓ* and *dhikr*, denote memory; however, *hifẓ* is used to indicate 'retentiveness of mind' (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 603), *dhikr* 'the presence of a thing in the mind' (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 969) or the act of calling something to mind.

the creation lay in creating us. Since we perceive this perfection in the creation of our own bodies, as they are, and there is no other creature in existence in which we observe this arrangement and array of organs, we know that this is the ultimate in perfected creation. We say too that this world, of which the human body is its child, necessarily has the same form as its child, for everything begotten has the same form without any disparity (*tafāwut*). So we say that it follows necessarily that our body be in an order like this world and without any disparity. For this reason, we make the manner in which the world is structured (*chegūnagī-yi tarkīb-i 'ālam*) an analogy for the way in which man is structured; we do not make the manner in which we are structured an analogy for the structure of the macrocosm, even though this small world has emerged from that larger one, not that larger one from this small one.⁴³⁵ The world is the Universal Body; our body is the particular world.⁴³⁶

[333] The sages of true religion say that man's structure is a world reduced (*mukhtaṣar*); they say that man's structure in this world is like the table of contents (*fihrist*) of a big book in which all that is contained in the book is indicated. We cannot get to know things as universals except by inference from particulars. Only those who cling to the divine cord (*muta'alliqān be-ḥabl-i ilāhī*), who dwell in an 'abode of truth',⁴³⁷ who are firmly ensconced in the lookout post for the truth (*marṣad-i ḥaqq*), are able to grasp these rational inferences. It is as God the Exalted says, 'We will show them Our signs on the horizon and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth.'⁴³⁸ Since we know that the sun is in the position of the heart in the macrocosm, and the moon in the position of the brain, we state that the five remaining planets are equivalent to our senses in the world's body; I mean the eye, the ear, the nose, the mouth, and the hand are the five planets, namely, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury. Just as eye and ear and nose and mouth and hand are our tools, and the faculties of our individual souls work with

435. De Gastines mistranslates this sentence (p. 296), turning it into the opposite of what the text states ('nous prenons la structure du corps de l'homme terrestre comme modele de celle de l'univers, et non l'inverse ...'); it is correctly rendered in Shatā (p. 378).

436. The argument here is an apt illustration of NKh's ambition to explain the 'how' and the 'why' of creation.

437. Q54:55.

438. Q41:53.

their help so that we can perceive what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched by means of them; and just as our heart, the dwelling-place of the spirit, and our brain, the abode of the rational soul, are sovereign over our senses – as we have explained previously, all that the sensory faculties perceive they bring to the ‘common sense’ (*hāss-i kullī*) which is the soul – so, too, these five stars stand in relation to Universal Soul at the level of the organs of sense, and the sun and the moon at the level of the heart and the brain in the body. And the faculties⁴³⁹ of the Universal Soul have flowed (*ravandah ast*) into these organs for the sake of the senses’ operations within us so that we can see and hear and smell.

[334] Then, since we see that there are two eyes in our body, one on the right and one on the left, but that our seeing is one, though it occurs in two places; and that we also have two ears, one on the right and the other on the left, but that our auditory faculty, though in two places, is one; and further, that our sense of smell depends on two nostrils and yet, is one; further still, that the sense of taste in our bodily make-up is in two locations – in the mouth and the genitals (*farj-i mubāsharat*) – and the mouth is at the level of the right side while the genitals are on the level of the left;⁴⁴⁰ and [finally] that for touching things we have two hands, a right and a left, and yet, the sense of touch in both of these is one – accordingly, we also know that our body is constructed in two parts, like the sphere itself, as the philosophers aver. From the middle of the human head, that is, from what is called the parting of the hair from which the hair falls on both sides, to the right and to the left, there is a line which descends between the two eyebrows, with one eye on the right and the other on the left, continues to descend along the nose and divides the two nostrils, one to the right, the other to the left, and as the line descends, it divides the four incisors, two to the right together with half of the mouth and two to the left with the other half; the line reaches the dimple of the chin (*chahak-i zunj*), then descends to the breast, with one side to the right and the other to the left. In this way the line divides the human body into two parts just as we have divided the spheres along with the stations of the zodiac by means of a line into two parts – this, in accord with the dictates of wisdom left to mankind from the ancient sages, the prophets, the true imams, and the philosophers.

439. The text in Shata (p. 379) here mistakenly reads *qaws* (instead of *quwwat-hā*).

440. This passage is puzzling; presumably the locations are a matter of rank rather than of actual anatomy.

[335] Clearly, this line bisects the human body. Of the five sense organs there is one eye, one ear, one nostril, one half of the mouth for tasting, and one hand for touching on the right side, and another eye, ear, nostril, the other half of the mouth, and another hand on the left side. Our five organs of sense are divided in two in our bodies just as the five organs of sense of the macrocosm are also divided in two in the sphere. This is because we have five senses and ten organs of sense, as we have explained; and there are five planets too with ten houses, five on the side of the sun and five on the side of the moon. That is, Gemini and Virgo are the houses of Mercury and yet, Mercury is one, just as we have two eyes, which are the locus and organs of sight, and yet our sight is one. Taurus and Libra are both the houses of Venus, but Venus is one; so too, we have two ears, which are the locus and organ of hearing, and yet, our hearing is one. Aries and Scorpio are both houses of Mars, but Mars is one; in the same way, we have two nostrils, each of which is the locus of smell, and yet, our faculty of smell is one. Pisces and Sagittarius are both houses of Jupiter, and Jupiter is one; so too our mouth has two sides, in both of which we taste, yet our faculty of taste is one. Capricorn and Aquarius are both houses of Saturn, and Saturn is one; so too our two hands are the locus of touch, yet our sense of touch is one.

