The numbers in {curly braces} correspond to the pages of the publication. The page number is given before its contents. Compared with the book publication, minor changes have been made to the translation, and some references to hadiths have been added.

Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani

The Tranquility of the Intellect

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,
in Whom I believe.

{21}

To begin: Mighty is the Benefactor toward Whom desires are directed; Exalted is the Inspirer to Whom souls turn in their supplication. He is the God whom all that exists exalts, proclaiming His incomparability, and whom the revolving spheres glorify, bearing witness to the splendour of His power. Before the light of His unity, intellects prostrate themselves; before the radiance of His wisdom, hearts (al-bāb) bow in humility. He is above the perfection inherent in His works and exalted beyond the completeness and power that it is proper for His creation to possess. He is hidden from the eyes: His very being is incomparable. He cannot be comprehended through an attribute: His very being is unique. For He is He alone: He has neither likeness nor equal, neither opposite nor resemblance, neither partner nor companion. O most incomparable Divinity! Intellects find no attribute with which to describe Him and, exhausted, withdraw, acknowledging their own incapacity and bowing before His majesty. No one who approaches the knowledge of Him escapes bewilderment; and everyone who contemplates the magnificence of His creations desires to know Him, yet loses the way and wanders in darkness.

I bear witness that there is no god but Him, who brought into being the supporting cause (ʿilla) and the effect, and brought forth entities (aʿyān) and intellects. Of these, He made those foremost in existence into causes (asbāb), while He ordained that those coming after should attain perfection. Among them He established shining moons and glittering stars. Their rays then streamed into the world of the soul, transforming it into a pure intellect where it became connected with the divine laws. They poured their grace upon them, and from them, in opposition to existing things, He fashioned heaven and earth: an entire world containing land and sea, days and months, night and day, suns and moons, the living and the dead, animals and plants, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, men and women, beings and emanations. Thus the luminous planets of this world rose, and the influential natural darkness was removed from souls. They attained the heights of happiness, taking their places as they wished in the gardens of Paradise, ready to pass into the abodes of bliss in the Merciful One’s palaces. For this wondrous bliss, let us glorify Him; for this purest grace, let us give thanks. The gracious gifts of God cannot be numbered, however hard one tries.

May blessings and abundant beneficence be bestowed forever upon the sun of the community, Muhammad, the shepherd who delivered his flock from the disgrace of paganism. Through his summons, the lamp of divine unity was kindled; through his wisdom, the believers were enlightened; through his grace, the stars of error were extinguished; through his power, the traces of paganism were dispersed; and through his guidance, the laws of worship were strengthened. With him dawn broke for those who affirm divine unity.

And may blessings be bestowed upon the summit of summits, the radiant light, the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, through whose boundless piety the rays of worship shone forth, and whom God commanded His people to obey after His Prophet. Through his wisdom and glory, he attained pre-eminence, and through his deeds and knowledge he became the leader of his people and their guide in the abode of Holiness.

And may blessings be bestowed upon the pure Imams, the guiding teachers, shoots of the heavenly tree and branches of the prophetic larch, the repositories and lights of divine knowledge, the trustworthy vessels of Holiness, the inhabitants of the heights and the dwellers of the Inhabited House, the forefathers of our master, the Commander of the Faithful. May God also bestow upon our master, Imam al-Hakim, Commander of the Faithful, the purest blessings and the finest benefactions.

Now then: truth has its signs, and everything has its own structure and order. Virtue is something to be sought, while the ability to attain it is a gift. Happiness is inseparable from perfection, and eternal life is firmly bound to the fulfilment of the rites of the Law. The highest of the celestial ranks is the rank of the teaching guides, and the highest among them is the rank of guides who possess knowledge and virtue. Every rank in the world of religion radiates benefit through those who know it, and every existing soul among the friends of God receives that benefit. Furthest from happiness is the one who neglects the ordinances of the community and violates the laws of religious confession; and the greatest loser is the one who lets the days of life pass in vain, forgetting religion for the sake of personal passions and whims.

Having observed that, among the shaykhs whose words resounded widely and whose summons spread far, many had been embraced by grace through their skilfully composed works and their drawing of souls toward the path of the hereafter; that each had duly employed the means of attaining happiness bestowed upon him, given thanks for the grace granted beforehand by instructing those who worship, proclaimed the wisdom of balance in the divine laws, and helped souls enter the abode of the hereafter and unite around the virtuous Imams; and that each had diligently and industriously devoted himself to worship and guidance, and had dedicated himself to writing works to the extent of his ability;

Having also observed that much remained beyond the pages of their writings that believers needed as they ascended toward the heights of the Kingdom, and that the virtuous sought when they embraced through knowledge the Kingdom of greatness and power, forming mental representations (taṣawwur) of existing things and attaining true comprehension (taḥaqquq) of their supporting causes and effects;

And since, within our community of preachers—that is, the preachers of the family of Muhammad, may God's blessing be upon him and them—who call people to divine unity through their holiness and obedience, the first has always assisted the last, and the last has supported the first, so that through joint efforts they might comprehend everything without exception and together become capable of leaving the sublunary world, I considered it necessary to set forth the first principles of existing things and the ranks of their existence, as well as the evidentiary signs within the prophetic creation through which the soul, by comprehending their forms, ascends to the highest assembly and tastes the happiness symbolically signified in the earlier scriptures. This is so provided that it remains faithful to cooperation in worship, joint effort in fulfilling obligatory rites, mutual assistance and support in religious affairs, and the proper acknowledgement of the grace bestowed upon us

through the blessing of God's vicegerent on His earth (may God bless him). Through this grace the soul becomes filled with bliss, in a dark-green meadow where springs of clear water flow and the air is fresh and pleasant, amid dark-eyed, wide-eyed maidens. Finally, it must be grateful for the gift and seek its reward.

Having accomplished what I set out to do, I gathered all of this into the present book and gave it the title *The Tranquility of the Intellect*, because its quarters and streets contain everything the intellect requires to attain holy purity and reach tranquillity—things that cannot be read in books or found in revealed scriptures, except through their signs and symbols. By this I mean our intellects, which dwell in the realm of Nature and possess souls.

{24}

This book contains seven quarters, each comprising seven streets, except the seventh quarter, which has fourteen, doubling the seven in order to fulfil the purpose sought and in the hope of attaining perfection in eternal life. To complete this book, I ask God and His vicegerent on His earth for support, and I beseech them to restrain me from error and grant precision to my hand, although we are not free from mistakes. God alone grants strength and power.

The First Quarter, containing the explanations necessary for the reader and explaining why the quarters and their streets have been arranged as they are, consists of seven streets:

1. On the purification of the soul and its preparation to receive this book before reading it, and on what purifies and prepares it.
2. On the precautions required when reading religious books and on the nature of the present book.
3. On the books that should be read before this one and on what should be selected from them for thoughtful reflection.
4. On the purpose for which the quarters and streets of this book have been arranged.
5. Glad tidings of salvation and bliss in the abode of eternity and abiding for those worshippers of the Most High from the community of the true faith who read this book as a work establishing religious confession and prescribing the order of the paths of worship.
6. A warning of the eternal, grievous torments (may God keep them far from us!) awaiting those who read this book without treating it as a work establishing religious confession and prescribing the order of worship, who do not consider action [in worship] necessary and do not strive to rectify the soul.
7. On the great benefit the soul derives, in attaining {25} perfection, from reading this book, assimilating its contents, and imprinting its form upon itself.

The Second Quarter. On the crown of intellects—affirmation of divine unity, exaltation, praise, and glorification of God.

It consists of seven streets:

1. On God, besides Whom there is no god, and the impossibility of His non-existence.
2. On why the Most High cannot be any “thing.”
3. On why the Most High cannot be comprehended through any attribute; why He is neither a body nor in a body; why the one who understands does not understand His essence, and the one who perceives does not perceive Him.

4. On why the Most High is neither form nor matter, and why, since He is Himself, there is nothing resembling matter upon which He might act: He is more glorious and exalted than this.
5. On why the Most High has neither opposite nor likeness.
6. On the inability of languages to describe Him adequately.
7. On why the truest expression of affirming divine unity, praising, glorifying, and affirming consists in not ascribing to the Most High the attributes found in existing things.

The Third Quarter. On the Pen, or the First Existent.

It consists of seven streets:

1. On affirming the Created One, who is the First Existent; on why its existence does not derive from its own essence; on its being the supporting cause of everything that exists; and on why it is neither a body nor a power within a body, and does not belong to the corporeal world.
2. On why it proceeds from the Most High not by way of emanation, as the philosophers maintain, but is created by Him, and on why the manner of its existence cannot be comprehended.
3. On its being the embodiment of Creation, the embodiment of the Created One, the embodiment of unity, and the embodiment of the one; and on its being the First Existent, which has nothing preceding it or coming before it in existence.
4. On its perfection; on its being eternal without limit but not eternal without beginning; on its remaining as it was created, undergoing no transformation; on its uniqueness and lack of likeness; and on its understanding only its own essence.
5. On the quiddity of its substance, the attributes that properly belong to it, what in its essence is the substratum and what is borne by it, and how it is one in one respect and multiple in another.
6. On the indescribable glory, magnificence, beauty, and self-rejoicing of it; on its inability to know the One beyond it, from whom its existence proceeds, and on the longing and bewilderment this entails; and on its being the Greatest Name and the greatest of that which is named.
7. On its being the mover of everything that moves and on precisely how it moves; on its being the supporting cause of everything else and needing nothing but its own essence to act; and on its being an intellect in itself, understanding its own essence and understood by its own essence.

The Fourth Quarter. On the Pen, the Tablet, and the supreme principles—which are the heavenly letters—that exist through Creation, which is the First Created.

It consists of seven streets:

1. On the manner of emanation.
2. On the first emanation, which is the Second Intellect, called the Pen in divine tradition; and on proving that its existence is second, that it is as perfect as the First [Intellect], that it is neither a body nor in a body, and that its existence is not the First Principle sought.
3. On the second, potential First Emanation, namely prime matter, called the Tablet in divine tradition; on how its existence proceeds from the First Created without being

the First Principle sought; on why it resembles neither the First [Existent] nor the First Emanation, and the reason for this; and on its being the root of the corporeal world and, among created existents, the equivalent of three among numbers.
4. On why what proceeds from the First Created, or the First Existent, is not uniform.

{27}

5. On the heavenly letters, which are the supreme principles in the world of the First Emanation; on their number, what proceeds from each of them, and how this occurs.
6. On why the heavenly letters proceeding from the First Created and the First Emanation are seven Intellects, and why the emanation of existents ceases after them.
7. On why the existence of things emanated from Creation, which is the First Created, is not temporal; on why all of them, except prime matter, are pure forms, while prime matter is one in one respect and multiple in another; on their understanding only themselves and that which precedes them in existence; on their form being the form of a human being, which it does not surpass; and on their lights being diffused through bodies and souls, acting upon them, and being connected with the existence of things.

The Fifth Quarter. On Nature and its heavenly bodies, which proceed from the supreme principles that are the heavenly letters.

It consists of seven streets:

1. On the quiddity of Nature and on how, as such, it is one in substance and multiple in its effects upon its matters within the corporeal world.
2. On Nature's two limits: the first limit encompasses everything for which Nature is the supporting cause; through this limit Nature possesses its first existence, that is, its first perfection. The second limit is encompassed by everything whose supporting effect Nature is; through it Nature possesses its second existence, that is, its second perfection. On Nature's position between these two limits; on what these limits are and where they are situated; and on how the second limit, as such, is the centre around which everything that moves revolves.
3. On Nature's possession of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge; on how, in the part of itself that constitutes its second limit, it gathers all virtues; and on how its internal interconnectedness gives it sufficiency and perfection.
4. On the Throne, or the Proximate Angel, or the first moving mover considered as mover—that is, the form that moves its receptacle, which is called the celestial sphere; on why it both moves and is moved, and on why it is located within a body.
5. On the Footstool, or the first moving mover considered as moved—that is, the highest sphere; on its being a body and how a body can be moving; on the celestial bodies that follow it and their number; and on how the celestial spheres are at rest as a whole but move in their individual parts.
6. On the bodies of the celestial spheres, especially the highest sphere; on how these bodies are the simplest in the realm of Nature, are free from defect, neither perish nor change in any of their states, and receive no form other than their own.
7. On the celestial bodies, what they consist of, their movements and effects, and how these are the causes of the existence of natural things.

The Sixth Quarter. On terrestrial bodies, which derive their existence from celestial bodies, and on their nature.

It consists of seven streets:

1. On the prime matter from which bodies are formed.
2. On the four pillars: what they are, their active natural forms, how they combine with one another, and how they differ from celestial bodies.
3. On the movement of the four pillars; on why they have neither heaviness nor weight at their centres; and on their role as intermediaries through which the soul apprehends perceptible things.
4. On how the four pillars persist as essences, their number remaining constant, neither increasing nor decreasing, and how they transform into one another in their boundary layers.
5. On the reason bodies possess density and their particles are multiple.
6. On why the earth is not spherical; on what within it deserves to be the centre of the encompassing body; on its shape; on how the parts of it exposed to the air are in motion, causing the waters of the sea to move, and on the nature of this movement; and on how mountain cliffs are formed from it and why.
7. On why water does not encompass the surface of the earth; why it rises and falls in the sea; and why water exposed to the air has the form of a human being.

{29}

The Seventh Quarter. On the three kinds of generated beings—minerals, plants, and animals—which arise from celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies: fire, air, water, and earth.

It consists of fourteen streets:

1. On the second matter from which generated beings arise, understood as a mixture.
2. On what comes into being in the region of the air through influences, as something composite, and on its nature.
3. On terrestrial existents—minerals, plants, and animals—beginning with minerals as bodies.
4. On minerals as natural souls; on their possessing efficacy and knowledge, and on the nature of this knowledge and efficacy.
5. On plants as bodies, on their being more complex than minerals, and on their possessing more organs.
6. On plants as vegetative souls, the nature of their existence, how they are connected with the body, and their quiddity.
7. On animals as bodies, the origin from which they emerged, their being more complex than plants and possessing more organs, and their constituting the limit of existents beyond which no further existent lies.
8. On the animal as a sensitive soul: what it is and how it exists; the knowledge it possesses for preserving its body; its perfection and power, and its first principle; and the respects in which it coincides with and differs from the human species.
9. On the human soul as a sensitive soul; on what arises within it in its existence as the first perfection, how it acquires its second perfection, and the supporting cause of that perfection; on the ultimate end it attains through its actions; on what plays the role of matter and what plays the role of form within it; on the imprints arising in it through acquisition; on its place among existing things; and on its being both one and multiple.

{30}

10. On the human soul as a rational soul and its nature at this level; on whether it is the sensitive soul raised to a higher degree or whether human beings possess three souls—vegetative, sensitive, and rational—as some maintain; on whether it is a substance or an accident; and, if it is a substance, whether the same accidents that belong to bodies belong to it or whether its accidents are distinctive; and on what plays the role of matter and what plays the role of form within it.
11. On the rational soul and its actions; on whether these actions come into existence with the body's assistance and participation or whether the soul can perform actions independently, without its body; on the difference between its actions and the ultimate end it attains through them; on its first and second perfections; and on how it becomes a complete, abiding intellect.
12. On the rational soul as an abiding entity and the reason for this; on what grants it permanence and happiness, and what brings it destruction and torment; on whether these things come to it from outside or arise from the nature from which its existence derives; and on the nature of torment and happiness, and of its death and life.
13. On the human soul and how it is requited for what it has acquired after its passage [into the next world]; on the meaning of resurrection, the Last Judgement, reward, punishment, Paradise, and Hell, and what these mean for the soul; on the state of the virtuous in their final abode, what their souls in earthly life reveal about their life in the hereafter, and their actions; on the hypocrites, apostates, misguided people, and arrogant, boastful individuals who are far removed from true worship of God, their actions, and what awaits them after death; on whether the soul receives reward and punishment as soon as it passes [into the next world] or remains as it is until the resurrection; on when it is requited and what the inhabitants of Paradise and Hell have in common before that time; on whether it remains an individual soul, identical to the form of its body during earthly life, or not; on whether a soul that has left its body becomes connected with another body, as proponents of transmigration maintain, or not; on whether it remembers its earthly life; on whether its knowledge disappears; and on whether a soul that has attained reward possesses the ability to act upon something else, as the intellects beyond [the realm of Nature] can, or not, and on the nature of this action.

{31}

14. On the human soul as a rational soul, supported by the heavens; on how it joins with the Spirit of Holiness and why not all souls receive such support at all times, and for what reason; on inspired revelation, through which the soul is supported, and its nature; on how it joins with resurrected souls and whether it joins them when they occupy the level of sensation, imagination, or the rational soul, and into what it is divided; on the miracles it manifests, how they differ from the tricks of magicians, and why magic can be understood and learned through instruction, whereas these miracles cannot be understood or learned through one's own efforts; on the virtues gathered by the supported soul, its actions, and its aims; on its companions, their ranks, and the rank of the one who succeeds it in safeguarding the community, and what is bestowed upon him by the Most High; on the number of cycles and their custodians through whom a new creation is accomplished; on the rank and actions of the custodian of the seventh cycle; on how the completion of the cycles is recognised and on the philosophers' arguments concerning the soul's attainment of virtue and their inadequacy.

God is our sufficiency: He is the most reliable protector!

[1] *Oneness of being* (*onost'*). I propose this rendering as a calque of the Arabic term *huwiyya* (*huwa*, "He," plus the abstract-noun suffix *-iyya*). In English, *huwiyya* is sometimes translated as *He-ness*.

[1] *Prophetic creation*. By this, al-Kirmani understands the "world of religion," within which one can distinguish doctrinal prescriptions (the Law, the foundation of "worship through action"), theoretical knowledge (the sciences, the foundation of "worship through knowledge"), and social structure (the hierarchy of the Ismaili community).

[1] An allusion to the verses: "You prefer the life of this world, but the Hereafter is better, for it is everlasting. This is indeed in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Abraham and Moses" (Qur'an 87:16–19, S.). In all cases where the Qur'an is quoted without an indication that the translation is by G. S. Sablukov (S.) or I. Y. Krachkovsky (K.), the translation is my own.

[1] An allusion to the Qur'anic description of Paradise: "These are those brought near to God. They shall be in gardens of bliss (a company from among the earlier generations, and a few from the later ones), reclining on couches adorned with precious stones, seated facing one another. Ever-youthful attendants will circulate among them with goblets, ewers, and cups containing a drink from which they will neither become intoxicated nor suffer drunkenness ... Dark-eyed, wide-eyed maidens, like guarded pearls, shall be their reward for what they used to do" (Qur'an 56:11–24, S.).

[1] "God is our sufficiency: He is the most reliable protector!" (Qur'an 3:173, S.). Al-Kirmani often adds to this formula the words, "Excellent is this Protector, and excellent is this Helper!" (Qur'an 22:78, S.).

WALL ONE

Containing the explanation necessary for the reader and explaining why the quarters and their streets have been arranged as they are

With Seven Streets

STREET ONE

On the purification and preparation of the soul required before reading this book, and on what purifies and prepares it

We say: Since the highest excellence of the soul consists in attaining its second perfection—that is, eternal happiness and abiding (*baqāʾ*) beside the Exalted and Glorious Creator—and since it attains this second perfection in two ways, the first is by purifying itself of its natural stains and darkness. These are anger, oppression, greed, mercilessness, and the other vices inherent in it by nature. The soul must free itself from these base traits so that it may become receptive to what its own essence pours into it when it impresses divine forms upon itself, and so that it may experience their beneficial effect, being prepared for them and corresponding to them.

The second way is by impressing upon itself the forms of divine knowledge: that is, by encompassing the Created and Emanated Intellects that precede it in existence, as well as the heavenly and earthly bodies. In this way, it reaches the limit at which, having impressed their forms upon itself, it becomes an Intellect like those whose forms it has impressed, differing from them in no respect in this regard.

Since, at the outset, the soul has not yet been purified or prepared to receive divine effusions—which are intelligible forms that bring it to perfection—we may compare it to metals that have not yet reached their own perfection, which consists in becoming gold. Such metals can receive the treatment that brings them to perfection only under two conditions. First, they must be cleansed of the dirt adhering to them and prepared by being melted in the fire poured upon them, so that their parts soften and they become ready to receive the treatment that will bring them to the level of perfection. Second, they must then be given that treatment, so that it corresponds to them both inwardly and outwardly.

Consequently, the beginner (*murīd*) must first diligently observe everything that purifies and prepares the soul. Only then should he proceed to the formation of concepts (*taṣawwur*), so that, having purified his soul, he may approach what he seeks, form a conception of it, and receive its beneficial effect—just as the treatment beneficially affects a body that has been melted. Otherwise, he will accomplish nothing, just as an apprentice cannot work a body of metal without first melting it in the fire. One's own path is easy; another's is difficult and dangerous.

Since this book of ours brings together the two things through which the soul attains perfection and happiness, teaching the divine sciences that give the soul form and refine it, making it self-intellective (*ʿāqila li-dhātihā*), so that through knowing these sciences the soul

rises above all its own levels; and since all this is of no benefit to a soul that has not been purified, the reader must first discipline his soul before setting out on its journey and approaching the life-giving springs. The soul must be corrected through the practice of following the prescriptions of the Laws and of governance (*siyāsa*); it must be clothed in the garment of worship and must know the limits of testimony (*ḥudūd al-shahāda*).