[336] And since we are so constituted that everything which the five senses, by means of their ten organs, perceive they bring to the heart and the brain – the heart being the abode of the spirit, the brain that of the rational soul – and since the locus and dwelling of these two lords, for whom the five senses display their activities, is one [dwelling] alone for each, while each of the five workers of the sphere have two, as we have described, we know that within the spheres, which are the ‘great man’ (*insān-i kabīr*), the same situation obtains: the sun and the moon each has one house; each of their five ‘servants’ has two houses. And it is further known that the form of the world, which is this ‘great man’, corresponds to that human form which is the microcosm. We have illustrated this analogy [see Fig. 4] so that it may be perceptible to readers.

This is the form which illustrates the line of division and of the stations of the zodiac. But from God alone comes success. And may God pray over His Prophet Muḥammad and his family, the sages of true religion.

[337] All of these rational explanations and sensory evidences which we mention and affirm are prefatory to adducing the words of those [sages of true religion] to whom unswerving allegiance offers deliverance from



Figure 4: Correspondence of Macrocosm and Microcosm

the torments of Hell and endless felicity in eternal bliss. In accord with this sense they say that God the Exalted created man in a manner analogous to the creation of the world; for the seed of the world is the very substance of man. The world is like a tree whose fruit is the rational man. The purpose of the one who plants the seed of the tree and tends it is that fruit may result from it; his purpose is not merely that the tree may exist. Do you not see that the gardener chops down and burns any tree which does not bear fruit? A tradition from our Prophet states that 'Every tree which is not of our planting, why, the fire is more fitting for it.' This tradition is a similitude that bears witness to the creation. Intelligent men know on the basis of this Tradition that a tree which has been planted in the garden of the religion of ignorant men is a tree condemned by the

Prophet to be burned in the fire. And this is a far-reaching allusion for the eloquent.⁴⁴¹

Here are some verses in this sense from the author of this book:⁴⁴²

O world, how proper and how necessary you are!
 Still, you do not stay fixed for anyone.
 Outwardly, you're not pleasing, like a mote in the eye;
 Inwardly, you're essential as our own two eyes.
 If sometimes you smash what's been joined,
 How many fractures have you healed as well?
 A corrupted person sees you as corrupt (*ālūdeh*)
 But to the pure you are purity itself.
 To him who rails against you
 You say, 'You do not know me yet.
 If you were wise you would flee from me –
 How can you blame that from which you're free?
 God gave me to you as a passageway;
 Why do you stay sitting in this sordid place?
 God planted a tree for you so that you
 Might sprout like a branch from its trunk.
 If you sprout out crookedly, you'll be burned;
 If you sprout out upright, you'll be saved.
 All crooked wood is meant for the fire,
 Never mind that it is almond or pistachio!
 You who are God's arrow against His enemy,
 Why do you wound yourself with His shaft?

[338] Just as God the Exalted composed the structure of the human body on an analogy with the structure and composition of the world, the Prophet established the true religion on an analogy with the creation of man, so that the sages of religion would see this great model (*paykar*) and see that it accords with creation; and they would know that the Prophet established the true religion by the Creator's command and that the six days of this world exist in the world of religion too. In this world of religion, the Prophet occupies the place of the sun, for the life of the world of religion comes through him, while the Prophet's Legatee occupies the place of the moon in the world of religion; through him

441. There is a play on words here: *va-in isharatī-yi baligh ast mar bulaghā-ra*.

442. For the full text of this poem, which NKH quotes only partially, see his *Dīwān*, pp. 253–254; also *Dīwān*, ed. Taqavi (Tehran, 1304–1307/1925–1928), p. 440.

there is order and well-being in the world of religion; he is the soul of the body of religion. In the body of religion, the Prophet occupies the heart, for the body's life comes through the heart. In the body of religion, the Prophet's Legatee occupies the brain, for the right order of the body comes through him. Both of these two sources of the world of religion – one of whom is the sun of the world of religion, the other its moon – have a single dwelling, just as the sun and the moon in the sphere have but a single house. The dwelling of the Prophet is the assemblage (*ta'līf*) of the Book and the Law but not its explication (*ta'wīl*); the dwelling of the Legatee of the Prophet is the explication of the Book and the Law but not its revelation (*tanzīl*). In the world of religion five stars are administered and active under the control of this moon and this sun; their light comes from the sun – upon him be peace – of the world of religion. By this I mean the *imām*, the *bāb*, the *ḥujjat*, the *dā'ī*, and the *ma'dhūn*.⁴⁴³ Each of these five stars has two dwellings, just as the five stars of the sphere of the physical world have two houses. One of the houses of these five stars of the world of religion keeps watch over (*nigāh dāsh*t) the exoteric aspect (*ẓāhir*) of the Book and the Law and their application; the other house has charge of the quest for exegesis and understanding. These five servants, who are under the control of the sun and the moon of the world of religion, are at the level of the five senses for the masters of true religion,⁴⁴⁴ just as God says of Abraham and his sons – upon them be peace – 'Remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all men of strength and vision.'⁴⁴⁵ The exegetes, those prattling literalists of the community, say that by 'hands' and 'eyes' are meant their 'patient fortitude' (*ṣabr*) in the affliction and distress which befell them because of their religion.⁴⁴⁶ Those versed in hermeneutics (*ahl-i ta'wīl*), however, say that the 'hands' and 'eyes' of the prophets and imams pertain to those who spread (*begustarand*) the true religion

443. On these ranks of the *da'wat*, see 8:106 and note 255 above.

444. De Gastines (p. 303, note 136) appears to misunderstand this in translating the phrase as 'le Seigneur de la Religion éternelle', and in interpreting it as a 'Personne humaine idéale qui est l'Imam Anthropos'. In the Persian text, the term is, however, plural (*khodāvandan*) and probably refers to those oft-invoked 'sages of true religion'.