The reader must therefore first train his soul by purifying, preparing, and correcting it through the acts of worship whose rites were communicated by Muhammad the Chosen One (may God bless him and grant him peace!). For just as fire melts metallic bodies so that they may attain their perfection, these acts help correct the soul, purify and discipline it, and restore its substance to soundness. The reader must also first bring the soul to life by observing religious commandments and laws, and subject it to the authority of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace!), the head of the community and leader of the righteous, as well as to the imams who succeed him (peace be upon them!), so that the soul becomes accustomed to what the Law prescribes and resembles a person who restrains his passions and cannot undertake what he desires unless it is permitted.

He must also perform worship in both its forms. Only then will this book benefit the reader. Only then, as he reads it and listens to our words, will he resemble fresh water in which sugar dissolves, revealing its taste and improving the water's qualities, rather than salt water in which sugar simply disappears because the saltiness overwhelms its sweetness.

We have said that acts prescribed by the Law—that is, acts of worship—affect the soul in the same way that fire affects metallic bodies being prepared for their intended form. We have said that these acts prepare the soul and restore its substance to soundness because each such act instils a virtue in the soul and drives away a vice, as we explained in our book *Guidance for the Teacher and the Student*.

These acts are seeds of intellect. When souls persist in performing them, the acts transform those souls into intellects. Therefore, only the person who performs these acts without exception and continually follows their prescriptions deserves to be called truly understanding, just as are the Speakers (*nuṭaqāʾ*), the Legatees (*awṣiyāʾ*), and the imams. Every commandment and every law, when observed, manifests its power to affect the soul. To neglect them is harmful, for doing so brings evil upon the soul.

Since the soul exists in the world of Nature, its vices emerge more quickly than ignited oil bursts into flame. Nothing can protect it except the Law and its prescriptions. Whoever adheres to what is prescribed and disciplines his soul under this burden is truly our brother. He finds delight within his soul and occupies each *maqām*—each spiritual station—rightfully.

But whoever departs from these prescriptions, observing some while forgetting others, or neglecting them all, harms only himself. May God deal with him as he deserves; His reckoning is swift. Let the reader of this book examine his own soul and accept my counsel, for I am a sincere adviser to him. May God preserve me and all believers.

Footnotes

[1] *Governance (siyāsa)* — Al-Kirmani means governance within the Ismaili community, exercised by its hierarchical authorities.

[1] *Limits* (*ḥudūd*, singular *ḥadd*) — Al-Kirmani uses this term to designate, first, the metaphysical principles of existence (the Intellects) and, second, the hierarchical authorities of the Ismaili community. In this passage, the second meaning is intended. The expression "God's limits" is, more generally, an established phrase in medieval Arabic thought. Ibn Manẓūr defines it in his *Lisān al-ʿArab* as follows: "The limits of God, the Exalted (*ḥudūd Allāh taʿālā*), are those things whose permissibility or prohibition He has clearly specified, commanding that none of them be transgressed, lest one fall into what He has not commanded or what He has forbidden, having ordered that the limits not be exceeded" (*Lisān al-ʿArab*, entry *ḥ-d-d*). The concept thus carries a sense of definiteness and fixed boundaries, a sense that remains present—though substantially transformed—in Al-Kirmani's usage and in that of Ismaili theorists generally.

[1] *Guidance for the Teacher and the Student* (*Tanbīh al-hādī wa-l-mustahdī*) — A polemical work of a propaedeutic nature directed against Sunnis, Twelver Shiʿites, Zaydis, and extremist Shiʿite groups on questions concerning the imamate. It defends the exclusive right to the imamate of the direct descendants of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib who possess an explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) concerning their succession. The work also argues for the necessity of "worship through action," that is, performing all prescribed rites and rituals, and explains their significance for "worship through knowledge."

STREET TWO

On the precautions required when reading religious books and choosing teachers, and on identifying the present book

Since, at the beginning of its existence, the soul is devoid of all forms and possesses no knowledge—which consists of the forms of existing things—it resembles a clean sheet of white paper on which nothing has been written and which bears no forms of things that can be known. The Exalted One has provided it with teachers: His holy and devoted servants among the prophets, the Legatees, and the wise imams (may God's blessing be upon them!). Their task is to engrave upon the soul the signs of divine unity and knowledge of His limits, entrusting these forms to it so that they bring it from potentiality into actuality and raise it to the level of perfection.

Yet demons are numerous, and they have all composed books according to their own views and desires, while considering themselves to be people of God. It is related on the authority of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace!) that Satan (may God curse him!), appearing before people in the guise of a scholar, leads them astray. The Prophet meant those who oppose his commands and laws and disobey those who succeed him.

Therefore, a believing servant of God who seeks His radiant countenance must exercise caution when reading religious books and choosing teachers of the faith. He must read the words only of those whom the Exalted One has appointed to teach, and he must not follow teachers who do not come from God, the Lord of the worlds. Such teachers may impose upon him a claim to leadership that does not rightfully belong to them, make him their servant, and turn him away from the true path by concealing from him the authentic proofs of divine unity.

No one has the right to teach another person any matter concerning religion, the rites of worship, faith, or true knowledge unless he has been commanded to do so by the one who succeeds the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace!)—namely, the imam and those affiliated with him. Anyone who does so without such authorization transgresses the prescribed limits and becomes a wanderer along the paths of contradiction and apostasy.

One must therefore not heed such a person's words, lest one learn from him and imprint upon the soul something that contradicts God's religion and leads to destruction. For what has been acquired is difficult to remove. Souls not yet touched by religion accept anything, since they yearn for whatever might become their form, whether truth or falsehood. They do not resist receiving it, just as a sheet of paper accepts without resistance whatever is written upon it: a name, a story, or perhaps an affirmation of divine unity and everything that brings happiness. In this respect, the soul and a sheet of paper are alike.

Since a soul lacking knowledge yearns for any form of knowledge, and since demons and misguided people, indiscriminately pursuing worldly benefits, are as numerous as we have shown, anyone who seeks to purify his soul and read something must exercise caution. He should take up books only by authors known to follow the holy servants of God appointed to oversee the sciences. He should read only the works of those whose piety, religious devotion, and connection to God's holy servants (may God bless them!) are known to him.

In short, he should read only books whose contents can be demonstrated to possess balance and correspondence with the creation of the Exalted One—for those who profess the faith, this is the true criterion—and which affirm both forms of worship: worship through action, in accordance with the prescriptions of the Law, and worship through knowledge, through knowledge of God's limits and the signs of His religion.

He must also understand that when some form of knowledge becomes imprinted upon the soul, the soul imagines that this is what is correct and true, and precisely what it ought to profess, and so it begins to believe it. In this respect, the soul resembles a naked person who, seeking to cover his nakedness, puts on whatever garment is available without considering whether it is worn or new, good or bad.

Whatever a person hears, accepts, and impresses upon his soul takes up a firm place within it. The soul will not accept something else as readily as it accepted the first thing. If the first form it received is false, it will cling to it, resist accepting the truth, and perish. The reader must also understand that he is most liable to fall into error when he trusts people too readily and imitates them without consistently demanding clear proof of their uprightness and honesty in every matter. He must not accept anything that leads him to forget what has been prescribed or to scorn the ordinances of the Exalted One.

The author of a book, for his part, must clearly identify its distinctive features and explain how it relates to other works, as we have discussed, so that it will not be classified among books of doubtful standing.

{37}

Since in our previous books and treatises we promised to present the reader with this book, we must clearly define its nature. In this way, the reader—who will find its contents supported by proofs of balance and correspondence establishing the necessity of both forms of worship, through knowledge and through action—will become attached to it more readily and guard it carefully against all who do not belong to the number of our good brothers.

We have therefore named this book *The Tranquility of the Intellect*, because it contains the knowledge for which potential intellects yearn and through whose attainment they find repose. This book is a contribution drawn from our own possessions, acquired through the grace of God's vicegerent upon His earth (may God bless him and grant him peace!). When he supported us with his power, we received this contribution, which we now offer in gratitude to assist our true brothers.

This book was written by Hamid al-Din Ahmad ibn Abd Allah, preacher in Iraq and the neighbouring lands, on behalf of Imam al-Hakim, Commander of the Faithful (may God bless him and grant him peace!). The successors of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace!) attested to this imam in writing, as we have demonstrated in our books *The Lamps of the Imamate*, *The Mouths That Proclaim Glad Tidings*, *The Authentic Treatise*, and *Guidance for the Teacher and the Student*.

It was written in Iraq in the year 411. The author also composed other treatises and books, listed in our *Catalogue*.

May the reader of this book accept guidance from God's vicegerent upon His earth (may God bless him and grant him peace!) and respond by fulfilling what has been prescribed for the community. May he become a good believer, and may the sun of his faith rise unobscured. May God's promise be fulfilled for those like him who impress upon themselves the forms set out in this book. May he not lag behind, and may he remember us in his invocation and prayer before joining all those who have gone before, for he will come to us.

May he strive for the strengthening of himself and of us, and may he respond accordingly—for those who arrive are awaited forever, and the best provision is piety. May God gather us with the imams of piety in the Abode of Holiness, and may He bestow His grace and mercy upon us and all believers, for the good of this world and the world to come.

[1] The year 411 AH corresponds to 1020/1021 CE.

[1] “Whatever good you do, God knows it. Take provisions for your journey; but the best provision for the journey is piety” (Qur’an 2:197, S.).

STREET THREE

On the books that should be read before this book, and on what should be selected from them for thoughtful reflection

We say: Among existing things that have been brought into being, each has its own order and arrangement. But the order of worship that brings eternal happiness, to which the imams call us (may God bless them and grant them peace!), is the reverse of the natural order: what comes first in the natural order comes last in the order of worship, and vice versa.

For example, the Created and Emanated Intellects are first in the natural order but last in the order of worship, whereas perceptible beings are last in the natural order but first in the order of worship. This is because the existence of the soul is at the end of the sequence of being; accordingly, it ascends from the end toward knowledge of what exists at the beginning. It first comes to know what is close to it and nearby, then rises upward toward the first limit until it encompasses all existing things together.

If the soul disrupts this order as it follows the paths of the two forms of worship and seeks the two kinds of happiness, it will find it difficult to escape the snares of sorrow and suffering. It will be unable to avoid doubt and hesitation when it cannot grasp the forms of things that can be known only after the things preceding them have been understood.

For example, the intelligible realm, as well as the non-material forms of the heavenly limits, cannot be known without first knowing the perceptible realm and the earthly limits, thereby paving the way toward knowledge of the former. Anyone who attempts to proceed otherwise will encounter only doubt and hesitation. But if he first comes to know the perceptible realm, the earthly limits, and their degrees, then the intelligible realm and the heavenly limits that follow them will become easy to understand and attainable.

The forms of perceptible things are impressed upon the soul more readily than the forms of intelligible things, because perceptible things—the former, as I mean here—are closer to the soul and serve as intermediaries along its ascent to the higher levels of knowledge. The soul therefore begins to understand only after acquiring the forms of perceptible things, which are closer to it than the intelligible. For the existence of the speaking soul is connected to the prior existence of the sensitive soul, and the existence of the sensitive soul is connected to the prior existence of the vegetative soul.

{39}

Since this is so, and the soul acquires the forms of perceptible things first, even though these things occupy a more distant position in the order of being; and since this matter concerns the two forms of worship that bring the soul salvation and perfection, and books have been written by people about each of them, one should approach this book only after reading those works of religious doctrine that are easier to understand and can serve as introductory guides to the first principles and final conclusions discussed here.

These include the Book of the Exalted One, which discloses the sciences, wisdom, and forms of religion, as well as the reason souls move toward their life in the hereafter. Among the books dealing with outward worship through action are *The Book of Purity* by the qadi al-

Nuʿman ibn Muhammad, as well as *The Pillars [of Islam]* and *The Concise Summary*. Other works in this category include *The Campaigns*, *The Clarification of Reports*, and *The Praiseworthy and the Blameworthy*.

Among the books on interpretation, which encompasses inward worship through knowledge, are *The Interpretation of the Sharia*, transmitted on the authority of our lord Imam al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah (may God bless him!), and the books of Jaʿfar ibn Mansur al-Yaman and other shaykhs whose righteousness is known, such as Abu Hatim al-Razi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Nakhshabi, and Abu Yaʿqub al-Sijistani (may God grant them a high station in the eternal abode!).

Among our own works, the reader should first read *Guidance for the Teacher and the Student*, followed by *The Signs of Faith*, *The Radiant [Proof of the] Imamate*, and *The Gardens*. The latter book adjudicates the dispute between the shaykhs Abu Hatim al-Razi and Abu Yaʿqub al-Sijistani, who disagreed in their writings: the former wrote *Correction*, and the latter *Victory*.

Among our treatises on the divine sciences, the reader should then read *The Luminous Treatise*, *Meadows and Gardens*, and the other treatises in the order in which they are listed in our *Catalogue*.

Once the reader has mastered what these works contain, he will be prepared to understand this book, and nothing in it will remain unclear to him. His soul will become like wax softened by heat and ready to receive the imprint of a seal.

In all matters relating to the present book, he should keep *The Gardens* constantly in view, for what is set out there will help him and enable him to imprint correctly upon his soul what he had previously misunderstood. He should not be satisfied with reading it once, ten times, twenty times, or even fifty times. The contents of that book must become a form preserved within his soul.

He should then read our treatise *The Unique One on the Hereafter*, which discusses exaltation (*taqdīs*): it declares the Exalted One transcendent in His absolute oneness.

If the reader has a good companion and a truthful friend, that will be a great blessing to him. Let him concentrate on the two forms of worship that are incumbent upon him, await his departure [from this world] and his joining, in eternity, his noble brothers who preceded him, and remember us in his invocations, asking God to show us mercy.

Let him understand that to neglect these instructions and act otherwise than I have said is to harm himself. This book, together with those other books, is like an antidote that restores health and promises a good reward; this book alone, without them, is like a poison that casts one into suffering and leads to destruction.

So, reader, accept all that I have said with an open heart and act accordingly, for I am a sincere adviser to you. May God—there is no god but He—bestow grace upon me and the community of believers. The Exalted One alone grants strength and power.

Footnotes

[1] See note 2 to I.1.

[1] The three levels of the soul are listed here: the vegetative, the animal (sensitive), and the rational (speaking) soul. The question of the soul is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VII.

[1] Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad al-Maghribī was a leading Ismaili jurist, known as "Qadi al-Nuʿman" (late ninth to early tenth century). Most historians report that he initially followed the Maliki school of law, subsequently became a Twelver Shiʿite, and finally became an Ismaili. Al-Nuʿman was among the close associates of two Ismaili Fatimid rulers in the Maghreb: Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh (reigned 945–952) and his son Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh (the fourteenth Ismaili imam, conqueror of Egypt and founder of Cairo and the Fatimid Caliphate, who reigned from 952 to 975). Al-Nuʿman served as qadi first in Manṣūriyya and subsequently throughout North Africa.

Al-Nuʿman is credited with more than fifty works, of which approximately twenty have survived. His books were highly esteemed by his contemporaries and later generations, including the Ismaili imams.

The Book of Purity (*Kitāb al-ṭahāra*) deals with matters of ritual.

The Pillars [of Islam] (*Daʿāʾim al-Islām*) is considered Qadi al-Nuʿman's most important work. It provides a comprehensive account of Ismaili jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and explains the pillars of faith, which, according to Ismaili doctrine, comprise devotion or allegiance (*walāya*), purity (*ṭahāra*), prayer, almsgiving (*zakāt*), fasting, pilgrimage, and jihad. An interpretation of the esoteric meaning of these pillars is contained in a work known as *The Interpretation of the Pillars of Islam* (*Taʾwīl daʿāʾim al-Islām*), which Al-Kirmani does not mention here.

The Concise Summary (*al-Iqtiṣār wa-l-ikhtiṣār*) — This probably refers to a work also known as *al-Ikhtiṣār li-ṣaḥīḥ al-akhbār ʿan al-aʾimma al-aṭhār* ("A Concise Summary of Authentic Reports from the Pure Imams"), a popular compendium of sayings attributed to the Ismaili imams that received the approval of Imam al-Muʿizz.

The Campaigns (*al-Maghāzī*) — Probably a work of historical content.

The Clarification of Reports (*Sharḥ al-akhbār*) — This evidently refers to *Sharḥ al-akhbār fī faḍāʾil al-aʾimma al-aṭhār* ("Explanation of Reports Concerning the Virtues of the Pure Imams"), whose title indicates its subject matter.

The Praiseworthy and the Blameworthy (*Kitāb al-manāqib wa-l-masālib*) — This probably refers to *al-Manāqib li-ahl bayt rasūl Allāh* ("The Praiseworthy Qualities of the Members of the Household of the Messenger of God").

The Interpretation of the Sharia (*Taʾwīl al-sharīʿa*) — A compilation of sayings of Imam al-Muʿizz prepared by Qadi al-Nuʿman.

[1] Jaʿfar ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman was a leading preacher of the Fatimid era. During the period of Fatimid rule in the Maghreb, Imam al-Qāʾim bi-amr Allāh received him favourably. Under al-Qāʾim's son and grandson, al-Manṣūr and al-Muʿizz, ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman attained the highest rank of "Gate of Gates" (*bāb al-abwāb*), thereby rising even above Qadi al-Nuʿman. Ismaili sources tend to explain this elevated standing by his greater expertise in interpreting the esoteric meaning of doctrine. According to M. Ghaleb, manuscripts of several of his works have survived, including *al-Farāʾiḍ wa-ḥudūd al-dīn*, *al-Bayān wa-l-shawāhid*, and others (M. Ghaleb, *Aʿlām al-Ismāʿīliyya*, p. 186).

Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī was one of the prominent Ismaili preachers active in Tabaristan, Daylam, Isfahan, and other regions (d. circa 934). Ismaili sources report that he succeeded in persuading a significant number of influential people to accept Ismaili teachings. His works include *Kitāb al-Zīna* ("The Book of Beauty"), one of the oldest Ismaili works of an *adab*-literary character; *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa* ("The Signs of Prophethood"), a philosophical work discussing the divine essence, the soul, prime matter, place and time, and the theory of prophecy, as well as engaging in polemic with Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī on prophecy and faith; and *al-Iṣlāḥ* ("Correction"), an extensive work on related subjects in which al-Rāzī argues against the views of al-Nasafī set out in *al-Maḥṣūl*.

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Nakhshabī, also known as al-Nasafī, was a prominent figure in the political history of the Ismailis of Transoxiana, a major Ismaili theorist, and a philosopher. After successful activity in Khurasan, he travelled to Bukhara and the court of the Samanids. Medieval historians report that he managed to win over the Samanid ruler Naṣr ibn Aḥmad and several high-ranking officials. However, he was killed in 942/943 as a result of a conspiracy organized after Naṣr's death, during the reign of Naṣr's son Nūḥ. Following al-Nasafī's death, Ismaili activity in Transoxiana subsided for a century and a half, until the emergence of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.

Al-Nasafī, a friend and teacher of the other renowned philosopher Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, authored a now-lost work entitled *al-Maḥṣūl* ("The Substance and Essence"), considered the first doctrinal work to circulate widely in Ismaili circles. He also wrote *al-Daʿwa al-nājiya* ("The Saving Call") and *ʿUṣūl al-sharʿ* ("The Foundations of the Law"), a work on Ismaili jurisprudence and metaphysics.

Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sajzī, also known as al-Sijistānī, was a student of al-Nasafī. He was born in 884/885 and was killed in Turkestan in 942/943. After studying in Yemen, al-Sijistānī, according to Ismaili sources, began his practical work as a preacher. He is, however, better known for his theoretical contributions. His works include *al-Mawāzīn* ("The Balances") and *al-Yanābīʿ* ("The Springs"), which explore metaphysics and the philosophy of history; *al-Nuṣra* ("The Victory"), in which al-Sijistānī defends al-Nasafī's position in his dispute with Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī; and several other works.

[1] *Guidance for the Teacher and the Student* — See note 3 to I.1. *The Signs of Faith* (*Maʿālim al-dīn*) is a work in two parts concerning inward and outward worship.

The Radiant [Proof of the] Imamate (*al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*) is a work in two parts, each consisting of seven chapters ("lamps," *miṣbāḥ*). The first part briefly discusses metaphysical questions, the Sharia, and the necessity of interpretation (*taʾwīl*). The second deals with the imamate, arguing for the infallibility of the imams and the necessity of succession to the imamate not through election but through an explicit designation from

ancestor to direct descendant. It also defends the legitimacy of the imamate of Ismāʿīl and his descendants.

The Gardens (*al-Riyāḍ*) is a work in which Al-Kirmani presents in detail the views of al-Nasafī expressed in *al-Maḥṣūl*, the polemic against al-Nasafī by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī in *al-Iṣlāḥ*, and Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī's response to the latter in *al-Nuṣra*. Al-Kirmani examines these positions in light of the foundations of Ismaili doctrine and sides with al-Nasafī and al-Sijistānī.

Meadows and Gardens (*al-Rawḍa*) is a short treatise on eternity (*aʿzal*) and the eternal (*ʿazalī*).

[1] *The Unique One on the Hereafter* (*al-Wāḥida fī al-maʿād*) is one of Al-Kirmani's short treatises.