445. Q38:45, tr. Abdel Haleem.

446. In the verses quoted, the literal meaning of strength is 'hands' (*aydin*) and of vision 'eyes' (*abṣar*). For these exegetes (*hashwīyan*), see 3:28, and note 96 above.

at their behest, just as physical objects may be spread by hand, and who see indications of knowledge (*ishārat-hā' ilmi*) in the same way that the eye sees sensory indications. And whoever changes the outward sense of the true word on the basis of his personal opinion (*ra'y*) distorts the word of God the Exalted.

On the Influence of Auspicious and Ominous Stars on the Soul and the Body

*Two of these planets are utterly ominous, two are auspicious –
What are the ominous and auspicious effects of the other three?*

(Jurjānī, verse 66)

[339] The astronomers consider Saturn and Mars to be ominous but declare Venus and Jupiter to be auspicious, and Mercury neither ominous nor auspicious. They call Mercury 'neutral' (*khunthā*); it is auspicious with the auspicious, ominous with the ominous. They call the sun and the moon 'the sultans of the spheres' and do not ascribe any auspicious or ominous effects to them. Instead, they locate the leaven of good and evil in these four stars, in the same way as they posit the basis for the arrangement (*tarkīb*) of the 'kingdoms', in which the effects of the good and the evil are found, in the four 'natures': the two which are heavy and tending downwards are malign (water and earth); and the two which are light and tending upwards are benign (air and fire). The sphere, which is the fifth 'nature', is neither heavy, they say, nor light. So too Mercury, they say, is neither malign nor benign. In the human constitution, which is the most consummate of created things, the five senses come to be as a result of the four auspicious and ominous [elements] which are downward-tending and the four auspicious and ominous which are upward-tending. Two of the senses are benign and serve as instruments for the attainment of continuance, namely, the eye and the ear, which give access to what is seen and heard so that knowledge, which comes to the soul through these two instruments, is possible. Two of these are malign; they are instruments for bringing well-being to the body, and that is death and destruction for the soul; these are the mouth and the genitals. We pair mouth and genitals since both are instruments for the apprehension of bodily pleasure. The body endures but the soul dies through

these two organs. One of the five senses is intermediary between the two malign and the two benign; that is the sense of smell, neither good nor bad in itself; what I mean is that the sense of smell has no strong effect on either the soul or the body.

[340] Since the continuing existence of every soul depends on knowledge of the world, and knowledge of the world comes to the soul through what is seen and heard, either by seeing something written or hearing something spoken, we come to understand that we have received these two organs, by which we can attain to felicity, from two auspicious heavenly bodies. Since the life and the well-being of the body – which is mortal and blocks the soul from its own continuing existence – lie in the sense of taste and it is the mouth and the genitals which taste sensual pleasure and incline the body towards those satisfactions, we also know that these two organs, by which we nourish the very thing which holds us back from the soul's felicity, come to be in us through two malign heavenly bodies.

[341] Hence we say that even if the existing opposition (*mukhālafat*) between these four elements, that is, earth, water, air, and fire, did not exist with two of them inimical to two others, the body's composition (*imtizāj*) and equilibrium could not come about. So, too, if those four stars were not opposed in their effects one upon the other, neither the body nor the soul could attain perfection. In the same way as this compound structure (*tarkīb*), which is the dwelling place and the mount of the soul as well as the instrument by which the soul attains felicity, has need of these two elements – the heavy and the light, earth and water – so too the body, dense and perishable, has need of those two malign heavenly influences, which cause the concupiscent soul, craving and enjoying its pleasures, to come to be. The rational soul too has need of the body for it acquires knowledge through the body. Thus, we say that since the rational soul needs the body in order to acquire knowledge, and since the body needs an organ by which it can live and experience sensual pleasure, and that organ is the concupiscent soul (*naḥs i shahvānī*) which is linked with those two malign stars, it is obvious that the rational soul needs these two malign stars as well in order to attain to its felicity.

[342] This subtle explanation, this fine deduction, serves to make known that the creation of the malign stars in the sphere occurred at the dictate of wisdom. Since man is composed of two substances – one mortal, the

other immortal – it would not be fitting that all the stars be benign, for then man's mortal part would have no share. Nor would it be fitting as well for all four stars to be malign, for then man's immortal part would have no share. Moreover, if all four elements were heavy, like earth and water, his structure would not be mobile; if all four were light, like air and fire, there would be neither composition nor stability. And so we say that it is because of the two malign and the two benign stars that the three other stars receive their portions of good and bad, with the result that it is from the two senses of felicity, the eye and the ear, and the two senses of misery, the mouth and the genitals, that the three souls – the rational, the concupiscent, and the irascible – receive their portions: the immortal discovers mortality, the mortal a transient immortality (*baqā-i gozarandah*).

This is the answer which we give to this question in its conditions and their ramifications, as based upon the criterion of wisdom and the standard of analogy (*qiyās*).

On Spiritual Father and Mother

*Why does a male child turn his face on high when he's born
While female babies turn their napes towards their genitals?*

(Jurjānī, verse 67)

[343] This is a question in natural science; it is familiar to natural scientists and it is current amongst seekers of the true nature of things (*ahl-i haqa'iq*). Natural scientists say that the mixture⁴⁴⁷ in women's bodies is cold and moist while that in men's bodies is hot and dry;⁴⁴⁸ each is in opposition to the other. In our view, when the woman's seed overwhelms the man's, the child is a daughter. It is said that whoever wishes to have a male child should refrain from sexual intercourse until his semen has become quite dense, then he should approach the woman and proceed in such a way that his own need is fulfilled before the woman's desire is aroused. The man's semen will then prevail over the woman's. If the semen comes before it can be lost, the woman's semen will be lost since the man's has already occurred, and then the child will be male. When the child is female, the mixture [of its temperament] will be cold and moist; the delicacy in its constitution will tend towards the face; when the child turns in the womb to come out, and this subtlety has not yet reached the face, it comes out upside down. Because of the heaviness that is in the female mixture, it is like a lute (*barbutī*) whose upper part is heavy and whose back is small and light so that when you set it down it is reversed. When the child is male, its temperament is hot and dry but light as well.

447. The 'mixture' is that of the humours; cf., among others, Galen, 'Mixtures', in *Selected Works*, ed. and tr. P. N. Singer (Oxford, 1997), pp. 202ff. For a historical account, see Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York, 2007).

448. Cf. Galen, 'Mixtures', p. 247: 'female-kind is by nature colder than male-kind'.

At the time when it turns in its mother's womb to come out, and its head is downward, since its face is light, it raises it upward because of that very lightness, like that thing whose back is heavier than its front which turns over when it is moved. This is the opinion of the natural scientists as to the cause why a girl child has its face turned downward when it comes out of the mother while the face of a son turns upward.

[344] The response of the *ahl i ta'vid* – upon them be peace – to this question is to say that woman is weaker by nature, rather like the outer aspect of the Book and the Law. Whoever clings to the outer sense of the Book and the Law has a weak soul. Those who rely on the exoteric in their exegesis are like women, as God says, '*Your women are fields for you, so go into your fields in any way you wish.*'⁴⁴⁹ The exoteric interpreters say that God means, 'Have intercourse with your wives in any way that you want.' But the practitioners of hermeneutics say that by this He refers to the aspirants (*mustajibān*). He is saying that the *da'i* should speak as he wishes so that the aspirant attains genuine knowledge both of revelation and of exegesis, for that is the best for him. It is a stage in a world of whose traces He speaks, saying '*and send forth [good deeds] for yourselves*.'⁴⁵⁰ And they say that 'to send forth good deeds' lies in the diffusion of knowledge, not in having intercourse with women. Those versed in esoteric understanding (*ahl i batīn*) are like [other] men, but the true man is the Prophet whom God the Exalted set over all mankind, all of whom are in relation to him on the level of women because of his manliness. And since in the Law women are obliged to be obedient to men, and obedience to the Prophet is obligatory, it is clear that man is [at the level of] the Prophet, while all human beings in relation to him are in the position of women.

[345] Another proof that the Prophet is at the level of man while all other human beings are at the level of woman is from the Book of God the Exalted when God – praise be to Him – commands men, '*Admonish those women whose rebelliousness you fear, shun them in their resting places and hit them. If they obey you, do not seek a further way against them.*'⁴⁵¹ Elsewhere God the Exalted commanded His Prophet to deal with the polytheists in the same way: '*Turn away from them and*

449. Q2:223.

450. Ibid., tr. Jones.

451. Q4:34, tr. Jones.

admonish them and speak to them eloquently about themselves.⁴⁵² And in another passage He says, 'Fight them until there is no dissension and until the religion is God's. Then if they desist, let the only enmity be against the wrongdoers.'⁴⁵³

[346] Thus, we have made it obvious by scriptural proofs that the Prophet is at the level of man while all other human beings are at the level of women. God the Exalted puts man at the level of two women in matters of inheritance. He commanded that a man receive twice what a woman inherits, and the same applies in blood-money; blood-money for a woman is half that for a man. Whoever in the matter of religion has both the inner and the outer aspect of the Law is a man of religion for the very reason that he has a share in both parts. Whoever accepts revelation (*tanzil*) but without going further into its inner meaning (*bī ta'wīl*) is a woman in religion inasmuch as he receives only a part of religion. The exoteric is a female child in spiritual birth and has its back turned to the 'mother of religion', which is the sovereign of symbolic exegesis, and turns her face towards it; and it is for this reason, the sages say, that when the female is born it turns its back towards its mother's face. But the believer who is inwardly directed (*mu'min-i bāṭin*) is a male child and keeps his face turned towards the 'mother of religion', the sovereign of exegesis, and it is for this reason that a male child keeps his face turned towards his mother when he is born. The exotericist, that female child with its back turned towards 'mother knowledge', unavoidably has only a single part of the wealth of religion, namely, the outer aspect of the Law and the Qur'ānic revelation. But the believer who is the male child and who has his face turned towards 'mother knowledge', has two parts of the wealth of religion, namely, the outer and the inner aspect of the Law, as well as the revelation of the Book and its interpretation.

This is a comprehensive spiritual reply to this question.

452. Q4:63, tr. Jones.

453. Q2:193, tr. Jones.

On Questions without Answers about the Properties of the Elements

*Why is wetness more evident in water
Such that any dry thing may be moistened by it?
The air is more humid, in reality, than water;
Air is known by its very nature for its humidity.*

(Jurjānī, verses 68–69)

[347] In these two verses he asks why water's wetness is more evident and why one moistens dry things with water, given that the air is moister than water by its very nature. This question is not suitable. He himself has already stated that the wetness of water is most conspicuous and so why does he have to say that air is actually wetter than water? Then he asks why dry things are moistened with water when air is wetter. These are preposterous remarks. And the answer to them is to say that dry things are moistened with water because dry things do not become moist by air; rather, things that are already moist become moister in air. This question is the same as if someone might ask why heat is more apparent in fire and why flammable things are burned by fire when in reality air is hotter than fire, for indeed they do say that the air is hot. If such a question is inept, then the question contained in these two verses is inept as well.