STREET FOUR

On the purpose behind the arrangement of the quarters and streets of this book

The purpose of this book is to expound the science of divine unity, which grants the soul eternal abiding and perfection. Through acquiring its forms, the soul attains everlasting permanence (*tasarmud*) and beauty.

This science of divine unity belongs to the class of comprehensive things: it encompasses many things, and it can exist within the soul only by means of such comprehensiveness. Indeed, it is a comprehensiveness into which all the sciences flow. Yet we, and others like us among the followers, cannot speak of the comprehensive as a whole in a way that simultaneously and exhaustively identifies all its particular parts. That is the station of one who is comprehensive in himself.

Such was the Speaker, who belonged to the class of the comprehensive and encompassed the earthly limits of his cycle, being granted authority over them. He united all existing things in their entirety in a single utterance when he said, “There is no god but God.” It is related on his authority—may God bless him and his family!—that if this utterance were placed on one side of a balance and all things on the other, the side bearing the utterance would outweigh them, for it points to the will that brought them [into existence], which is above them.

For this reason, we have had to speak at length here about the comprehensive by unfolding its parts, through which its comprehensiveness is constituted. By explaining each part exhaustively, we thereby encompass the whole. It is like a person who cannot carry an entire load at once and so transports it piece by piece. Once he has carried every part, he has thereby transported the whole load in its entirety.

For this purpose, we have constructed quarters, which are parts of the whole, and within each quarter, streets that are united within that quarter. Together, they encompass the knowledge of divine unity, the beginnings and final ends of existing things, that is necessary. In this way, they form something like a congregational city that gathers its contents together and has no need of anything outside itself, since everything within it meets the needs of everything else.

The best composition is one whose structure accords with this divine creation in which our lives unfold: with the great arrangement of its heavens and earth and all the existing things contained within it.

We therefore wished to arrange our book in accordance with the heavenly bodies. We divided it into seven quarters, corresponding to the number of planets that influence bodily generation. In religious doctrine, through interpretation, these correspond to the Lights of God, the guardians of the seven cycles, who influence the generation of souls.

We arranged forty-nine streets within the quarters, corresponding to the total number of celestial spheres, great and small, that set the bodies beneath them in motion. In religious doctrine, through interpretation, these spheres correspond to the fully realized Limits of God's religion and the imams, who move souls toward worship and the imprinting of forms. In addition, we have seven further streets, so that their total number equals exactly the number of our own works.

All these works together resemble a constructed world that manifests correspondence and proportion. They bring many souls together, making them one in one respect and many in another. We have demonstrated this in the treatise *The Unique One [on the Hereafter]* and in the *Catalogue*, pointing to the spring contained within them and its source—the sanctuary of revelation.

{42}

All this is necessary "so that the People of the Book may attain certainty, the believers may grow stronger in faith, and the doubts of the People of the Book and the believers may disappear." Thus they may read this book with even greater diligence, turn to it, and act according to it. They should strive in every way to attain virtue through knowledge and action, confident of the exalted nearness prepared for them with the Merciful Lord, and knowing that their brothers who preceded them joyfully await their arrival.

For as the soul rises toward perfection through worship of its Lord by means of knowledge and action, it seeks eternal abiding in goodness, delight, and repose. It attains abiding by attaching itself to that which abides and protecting itself through the eternal, which preserves its existence. It attaches itself to that which abides by encompassing all the degrees of existing things and imprinting their forms upon itself.

This encompassing brings abiding and repose to the soul when it unites the two forms of worship, observes them, and departs this lower life by following their paths.

This book of ours contains everything the soul needs to attain eternal bliss and repose in the world to come, and to pass from the level of souls to the level of the second resurrection, which among existing things corresponds to the Intellects of the realm of Creation.

We have named it *The Tranquility of the Intellect*. May its reader attain happiness by following to the end the path along which we guide him. Let him know that we desire his good as much as our own, for a leader is always sincere toward his people.

Let him strengthen himself in piety, for a great book is in his hands. Whenever he raises his prayers and begins his words of praise, may he also bestow blessings upon us and pray that mercy be granted to us.

If he is truly our brother, let him join us on our path—the path of faith and worship of the Exalted One. May our meeting take place in the holy land, and may God gather us together with the community of believers in the abode of eternity. May Almighty God bestow mercy upon me and upon them. The Exalted One alone grants strength and power.

Footnotes

[1] *“...among the followers...”* — The ellipsis refers to “the followers of the Prophet and the Imams,” that is, ordinary people who have not been endowed with revelation from on high. On the distinctive features of knowledge bestowed through revelation, see also VII.14.

[1] Qur’an 74:31. In the Qur’anic context, *the Book* means “the Scripture,” that is, the Qur’an itself. However, al-Kirmani uses the quotation in such a way that the word may also refer to his own treatise, since Arabic orthography does not distinguish between uppercase and lowercase letters.

[1] This thesis of al-Kirmani inevitably evokes associations with Platonism. Compare: “...if a person devotes himself to the love of learning, strives for what is truly rational, and cultivates the corresponding faculty above all others, then, having touched the truth, he acquires immortal and divine thoughts and thus possesses immortality to the fullest extent that human nature can accommodate; and since he continually nurtures the divine element within himself... he himself cannot help but be supremely blessed” (Plato, *Timaeus*, 90b–c, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, Moscow, 1971, p. 538). This parallel should not, however, be taken too far; see al-Kirmani’s discussion in I.6.

[1] *The Second Resurrection* — in the original, *al-inbiʿāth al-thānī*. The term *inbiʿāth* is polysemous: it means both “resurrection” and “emanation.” In the Russian translation, it proved impossible to find a single term that would convey both meanings. It should be noted that al-Kirmani’s use of one term for both concepts is by no means accidental: the “second resurrection” (that is, the final resurrection) is the concluding act of history, which makes the human being (the second limit of the cosmos) fully resemble the principles of the Universe—the nine Emanations. Their likeness is emphasized precisely through the use of a single term.

{43}

STREET FIVE

Good Tidings of Salvation and Bliss in the Abode of Eternity and Everlasting Residence for Those Worshippers of the Most High from the Community of the True Faith Who Read This Book as a Treatise on Faith That Establishes the Order of the Paths of Worship

We shall say: Since that whose existence is connected with the existence of something preceding it cannot exist unless that which precedes it has first come into existence, and since the soul's attainment of perfection, the illumination of its substance, and its acquisition of eternal abiding and delight in the Abode of Holiness through the true imprinting, in worship through knowledge, of the forms of that which precedes it in existence depend upon the prior existence of worship through action—which sets the soul's self aright, removes the natural stains and darkness from it, and thereby brings their influence to an end—and since the existence of everything expounded in this book, which brings the soul perfection, illumination, abiding, and delight, and enables it to become firmly established (*taʿaqqul*) in the refuge of the eternal sustaining causes, enjoying everlasting happiness that bestows upon it an eternal form, likewise depends upon the prior existence of worship through action, we shall tell the reader of our book, if he is truly our brother and follows the path of the faith by fulfilling what God has prescribed for him, that he must first strengthen his soul through outward worship, that is, through action; purify it by this worship; and accustom it to all the circumstances and conditions of that worship, firmly observing all its requirements. He must cast his soul in the mould of the noble norms of the Law, which consist of the rites and ceremonies of outward worship, and make the limbs of his body and the faculties of his soul obedient to religious prescriptions, wholly absorbed in fulfilling the ordinances of the Law. His sole aim and concern must be the fulfilment of duties and observance of laws, obedience and compliance, so that nothing but words of truth and piety passes from his tongue; so that he strives only to visit the mosque for prayer and glorification, to acquire good and beneficial knowledge, and to be generous in good deeds and sacred words; so that virtuous habits required of the community become part of his very being; so that he acquires good qualities in accordance with the commands of its laws and ordinances and avoids everything sinful that would plunge his soul into the abyss of darkness; and so that he comes to know the joy of the radiance (*ishrāq*) of his substance and the illumination of his soul's innermost essence (*lubb*), when he becomes a single form in which virtues have spread and which binds him firmly to his eternal principles, resembling them.

Then the promise made by the Guide to those who are guided is fulfilled. At separation, the soul becomes pure intellect, attains boundless expanse, and soars above the realm of Creation together with the angels brought near to God. It then finds itself in a wondrous meadow amid its flowers, and in Paradise experiences bliss, eternal life, everlasting happiness, and holy lights. Beyond the natural delight enjoyed by the sensitive soul, and beyond that which nourishes vegetative souls in their mothers' wombs, it tastes an equal measure of delight—except that this delight is higher, nobler, more radiant, and subtler. All this comes to pass in proportion to the good seeds he sowed in days gone by and the piety with which he fortified himself in the crucible of trials.

Then he will know the joy of tasting the beauties, bliss, and grace of the Raised City, where those chosen adherents of the path of the faith who arrived before him, and who resemble

him, have found refuge. In ages past, this City was raised by the prophets, covenant-bearers, and virtuous Imams themselves, through their own efforts and from their own selves, as well as by their followers, with skilled hands and discerning eyes. That City has seven gates, and from each gate a road leads to a palace built of light. The palace is immense: a spring murmurs within it; couches have been arranged, goblets set out, and the floor covered with carpets and adorned with soft cushions. There is a cool garden within it, and in that garden are palms, pomegranates, grapes, and all the divine fruits created by God, which bestow everlasting delight. In that palace are "chambers, and above them other chambers," built from the lights of Holiness. Here is the dwelling place of souls: in each chamber are twelve couches; upon each couch are countless angels of the Emanations; and the delights, blessings, angelic songs, wondrous melodies of glorification, and hymns are so numerous that the eye cannot encompass them, no single ear can hear them all, and no human being illuminated by the sun of the realm of Creation and the moon of emanation can imagine them.

Here he will rejoice at the glad welcome of the angels of the Emanations brought near to God and of the souls that have been purified of the world of Nature. {45} Then he will exult, illumined together with them by the radiance of the Second Resurrection, finding happiness near the Creator and the prophets, beneath the protection of the covenant-bearers, in the company of the virtuous Imams, together with the wide-eyed, dark-pupilled, for all eternity and throughout all time. When he encounters all this, he will resemble a man who has seen his beloved, attained what he desired, and been united with the one he loves, as a tremor of joyful elation passes through him.

Let all this be known to the reader: I have spoken only the truth, and all this truly exists. Let him therefore fulfil all the conditions before reading this book, lest he receive the opposite of what he desires. I am a sincere counsellor to him, and I ask Almighty God to bestow His mercy upon me, upon him, and upon the community of believers. Only the Most High grants strength and power.

[1] *To become firmly established (taʿaqqul)* — This term derives from the same root as "intellect" (*ʿaql*). In this instance, the etymology underscores the idea that understanding the principles of existent things gives the human soul an ontological "firmness," that is, immortality.

[1] Qur'an 39:20.

[1] This is apparently an allusion to a hadith that al-Kirmani will mention repeatedly below ("...what no eye has seen and no ear has heard"). At the same time, the words under discussion are almost a verbatim quotation from the Bible: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9).

STREET SIX

An Account of the Everlasting Torments of Fierce Severity (May God Keep Them Far from Us!) That Await Those Who Read This Book Otherwise Than as a Treatise on Faith Establishing the Order of Worship, Who Do Not Consider Worship Through Action Necessary and Do Not Strive to Set Their Souls Aright

There is a path to everything; the path to Paradise and the attainment of bliss is worship. This worship is of two kinds: worship through action and worship through knowledge. When one sets out on the path to Paradise, one begins with worship through action: it sets the soul aright and trains it to acquire moral virtues. Moral virtues are like the matter from which formal virtues are fashioned, and these are bestowed upon the soul by the other kind of worship, namely, worship through knowledge. In this book we have expounded what pertains to worship through knowledge. Therefore, whoever begins reading it without first setting his soul aright through discipline and devoting himself wholly to worship, without removing the natural stains from his soul; whoever has not concerned himself with religious duty and worship of his Lord, as the Prophet spoke of these matters (may God bless him and his family!); whoever has not acquired, through constant repetition, a firm habit of fulfilling vows and prescriptions; whoever has not improved his conduct through worship of God and adherence to the faith; whoever has not practised honesty and sincerity and, moreover, after reading this book, does not make up for what he has neglected through repentance before the Most High and the performance of the rites of worship—all such a person, having been negligent, will become one in need of saving assistance, because he has scorned the worship of his Lord according to the laws of the community of the true faith. He will complacently abandon worship, thinking that knowledge without action will save him, and will thereby sink into disobedience and mortal sins. Let him know that, intoxicated by this opinion, he will experience a grievous hangover and remorse, and will forever utter cries of anguish and weeping.

Let him know that, by apprehending these clear divine signs, his soul acquires a form that connects it with the heavenly stars and the extraneous Intellects, and through this becomes everlasting. Yet when it abandons worship and fails to reform its conduct through what the Law prescribes, supposing that some or all of these duties may be disregarded, it possesses within itself another form, different from the one imparted to it by its apprehension of divine knowledge. Thus it becomes the bearer of two opposing forms: one, because it has imprinted upon itself the form of the necessity of knowledge and has become self-sufficient through what it knows; this form resembles that of the angels who glorify their Lord. The other, because it has imprinted upon itself the notion that action may be abandoned and that there is no need for it; this form resembles that of cattle and beasts that do not worship their Lord. The form that the soul acquires through knowledge of the Limits preserves its selfhood and protects it from perishing; the other remains within it because the soul itself continues to exist.

The existence of these two forms brings torment—and what torment it is! It is such torment that whoever experiences it desires only to escape. Yet deliverance is delayed, for he has already entered into the realm of eternal goodness and immortality, having passed from the category of the possible (*imkān*) into that of the necessary and everlasting, while his substance suffers the pain of dimness and darkness. One form is tormented by the other, as though two men were brought together: one a virtuous, learned man who seeks nothing but knowledge and devotes himself solely to worship; the other a frivolous fool whose mind is

occupied only with amusements and games, and whose only activities are dancing and mockery. Suppose they meet in one place from which neither can escape the other. Each becomes a source of sorrow and anxiety for the other, and each finds in the other only an obstacle to the object of the soul's longing and desire. Each then wishes to flee from the other and find deliverance, but this wish cannot be fulfilled.

Thus these two forms cast the soul into an abyss of darkness and terror. It remains in confusion: it neither lives a wholly good life nor can it perish and attain eternal rest, as the Most High has said: "Therein [in Gehenna—A.S.] he shall neither die nor live." Thus it carries within itself a fierce torment beneath the extraneous sun, in the Royal City, built of holy lights, during a day equal to fifty thousand years, a City containing wine, milk, honey, and water. There it endures harsh punishment: boiling water is poured over its head, and its only food is filth. It cries out for help, but only that which corresponds to it will come to its aid. It will also experience the bitterness of rejection and reproach from those like itself who arrived before it at the Pool of Kawthar. When they see it, they will say, "No, we do not welcome you; we do not welcome you." It will then wish for only one thing: that it had never been brought into the world at all. For its arrival in this form, filled with vices—for it had consigned the prescriptions and commands of the Most High to oblivion—will cause them suffering, and their torment will grow as the heat of a flame grows when more fuel is added.

Thus this book will bring joy and benefit to those who read it as a treatise on faith, as we have already explained, but it will bring misery to those who read it otherwise. There is good, and there is evil (may God keep us far from it!). Let the reader, child of this world who seeks happiness in it, therefore remain on his guard. It may also happen that he does not believe in the holiness of the pure Imams and in their paths of worship of God, the Lord of the worlds. In that case, this book will bring him immortality and torment for all eternity. Let whoever reads our book be fervent in worship, turn his soul away from what the Law forbids, and, while there is still time, make up for what he has neglected, so that he may escape the fatal abyss. What I seek to encourage him to do is truly beneficial, and what I warn him against through the example of those who disobeyed truly exists, "when the earth is shaken with its shaking, and the mountains crumble to pieces." Let him accept my sincere counsel. Yet among us, only one who is truly our brother will be accepted. May God grant us and all the faithful who shun sins what we seek in our faith. I ask the Most High God for help and seek refuge in Him. Only the Most High grants strength and power

Footnotes

[1] *Formal virtues* — virtues that alter the *form* of the soul and transform it into intellect, that is, true knowledge.

[1] Qur'an 20:74, S.

[1] An allusion to the verse: "Someone asked about the punishment that will befall the wicked, which none can repel, from God, the Lord of the ascending steps, up which the angels and the Spirit ascend to Him during a day whose duration is fifty thousand years" (Qur'an 70:1–7, S.). On the interpretation of the concept of *day*, see VII.14.

[1] An allusion to the Qur'anic description of the torments of Hell: "...his [the sinner's—A.S.] only food will be filth" (Qur'an 69:36, S.). *Boiling water* — in the original, *ḥamīm*. This word concludes the preceding verse, where its second meaning, "close friend," is intended: "For today he has no devoted friend here" (Qur'an 69:35, S.).

[1] *The Pool* — According to Muslim tradition, on the Day of Resurrection the believers will be brought to the Pool of the Prophet. The tradition is based on the following hadith: "The Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace!) said: My Pool is [a month's journey in length] (according to other versions, 'a day's journey'—A.S.); its corners are right-angled, its water is whiter than milk, its fragrance sweeter than musk, and the number of jugs beside it is like the number of stars in the sky; whoever drinks from it will never again suffer the torments of thirst." Sunnis generally emphasize that those who sought innovations and changes in religious doctrine will not find their way to the Pool.

Kawthar — the name of a river in Paradise.

[1] Qur'an 56:4–5, S.; the Day of Judgment is meant.

[1] See note 1 to I.5.

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STREET SEVEN

On the Great Benefit That Reading This Book, Assimilating Its Contents, and Imprinting Its Form Bring to the Soul in Its Attainment of Perfection

We shall say: The soul has two perfections. The first is existence in itself; the second is the perfection of that selfhood in respect of its form. When the soul imprints upon itself the form of something pertaining to the faith, this is beneficial to it in two ways. First, it benefits from the rectification of its own self: it acquires good character and is freed from natural stains and darkness. Such benefit is brought by deeds: zakat, for example, which, when given as prescribed, makes the soul generous; jihad—that is, striving in the works of worship—which makes it courageous; or fasting, through which the soul acquires the virtues of temperance, sincerity, piety, and trustworthiness. Through striving in these and other deeds prescribed by the Law, the soul acquires numerous virtues, as we have shown in our book *Guidance for the Teacher and the Student*. Second, it benefits from imprinting forms upon its selfhood and establishing (*ʿaql*) it in the divine principles that precede it in existence. It is knowledge that brings this benefit to the soul. In all this lies its happiness and the attainment of the second degree of perfection, when it passes from something that bears to something that exists, from mortal to everlasting, from lifeless to living, and from stained to pure.

What we have expounded in this book belongs to the kind of knowledge that benefits the soul by imprinting within it the forms of the world of Creation (*ibdāʿ*) and the realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of what exists, joining it to that which endures forever, bestowing upon it rational radiance and eternal light, and protecting it from transformations and changes. For this knowledge removes it from the dominion of Nature and bestows upon it an angelic form. When the soul has imprinted all these forms upon itself and comprehended them all, attaining actual existence and becoming joined to eternity, supreme bliss, and primordial grace, then everything that exists in the divine principles of existent things—the principles that were brought forth first—will be present within it. The soul's selfhood then embraces itself, for to embrace all these things is, for the soul, to embrace its own selfhood. Its selfhood derives from that foundation (*aṣl*) and that substance which is Creation itself. Yet Creation, being First, must necessarily be actual, whereas the substance of the soul can attain perfection—that is, become actually existent—only by passing from potentiality to actuality through acquisition (*iktisāb*). For the soul is a final existent, and its existence does not arise from the same relation through which the actual Intellects came into being.

By knowing these Intellects, which are the heavenly letters, the soul acquires their configuration (*hayʾa*): they make it like themselves. Leaven acts in the same way upon dough. Dough is, in its essence, like leaven, since both are made from flour; yet leaven possesses something that dough does not, and when introduced into the dough, it makes the dough like itself. An example of this is also found among perceptible metallic substances: silver stands below the rank of gold, and it is brought to that rank—after being melted by heat to prepare it for reception—by the addition of a leaven taken from gold. Like God's creation, this leaven transforms everything into gold. Such too is the art expounded by us in the treatise *Knowledge of the Limits and the Hereafter*. To decipher this great symbol is a splendid festival for those who possess this art and for those who are truly our brothers in insight, intellect, and spiritual striving.

Let the reader of this book immerse himself in reflection; let every word in it awaken his thoughts; and let the grace contained within it imprint its form upon him, so that both kinds of

worship become sweet to him and he practises them properly. Let him remember us in his prayers whenever reading brings him a new joy. May he choose the right path from among the many paths, join the company of those who follow the Imams from the family of Muhammad (may God bless him and them!), and equip himself with piety. May God make us and all believers pious, free from fear and untouched by sorrow. Only the Most High grants strength and power, and God's command must inevitably come to pass. I seek refuge in Him and place my trust in Him: He watches over His servants with vigilant care.