[348] This man has conceived the notion that moisture denotes softness (*narmī*).⁴⁵⁴ Since air is softer than water he imagines that air is moister. This is an error. Moistness is one thing, softness another, just as hardness

454. De Gastines translates this (p. 314) as 'fluidity' ('fluidité'), which makes sense; however, I am not convinced that this is what NKh means here. He remains with the four basic qualities of matter (moist/dry/hard/soft) as formulated by Aristotle.

is one thing, dryness another. The natural scientists have said something about this notion. They have made a distinction between what is soft and what is moist, as well as between what is dry and what is hard. A thing can be soft without being moist; a thing can be dry without being hard. If everything that is soft were moist, fire too would necessarily be moist, inasmuch as we always see that it is a soft substance. Do you not see that however big a fire may be, we can put a piece of iron into it and move it around and it moves easily, without any resistance to our hand? But if we put the same iron into water with the same volume as that of the fire and we move that piece of iron around in the water, we are able to move it around only with difficulty. So we have shown that fire is softer than water and yet, there is no moisture in fire. It does not occur to people to doubt that air is moist, but only because it is soft, and indeed, softer than water; so that this man can say that air is actually moister than water and so it follows necessarily that air is softer than water. It is as if somebody held that earth is dry, by the same token it is hard, and so would say that it necessarily follows that everything which by nature is dry is hard. By this line of reasoning it would necessarily follow that fire, which is drier than earth, is – since dryness and hardness are considered synonymous – harder than earth. But since fire is extremely soft, this comparison is demonstrably false.

[349] Natural scientists differ as to their views of the nature of air. One faction says that air is essentially warm and moist. Another group says that air is essentially cold and dry. As proof of their assertion these latter say that moist things become dry out in the air; so the substance of air draws the moisture from a damp garment. Such is the nature of a dry thing that when it comes into contact with a wet thing, it takes the moisture out of it. If air were not dry, they say, damp things would not become dry by means of it.

[350] Another group says that air has no nature whatsoever, just as water has no colour. They prove this assertion by saying that in spring the air is warm and moist, in summer it is warm and dry, in autumn it is cold and dry, and in winter it is cold and damp. It must follow then that the air in itself has no proper nature of its own which would enable it to receive the elements in succession, in this like water which now accepts translucency, now turbidity, and now yet some other shade. It follows therefore that water too by its very nature has no colour. None of the four 'natures' has this versatility (*talawwun*) which air possesses.

[351] Still another group holds that air is cold and soft, and neither warm nor moist. The proof that they adduce is as follows. If the air were moist, it would freeze when the weather turned cold, in the same way that water which is moist freezes when it gets extremely cold; since the air does not freeze, it is not moist – on the contrary, it is soft. They go on to say that since in winter we all see that the air grows colder than the earth, we know that air by its nature is colder than earth. If air were really moister than water, it would quench thirst more quickly than water does; but it is water which quenches our thirst by its wetness. And since a thirsty man's thirst is intensified by the air which he inhales and exhales, we know that air is not moist. On the contrary, it is dry, for it makes the thirsty person's innards drier than they were. And something which makes moist things dry cannot be moist; likewise, anything which makes dry things moist cannot be dry. So we have shown that softness is one thing and moistness another, dryness one thing and hardness another. Softness is the nature of the substance of the air, but that does not by itself establish the moistness of the air, just as the softness of fire's substance does not prevent it from being dry. Water is wet not by virtue of its being soft; fire too is soft and yet, it is not moist. Earth is dry not by virtue of being hard; fire too is dry but it is not hard. We know that whatever water moistens cannot be moister than water itself. We also observe that if the air grows humid it loses its particular airy property, for its property is such that a healthy person breathes it in and then breathes it out without any ill effect. The air in deep pits, in mines where fires are laid or in underground aquifers (*kāriz*), becomes at times so densely humid that anyone who goes into that air cannot breathe and dies. So we know that that air has become so humid that it has taken on the nature of water to such an extent that it has lost its properties as air. Hence, if the substance of air were moister than water, as this man claims, air could not be moistened by water nor could its humidity be increased, since water's wetness derives from air. It is as though he were saying that fire is drier than earth but the fire's dryness derives from the earth. And this is ridiculous.

[352] Certain philosophers are of the view that the world's Creator first brought matter into being by creation out of nothing (*ibdā'*). Other philosophers say that on the contrary, matter itself, in its particulars and unstructured (*bī tarkīb*), is eternal (*qadīm*). These say further that He joined together a portion of these individual parts of matter in a compound which was hard and closed (*afrāz*) until the substance of the earth was produced, heavy and dense as it is. Another portion of those parts,

they say, He also bound together one to the other, but not densely as is the case with the compaction of the earth's parts; rather, with a hardness looser and more open (*gushādtar*) than that of the earth. And that is water, which is softer than earth. Even though the parts of the water are bound together, one with another, they do not have the density and firmness of earth. Water, they say, despite its density and openness, does not have the heaviness of earth; for this reason, it is lighter in its density than the earth and stands on the earth's surface. They go on to say that He combined another portion of those individual parts even more loosely than water; because of that looseness too these parts are lighter than water. That is air which has its position above water. He also assembled yet another portion of those parts of matter, they claim, which is even looser than air, and those too are lighter than air by virtue of this very looseness. If air grows even looser and more diffuse than it is, it turns to fire. As proof of the correctness of their view they say that when we strike a stone against iron, the air is immediately torn and becomes more diffuse than it was, and because of this a spark appears in the midst of the stone and the iron at the very instant when we thus rend the air. They say too that when water is cold and receives the force of fire, it turns into air (i.e., steam) and ascends simply by becoming more diffuse than it had been.

[353] No one asks why water freezes in sharp cold and grows hard as stone while the air does not solidify, or why the earth freezes when it is wet. No one asks why water penetrates a clod of earth but not a stone. No one asks why water moves from on high downwards but not in the opposite direction, though wind blows both upwards and downwards. Men always see things acting thus and do not imagine that there is any need to ask about them. It would be as if someone were to ask why fire burns cotton quickly but a log slowly. At such questions the ignoramus bursts out laughing and says, 'What sort of talk is this?' No one asks why oil (*rawghan*), which is also a liquid, keeps to the surface of the water and does not mix with it, or why fire burns oil. No one asks why fire at first does not burn a damp log and then at the last seizes and burns it. No one asks why, if fire burns up dry things and stone is dry, it does not burn stone. No one asks why water will not mix with quicksilver (*simab*). No one asks about lead (*surb*), the most fusible of metals (*gudāzandahtarin-i gawharī*), why – when it is put into a cauldron in which there are one hundred *man* of lead and one *man* of water – the fire does not cause it to fuse in the cauldron so long as there is even a little bit of water remaining inside. No one asks why iron, which is harder than gold, is burned in a fire while gold remains unburned.

[354] We ourselves have mentioned these questions in such writings of ours as *The Book of the Wonders of Art*, *The Wayfarers' Provision*, *The Book of the Language of the Universe*, and *The Book of the Choice of the Imam and the Choice of the Faith*.⁴⁵⁵ We have answered each of these with rational proofs and logical demonstrations, for this is an obligation for sages, namely, to compose books of questions together with their answers. And yet, all the things we see in the world are so many questions without answers. If we were to repeat all that we have said in these books, we would be wasting time. And since there remains much more to be said, than we have already said, we will not concern ourselves with repeating what we have already discussed. After these questions this man then goes on to say [as follows].

455. These titles are, respectively, *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-ṣan'ah* (lost), *Kitāb Zad al-musāfirin*, *Kitāb Lisān al-'ālam* (lost), and *Kitāb Ikhtiyār al-imam wa-ikhtiyār al-īmān* (lost). Cf. Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 122, nos 18, 5, 17, and 16.

On the Poet's Resolve to Reply to his own Questions

*Now my discourse grows tedious. I will let it drop here.
It is become heavy¹ and I fear the weight of its burden.
I pose questions but my object is neither to pester nor probe.
I've strewed these at such length to offer benefit.
I'd answer in verse if things weren't now as they are:
The nettle has usurped the place of the date.
But if not in verse, then I'll speak in prose and make
A forest of words so that wisdom may pluck the fruit of my trees.
I'll advance my argument and will fashion a cloak
Made out of demonstration, with a turban of proof.*

(Jurjānī, verses 70–74)

[355] With these verses he asks forgiveness for heaping up so many questions; as a reasonable man he says, in effect, that 'My object in this was not to annoy; rather, I pose questions for the sake of benefit.' Such a statement might have been fine if he had shortened his discourse. But when finally he states, 'I wish to answer', and then, at last, says, 'I know what the answer to this question is', it is in fact annoying, not beneficial. Indeed, since he knows the answers to these questions, it would have behoved him at the end of the poem to say, 'My purpose here is not to annoy; rather, I pose these questions so that I may make intelligent men and seekers after knowledge crave the pursuit of hidden knowledge. I will provide answers later to these questions so that anyone who seeks their meaning will arrive at the path we have sent them on. Questions without answers are [like] good tidings (*nuvid*) without joy – tough and insipid at once.

[356] We ourselves have written a book on arithmetic and entitled it *The Oddities of Arithmetic and the Marvels of the Arithmeticians*.⁴⁵⁶ We composed questions and answers and collected two hundred problems in arithmetic; first the question, then the answer. We showed the way to solve the problem and how to prove its correctness. No science is more rigorously demonstrable than arithmetic. Even though nowadays in the lands of Khurasan and the East, there is not a single accomplished mathematician; since I have the solution to those problems I composed that book for those yet to come in a future time.

[357] This fellow says that he would give the answers to these questions if 'the nettle hadn't usurped the place of the date'. These words make it clear that in his time the sultan of the land was an ignoramus and that the scholars of the day could not disseminate knowledge. If, because ignorance has imposed its empery over people, it would be fitting for sages and scholars to keep silent and not pursue wisdom (*hikmat nakarkandi*), then it would have behoved the wisest of the wise, the Seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad, the Chosen One, not to give mankind this treasure of wisdom, this mine of the truths of all knowledge, which is the Noble Qur'ān. Quite the contrary. God the Exalted gave him this command, in the verses where He says, 'Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book. Perform the prayer for prayer prevents abominable behaviour and reprehensible deeds. To remember God is greater, for God knows all that you do.'⁴⁵⁷ The exterior meaning of ritual prayer is the worship of God with the body by advancing towards the *qibla* of bodies, which is the Ka'ba, the house of God the Exalted in Mecca. The interior explication (*ta'wil-i batm*) of the ritual prayer is the worship of God with the rational soul by turning, in the quest for knowledge of the Book and the Law, towards the *qibla* of spirits, which is God's house, which is a house in which God's knowledge, the Imam of Truth – peace be upon him – resides. If anyone waits to disseminate knowledge and establish righteousness until the sultan of ignorance has been eliminated among people, they will depart this world ignorant and unrighteous themselves. On the contrary, the wise are like fruit trees, lofty and fruit-laden; the seekers after wisdom are like furnished children, nimble, cunning, and sharp-eyed (*jald ve hulatgar ve durbm*); but the ignorant are like beasts,