[1] *Heavenly letters (al-ḥurūf al-ʿulawiyya)* — Apparently a calque of the Ancient Greek *stoicheia*. This term, which originally meant "letters," later acquired the philosophical meanings "elements" and "principles." See Plato: "...to this day no one has explained their generation, but we call them principles and accept them as the elements ['letters'] of the Universe...; meanwhile, it should be clear to anyone of even modest intelligence that there is no basis for comparing them with any kind of syllables" (Plato, *Timaeus*, 48b–c, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 [1], Moscow, 1971, p. 489).

[1] The image of *dough* and *leaven* was also very popular among the Sufis. Compare the Gospel parable: "Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33).

[1] See note 2 to I.2.

WALL TWO

On the Crown of Intellects—The Unity of God, His Exaltation, Praise, and Glorification

With Seven Streets

STREET ONE

On God, Besides Whom There Is No God, and the Impossibility of His Nonbeing

We shall say: the immutable laws declare that an effect (*maʿlūl*) can exist only through its sustaining cause (*ʿilla*), which makes its existence necessary. Its existence is connected with this cause, and it depends upon it for its existence: were it not for the cause, the effect would not exist. Heat, for example, does not exist without its sustaining cause, which makes its existence necessary, with which its existence is connected, and upon which it depends for its existence; this cause is motion, and were it not for motion, heat would not exist. And motion does not exist without its sustaining cause, which makes its existence necessary, with which its existence is connected, and upon which it depends for its existence, namely, the mover, without which motion would not exist. Or consider composite bodily products, which exist through the primary elements (*ustūqus*): their existence is connected with the primary elements, they depend upon them for their existence, and were the elements not to exist, neither would those products. Or consider the primary elements, which would not exist were it not for matter and form, upon whose existence they depend for their own existence. Or matter (*mādda*) and form, which would not exist were it not for the causes (*asbāb*) upon which both depend for their existence, and from whose existence {51} their own existence can arise, namely, the heavenly bodies and the higher forms.

Now, since one of the things that exist depends for its existence upon another, and since, were that upon which it depends for its existence, and with which its existence is connected, not established (*ghayr thābit*) in existence and not existent, its own existence would likewise be impossible—and since it has been demonstrated that this thing exists only through that other—then it follows that He to whom all things that exist through Him, from Him, and by relying upon Him ultimately lead is God, besides whom there is no god, whose nonbeing (*laysiyya*) is impossible and the denial of whose *Onostʾ* is false: if He were nothing (*lays*), then all things that exist would also be nothing, but since things do exist, His nonbeing is impossible.

Moreover, since opposites are such that each exists only through the loss of its opposite, and since existent things are opposed to one another and their essences are distinct and incompatible, yet they exist together with all their opposites (so that nothing is lost on account of the existence of its opposite), and all are preserved under the shelter of existence, it follows that He, through whom an opposite loses its natural property of losing existence as a consequence of the existence of its opposite (so that one opposite is protected from the other), is God, besides whom there is no god, whose nonbeing is impossible. For if He were nothing, the existence of opposing things would also be nothing; but since the embodied realities of opposing things exist by relying upon His governance (*siyāsa*), His nonbeing is impossible.

All-glorious is He through whom the existence of things is preserved despite the opposition of their essences and the difference of their forms. There is no god but God; silence binds the tongue when the soul strives to apprehend Him through words spoken of Him and comes to a halt in bewilderment, convinced of its own incapacity; and only the Most High grants firmness and strength.

{52}

[1] By contrasting *multiplicity* (*kathra*) with *paucity* (*qilla*), al-Kirmani follows the logic of language (the opposition between *kathīr* and *qalīl*, "many" and "few"), rather than the philosophical logic that requires multiplicity to be opposed to unity.

[1] "...in neither of the two parts of existence..." That is, neither in potentiality nor in actuality.

STREET TWO

On the Impossibility of the Most High Being Any "Something"

Since a something (*ʿays*) as such requires that upon which it depends for its existence, as has already been explained, and since He—may His majesty be glorified!—insofar as He is He, is above every need for anything else in connection with which He would be He, it follows that the Most High cannot be any "something." For a something is a something because there precedes it that which made it this "something." It is impossible that the Most High should be such a "something," since He, insofar as He is He, has no need of another through which He would become Himself, and consequently would depend upon that other: He is immeasurably higher and more glorious than this. Since He—glorious and great is He!—being Himself, has no need of anything else in connection with which He is He, He cannot be any "something."

Moreover, were God Most High such a "something," He would necessarily be either a substance or an accident. If He were a substance, He would necessarily be either a body or a non-body. If He were a body, the division of His self into that through which it exists would entail the existence of something preceding Him, since anything multiple is always preceded by something, whereas He, in His great glory, is above having anything precede Him. If He were a non-body, He would necessarily be either potential, like souls, or actual, like intellects. If He were potential, His need for that which brings Him into actuality would entail something preceding Him, whereas He is above such a thing. If He were actual, He would necessarily be either acting upon His own self, without needing anything else through which His action is accomplished, or acting upon another through which His action is accomplished. If He acted upon another through which His action was accomplished, this would be a consequence of a deficiency (*nuqṣān*) in His action, and His need for that through which His action was accomplished would presuppose something preceding Him, whereas He is above such a thing. If, on the other hand, He acted upon His own self without needing anything else through which His action was accomplished, this could only be because His self encompassed {53} within itself various relations of many different meanings: He would be both acting through His own self and undergoing action through His own self; but this presupposes something from which He received existence and in which there is no multiplicity (*kathra*) or paucity (*qilla*) arising from these relations [1], whereas He is above such a thing. Thus, if He were a substance, these divisions would necessarily be present in Him, whereas He is free from all traces of need and multiplicity inherent in substance; consequently, He cannot be a substance.

As for His being an accident, an accident depends for its existence upon a substance preceding it, through which it exists, whereas He is higher and more glorious than for His *Onostʾ* to be connected with something preceding Him; consequently, He cannot be an accident.

Thus, since a "something" must necessarily be either a substance or an accident, and the Most High can be neither a substance nor an accident, He cannot be such a "something."

Furthermore, a "something" cannot be neither a substance nor an accident. If the Most High were such a "something," then something that cannot exist would necessarily have to precede Him. Specifically, if there were some "something" that was neither a substance nor an accident (just as a substance-something is not an accident, and an accident-something is not a substance, so He too would be Himself, neither substance nor accident), it would be one of

the kinds belonging to the genus "something," falling under that genus. It would then possess all that belongs simultaneously to both substance and accident, which belong to this genus, and it would differ from both substance and accident by something particular to itself (just as substance differs from accident, and accident from substance, by what is particular to each), while sharing with both what they share with one another (just as substance shares with accident, and accident with substance, what they have in common). Then the self of this "something," differing from other things in one respect and sharing a common feature with them in another, would contain two parts through which its existence was sustained. Yet if the self of anything is divided in this way into that through which it exists, then it is multiple, and something precedes it upon which it depends for its existence. Its multiplicity therefore presupposes the precedence of what is not multiple (for what is devoid of multiplicity precedes what is multiple); and, being one of the kinds of "something"—a kind whose removal in thought would make the existence of all the other kinds impossible—it requires that through which it is what it is. But the Most High is above such multiplicity, which entails that something precedes Him, and above belonging to a kind for which something else is required in order for His *Onostʾ* to be Himself; and since He is above all this, He cannot be any "something."

Moreover, if the Most High is a something, then either He Himself gave this property to His own self, or something else gave it to Him. He cannot confer this property upon Himself, for that would mean He had previously been without it, which would be a miraculous transformation and coming-to-be, as though He had not existed and then came to exist. This is impossible, for that which is embodied in neither of the two parts of existence [2] cannot subsequently acquire existence; and if some agent stood behind Him, then His existence would be connected with such an agent. Nor is it possible for something else to confer upon Him the property of being a "something," for that would mean it preceded Him. Since neither possibility is possible, His quiddity is impossible, and His *Onostʾ* must therefore be held to lie beyond the bounds of every "something," whose existence is connected with that which He created. Glorious is He who, having ascended to apprehend Him, will add to what He created the attribute that befits it—bewilderment (*ḥayra*); there is no god but Him, and only He grants firmness and strength. I call upon Him for help and place my trust in Him: He is fully aware of His servants.

[1] "...the Lord of the Great Throne." The expression is borrowed from Qur'an 9:129, 23:86, and 27:26.

STREET THREE

On the Most High Being Inapprehensible Through Any Attribute, on His Being Neither a Body nor in a Body, and on Neither an Intellective Knower nor a Sensate Being Being Able to Apprehend His Self

We shall say: through His supreme glory, the Most High is concealed, as though behind a veil, from all the instruments of apprehending things that exist; He lies beyond the reach of the {55} faculties through which human beings apprehend the various "somethings" in their intelligible and sensible aspects—for He does not belong to the genus "something," but is exalted above them like the sun, which is hidden from the apprehending gaze, since He, insofar as He is He, is such that their selves cannot apprehend Him through any attribute, while His *Onost'* (as such, through itself alone) is distinct from all things in every respect. Neither intellect nor sense can grasp Him in His all-glorious might, before which every other might is powerless. He, insofar as He is He, seals the mouth in silence, binds the tongue, deprives the intellect of the power of apprehension, and the soul of representation. He cannot be described by anything said of Him, whether it be ultimate perfection or finite greatness—for even these pertain to something other than Him, to that which is other than He, which must necessarily be either a substance or an accident. For that in which attributes of distinction and division exist, whether acknowledged openly or tacitly, is constituted such that its self exists through that into which it is divided; this entails the necessity of something preceding it, from which its existence derives, whereas He, all-glorious is He, is above division and free from deficiency or completeness (*tamām*): He is above these characteristics, which would make causality necessary in relation to His *Onost'*. And if He is apprehended through an attribute, or some attribute is ascribed to Him, these attributes are borrowed from things whose existence is produced, and they belong to selves inseparable from the created cosmos.

It is clear that if we ascribe to a thing an attribute that belongs to something else, we thereby lie, for we have ascribed to the thing what it does not possess and described it by what rightfully belongs to another. This is a manifest lie. If this is so, and what is said of God Most High is an attribute not belonging to Him but transferred to the Most High from something else, then it is clear that those who ascribe attributes to Him are lying, for they describe Him through attributes belonging to something else, and that the power of those who attempt to render the Most High His due fades before this task.

Moreover, it is well known and beyond doubt that the intellect cannot devise an attribute that is not found among things subject to the operation of natural causes, and that the soul cannot conceive (*tawahhum*) anything that is not rooted in nature. How, then, {56} can the intellect rise and turn its face toward Him, toward His blinding radiance, which is to the intellect as the sun's brilliance is to our eyes? It will fall prostrate, glorifying Him and repenting of what it has done, when it realizes that what it longs for is impossible. How can it impel itself toward such a thing when its own destruction lies therein, just as it is destructive for the eye to encounter the face of the sun?