456. That is, *Ghara'ib al-hisab wa-aja'ib al-hussab*, a lost treatise. Cf. Poonawala, p. 122, no. 19.

457. Q29:45.

their heads hanging down heavily, who cannot look up at the trees, nor do they even know that there is something in the trees. The children gather the moist, fresh fruits, sweet and delicious, from those trees and eat them without the beasts ever realising what they are up to. These verses of mine are in this vein:⁴⁵⁸

On the tree of this world only the intelligent
 See the fruit, O you who are wise!
 The tree of this world, to him who knows,
 Holds out fruit but to him who knows nothing, a thorn.
 Know that the good are concealed within,
 Like the dates amid tangles of thorn.
 You say to me, 'If you're free and magnanimous,
 Why do you stay in Yumgān, friendless and despised?'
 I reply that at Yumgān I'm under God's care (*zinhār*);
 Take a good look: I am not a prisoner (*giriftār*).
 No one would say that silver, pearl, and ruby
 Are necessarily captives of the mines they're in.
 If Yumgān is poor and powerless,
 Even so I still have power and standing there.
 Although the serpent is lowly and despised,
 The bezoar-stone is both precious and prized.⁴⁵⁹
 The royal pearl is not lacking in value or worth to a man
 Because of the worthless shell that it is in.
 The sweet-smelling rose is pure although
 It grows only in dirt turned up and in dung.
 You too are the fruit of the tree of this world:
 A tall upstanding tree with language for fruit.
 Whether you bear the fruit of wisdom or not,
 You're white poplar, white poplar, white poplar.⁴⁶⁰
 Nothing's left, O wise man, but a tree

458. For the complete 50-line poem, of which this is lines 1–15, see *Diwan*, pp. 17–19 (no. 9), also, *Diwan*, ed. Taqavi, pp. 233–235. In both these editions, the first word of the poem is given as *nabini* ('You do not see ...') while the present text gives *nabīnad* ([He] 'doesn't see').

459. The bezoar (*muhrah ī mar*) is a mineral deposit found in the stomach of certain animals and used as an antidote to poison; cf. Persian *padzahr* (Steingass, *A Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 229).

460. An utterly simple but strikingly beautiful verse, made up of the same three words repeated: *sapidāri sapidāri sapidār*.

Whose fruit is pearl and whose leaves are dinars.
Finer than coins and gems are knowledge and wisdom
Which make the heart shine and awaken the eye.

[358] We have transmitted a portion of the verses which this man placed at the end of his poem, not for the purpose of disputing him or causing contention but rather, so that when those distinguished in virtue and learning (*afāḍil*) read this book, they may know that we were not unaware of the measure of contradiction which lay in our brother's words. For next he says [as follows].

That the Learned Man is Alive, the Ignorant Man Dead

*Seek and write! Then read and question! Afterwards
Learn and then know and sow it all in your heart.
The lion's prey is the stag, that of the panther the gazelle,
But knowledge and wisdom are the wise man's prey.
The man of knowledge is not dead, even in the tomb;
The ignorant man is a corpse, even on a throne.
I'll be greatly gladdened if the answers come
From someone who brings proof and possesses the call (da'wā-dār).
But let him who has not learned and who lacks foundation
Keep still: his word has no weight in measure or criterion.
O You who ordain destinies, Originator of all things,
By right of reverence and veneration of Aḥmad the Chosen,
Save us and those who seek the knowledge of the faith
From the talons of tribulation, O Forgiver of sins!
But whoever does evil to those who do no evil,
Him, O Lord, do Thou curse and deliver to the pit!*

(Jurjānī, verses 75–82)

[359] To know that the ignorant are like the dead but that whoever moves from ignorance to knowledge is like a dead man who comes back to life; to know that light truly is belief; that doubt and shadows are undeniably ignorance and error – such are the signs of those who follow the household of the Prophet – may God bless him and give him peace and grant His peace and blessings to the pure members of his house. God says, 'Is the one who was dead and to whom We gave life and appointed for him a light by which he could walk among the people like the one whose likeness

*is in darkness from which he cannot emerge? Thus what they have been doing has been made to seem fair to the unbelievers.*⁴⁶¹

[360] From this verse it is evident that the believers are the living and that they move amongst people by the light of knowledge, while the ignorant in their darkness are unknowing. Moreover, [it is evident] that coming back to life after death is a true promise God the Exalted has made to people, and that the resurrection which is mentioned in this verse is certain truth, is truth itself. Therefore, that person whose resurrection God the Exalted has mentioned in this verse is not dead; rather, he is alive. And this coming back to life pertains to all people.

[361] The literalists of the community have explicated this verse but they differed about whom God the Exalted intended to resurrect. Certain of them say this verse refers to the Prophet whom God has brought to life by light, while by the cadaver of unbelief in the shadows, they say, *Abū Jahl* is meant.⁴⁶²

[362] It is our purpose to show that God's resurrection of people after death means bringing them out of ignorance into knowledge. Thus, this man by the words which he has uttered in these verses – by comparing the man who knows with the living and the ignorant man with the dead – indicates those who follow faithfully in the path of God the Exalted, among whom are the *ahl-i ta'yīd*, those assisted by divine inspiration, and the spiritual exegetes, practitioners of *ta'wīl*.

461. Q6:122, tr. Jones.

462. That is, 'Amr b. Hisham, known as 'Abū Jahl' ('Father of Ignorance'), an early adversary of the Prophet; he was killed in 624 at the Battle of Badr.

Conclusion of the Book

[363] This poem (*qaṣīdat*) as it has come down to us, contains eighty-two verses in which there are ninety-one questions, some philosophical, some logical, some scientific, some grammatical, some religious, and some exegetical. To each one of them an exact answer has been given. All that seemed necessary, whether broad expositions of meanings or concise commentaries on individual statements, has been collected and delineated in accord with philosophical wisdom and, at the same time, the path of wisdom of true religion. Through these detailed commentaries, these stringent explanations, and these cogent and considered chapters, this poem – which was comparable to a body that has been neglected, wasted, discarded, treated shabbily, and flung aside – has been recast and its scattered parts put into a coherent whole.⁴⁶³ We have made it into something select, worthy of mention, and much-cited, as required by the request of an illustrious and celebrated prince, alert to truths, seeking subtleties, adept in hidden meanings, skilled in language, a connoisseur of knowledge, just and upright of character, guardian of wisdom, protector of arts, the *amīr* of Badakhshān ‘Ayn al-Dawla Zayn al-Milla. Fakhr al-Umma, Shams al-A‘ālī, Abū al-Ma‘ālī ‘Alī b. al-Asad b. al-Ḥārith, the client (*mawla*) of the Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*) – may God the Exalted grant his rule, both temporal and spiritual, peace in this world and felicity in the next; and may He augment his success in revivifying knowledge and wisdom, in establishing truth, inward and outward, and in exalting both fervour and perception. As for myself, during a long life I have seen no one on God’s vast earth who set out in search of the sources of knowledge, the hidden truths of religion, and the treasures of truth, without giving a thought to this passing realm, as he did. Anyone else of his rank and station, whether

463. This suggests that NKh was unaware of the earlier commentary on al-Jurjānī’s poem by his disciple Muḥammad Surkh Nishāpūri.

prince or sultan, would have accommodated the demands of the world; and yet, despite all that he had of the world and good fortune, the auspicious favour of the sphere, regal within and obeyed without, with a hereditary kingdom, an exalted rule, troops and retainers and servants, he strove always to acquire a good name and to perform praiseworthy deeds. He relied on right belief in matters of religion, and in the use of his sovereign power he sought the grace of God the Exalted, taking in hand the bridle of fate to deliver those oppressed by the fluctuations of the spinning heavens.

[364] These sincere verses which he himself composed will attest, to men of understanding, to the purity of his conviction. A poem of Shams al-Dīn al-A'ālī Abū al-Ma'ālī:

Do not go whenever you can to the servants
When the Master himself is in place.
There's no helper (*firyād-ras*) in this world
In a man's affliction other than God.

[365] Every intelligent reader who looks into this book, in which we have related the answers of the sages of philosophy to each question – which we have encompassed with commentary and exegetical demonstrations drawn from the deductions of the *ahl-i ta'vid* and the conclusions of 'those rooted in knowledge'⁴⁶⁴ – upon them be peace – in a firm and definitive way, every such reader should consider this book with a discerning eye (*chashm-i bašīrat*) and reflect truthfully on each of its points. If he comes upon a term or a point regarding a religious reference or an exegetical expression which is not known to the renowned scholars of the day – whether they are men of letters, poets, or scribes – let him not reject these out of hand. For the gems of knowledge of the true religion are strung on threads of analogy (*be rishta-hā'ī amthal*) and lie concealed in the jewel boxes of enigmas (*andar durī hā'ī rumuz nihūftah*). 'Only those who are purified may touch them.'⁴⁶⁵ And those who have seen the hidden secrets of the knowledge of the Glorious Book (*masturāt-i 'ilm-i kitāb*) and have grasped the books of the most glorious Law ...⁴⁶⁶

464. Q3:7; 4:162.

465. Q56:79.

466. There is a lacuna here. The play of rhyme on 'hidden secrets' (*masturat*) and 'books' (*maktubat*) is reflective of the play on esoteric and exoteric knowledge

[366] {This book has been composed for the *amir* of Badakhshān 'Alī b. al-Asad, the *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful by Abū Mu'īn Nāṣir b. Khusraw b. Ḥārith al-Yumghānī in the year 462 of the Hijra of our Prophet. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and may God bless Muḥammad, the best of His creations, and all of his pure and virtuous family.⁴⁶⁷

The *Book of Twin Wisdoms Reconciled* is concluded.]⁴⁶⁸

throughout the book. The MS Aya Sofya 2393 breaks off at this point; it is not clear how much of the text between sections 365 and 366 may be missing.

467. The date in the text is 422 but has been corrected by the editors to AH 462, i.e., AD 1069 or 1070.

468. This colophon is missing from MS Aya Sofya 2393. It was discovered by Muḥtabā Minuvi in a collection of manuscripts belonging to Sayyid Naṣr Allāh Taqavī and published in his *Dīwān*, which was edited by Ḥasan Taqīzada (Tehran, 1929) as part of the so-called *Risāla*, an abstract of certain of the questions in the *Jāmi'* (though not apparently compiled by Nāṣir-i Khusraw himself, according to Corbin; cf. his Introduction, p. 43). The date of composition given as 422 is undoubtedly incorrect, as M. Mu'īn has demonstrated in his Persian introduction to the published text (pp. 4-5). See also our Introduction above.

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Between Reason and Revelation: Twin Wisdoms

Reconciled is an annotated translation of the Persian text prepared by Henry Corbin and Mohammed Mu'in based on the single surviving manuscript of the work, now in the Süleymaniye Mosque Library in Istanbul. It is a work of great philosophical and spiritual insight, which is also a pioneering attempt to tackle difficult intellectual problems in the Persian language; it is at once lucid and lyrical, precise and speculative. Nāṣir's influence has been immense as both a poet and a thinker, and the *Kitāb-i Jāmi' al-hikmatayn* is his crowning work.

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