Moreover, the Most High is not a body, such that we could speak of Him as we speak of bodies; nor is He in a body, such that we could speak of Him as something located within a body. Were He a body or in a body, something would necessarily precede Him, as we demonstrated in our treatise *The Guide* (*al-Murshid*).

Furthermore, the Most High is not divided (*munqasim*), so that one could speak of separate parts of Him; for were He divided, His division would entail something preceding Him, through which His self would exist. He also has no delimiting definition (*ḥadd*) by which His nature could be demonstrated, as, for example, length, breadth, and depth constitute the limits and nature of a body, or matter and form constitute its definition, thereby making it knowable. He is not composite (*mufakkab*), such that one could disassemble Him into that of which He is composed and thereby know Him; nor does He enter into something composite, such that He could be known through the ultimate perfection attained by the process of composition.

Nor does He belong among things knowable by syllogism, such that knowledge of Him could be caught in the nets of premises, for that which is known through premises resembles the premises themselves. The purpose of apprehending Him through premises is to represent His nature in the way that can be represented from the nature of the premises; yet premises can be obtained and constructed only through knowledge acquired either by sense or by intellect, uncontaminated by doubt. But He is neither sensible nor intelligible, such that the paths to apprehending Him could be known; and so, since He is above being either sensible or intelligible, the gates of apprehension are closed. Were He sensible, the senses would apprehend Him; and were He intelligible, He could be apprehended by one of five methods: definition, division, analysis, composition, and syllogism. Since He is neither sensible nor intelligible, nothing can be said of {57} Him that is said of them—that is, of things. He, insofar as He is He, is wholly inapprehensible, exalted above what He created in a majesty like that of an immeasurable ocean. He is the Most High above them, and it is not within their power to attain knowledge of Him. It is said of this that the Most High lies beyond perfection and above greatness: the intellect gasps beneath the weight of His might. All-glorious is He who possesses this might; there is no god but Him, the Lord of the Great Throne [3].

STREET FOUR

On the Most High Being Neither Form nor Matter, and on There Being Nothing Like Matter with Him (Insofar as He Is He) upon Which He Might Act: He Is More Glorious and Exalted Than This

We shall say: the Most High is above being a form, for form depends for its existence upon that of which it is the form, and to require the existence of something else for one's own existence is a characteristic of creation, which must ultimately lead back to that which is neither form nor anything else that is dependent. He is likewise above being matter or anything resembling it, for matter is inseparable, in its existence, from that of which it is the matter and whose effects it receives. The Most High is also far too pure to be both of them, form and matter, for then His self would be divided into form and matter, each of which would require the existence of the other for its own existence, so that their selves would require something preceding them both, more fully established in its own self than they are. It is also excluded that matter should exist with Him, through which the things that exist could exist from Him: were this so, He would be deficient in His action (for His action would not exist without that matter through which it was accomplished), and the existence of what is deficient in its action derives from something else preceding it, whereas He is more glorious and exalted than for anything else to have priority over Him or precede Him. It is therefore false that matter exists with Him, insofar as He is He.

{58}

Moreover, form is divided into intellectual (*ʿaqlī*) and natural (*ṭabīʿī*) form, on the one hand, and artificial (*ṣināʿī*) form, on the other. Intellectual form is that which is itself an intellective knower, itself an object of intellection, and itself intellection; these aspects differ because of their relations and connections, for one aspect in its self is its substance, while another is its perfection, belonging to its substance, from which derives the existence of everything that exists through it. All these characteristics necessarily presuppose something preceding it in existence, whereas the Most High is free from such characteristics. Natural form is that which moves what contains it and is itself moved accidentally; one aspect of its self is intellective, while another is not so, but is intelligible. All these characteristics indicate that something existed before it, from which it received existence, whereas He, in His glory, is above motion and division and everything that would make it necessary for something to precede Him. Artificial form, meanwhile, is the perfection of that which it contains, and exists only through it. And if the All-Glorious, in His great glory, is above resembling intellectual form (to which belong magnificence, greatness, might, knowledge, comprehensiveness, strength, and power), then He is all the more above those forms that fall short of it in greatness and magnificence. In His glory He is exalted above resembling them: He is neither form nor matter, nor both simultaneously, and there is no matter with Him through which He acts. He, insofar as He is He, is distinct from all created Nature (*khilqa*) with its inherent attributes. He is veiled by a covering that intellects strive to lift in order to behold that Unity (*waḥda*) and speak of it otherwise than by denying the attributes of things that exist—subjects and predicates, manifest and hidden—when mentioning the Most High. All-glorious is He whom attributes cannot describe and of whom words cannot tell; there is no god but the Most High. I call upon God the Great for help, for myself and all believers, and say: only God, the Great and Most High, grants firmness and strength.

{59}

STREET FIVE

On the Most High Having Neither an Opposite nor a Likeness

We shall say: an opposite is such that it negates its opposite, so that one of them exists only at the expense of the other's disappearance; as such, they alternate in existence. Each is apt to manifest its weakness when joined with the other, as a result of which one loses its embodied existence when the other, joined with it, comes into existence. The Most High can have no opposite, for were there such an opposite, it would either possess an embodied reality (*qāʾim al-ʿayn*) or lack one (*mafqūd al-ʿayn*). If it lacked its embodied reality, it would thereby have lost the cause of its existence; and whenever something has a cause, that cause precedes it and is closer to divinity. If, on the other hand, this opposite possessed an embodied reality and existed, so that both of them (God and His opposite) equally possessed existence, then their coexistence, in which neither disappeared, would necessarily presuppose something that preserved their existence, for two opposites can possess existence simultaneously only through the protection of a protector and the connection of that which connects them, which preserves the existence of both together from outside; and divinity should rather be ascribed to this protector. Thus, since the existence of an opposite to the Most High entails that something precedes Him whose existence is impossible, the existence of an opposite to the Most High is itself impossible and false.

Furthermore, if He had an opposite (though He is above this), there would have to be something in which they came into existence alternately, now one and then the other, so that each might fully receive its share of existence as an opposite. If there were something in which they came into existence alternately, depending upon it for their existence therein, then it would precede them, and their alternating existence would be connected with it. Yet He is above having anything precede Him, insofar as He is He; His majesty excludes the need for another to intercede mercifully on His behalf, insofar as He is He, or the connection of His *Onostʾ* with anything else that would be a cause for Him, insofar as He is He. Since the existence of an opposite to God entails the necessity of something in which it comes into existence alternately with Him, and through which something preceding it is established, and since this continues ad infinitum, an opposite to the Most High is impossible. And since an opposite to Him is impossible, the existence of that in which they would alternate, and which would condition the Most High's *Onostʾ*, is likewise impossible.

Moreover, the impossibility of there being something from which the existence of His *Onostʾ* derives, and which would be a cause for Him (though He is above this), rules out His having an opposite. For if anything has an opposite, it also has a cause preceding it, with which its existence is connected: as is well known, opposites have causes of their existence that precede them and exist among sensible things. Since that which has an opposite has a cause, whereas the Most High is free from having a cause, an opposite to the Most High is impossible.

He also has no likeness, for were there one, there would be two of them; and since there would be two, each would contain something distinct from the other, through which their duality would arise. Thus each would contain two parts through which its self existed: one common and one particular. This would entail the necessity of something preceding them both, which endowed each with its particular feature, distinguishing it from the other; and this prior thing would be closer to divinity than they. Yet the Most High is exalted to the highest degree, and it is impossible for anything else to outstrip Him and for Him to be beneath it. He

is above the utmost limit of every degree of greatness, magnificence, exaltation, radiance, might, and brilliance, so that intellects cannot encompass Him. God is exalted to the highest degree, and such a one has neither an opposite nor a likeness. Glory be to God, besides whom there is no god, whose majesty, insofar as He is He, excludes both opposition and likeness. I call upon God the Great and seek refuge in Him in all my affairs. Glory be to God, Lord of the worlds; only God, the Most High, grants firmness and strength.

{61}

STREET SIX

On the Inability of Languages to Describe Him Worthily

We shall say: the existence of things, in all their difference and opposition, rests upon their dependence upon one another, for they fit and correspond to one another. It is precisely through this that they exist, as, for example, things existing in the world of Nature, where one preserves another through their mutual correspondence, each being connected with and brought forth by each other, and were it not for one, the other would not exist. Fire, for example, with its heat and dryness, is opposed to water with its coldness and moisture, and both came into existence by virtue of the air between them, which possesses heat and moisture: through its heat it corresponded to fire and became connected with it, while through its moisture it corresponded to water and became connected with that as well. Thus water, the opposite of fire, was connected and joined with it in this way, through correspondence and relation. Likewise, air and earth were joined through their mutual correspondence with that which united them, connecting their two sides, namely, water. But if there is no correspondence between one thing and another, one is hostile to the other, does not seek it, and does not entail the necessity of its existence.

Since this is so, and since names and words are things that signify other things, which in turn determine the existence of the words, it necessarily follows that there is a relation between the names and words that signify and the things they signify: were it not for this relation, the signified thing would not make their existence necessary, and the soul would then have no path to knowledge of the realities of things. For if one could suppose that the sign denoting a triangle signified a square, and that the sign denoting a cubic figure signified a spherical one, and vice versa, the path to discovering true knowledge would be severed, and the soul would be unable to reach it: the form imprinted upon it might turn out to be the form of something else. But since it is impossible for the soul to see the form of a triangle in what signifies the form of a cube, and the form of a square in what signifies the form of a triangle, or for what signifies one number to yield knowledge of what signifies another number, greater or smaller, for the sign signifies only what is determined by the relation through which it seeks that number, it follows that relations and correspondence cannot signify something else or entail the necessity of something different.

Since names, attributes, and words correspond to what they signify, and since they are composed of the simplest letters from which all languages are constructed, and since letters are things that have come into being (*muḥdatha*), what they signify must also have come into being and be like them in its state. But if what is signified by the letters from which all languages are composed has come into being, like those letters and languages, as we have shown, while He, the Most High in His majesty, has not come into being, it is clear that the letters from which all languages arise through composition cannot find a way to designate His majesty—for the Most High is distinct from things that have come into being, has no correspondence with them, and does not belong to their substance. Since He is distinct from things that have come into being, it is utterly impossible to find among words and expressions anything that signifies something worthy of God Most High; consequently, those who affirm divine unity are right in maintaining that He cannot be expressed by either a word or a pronoun.

How, indeed, can letters signify that *Onostʾ* from which all created and derived things came into existence, including the letters themselves, when He, the Most High, lies beyond their

bounds, at the summit of might, where intellects cannot describe Him through any attribute? How can intellects find a way to know His form when they understand only what is substantial and accidental? No! He is in the cloud-high heights, in the radiance of perfection. All-glorious is God, when every word spoken about Him has itself been created by Him. There is no god but Him. In God I place my trust and to Him I call; in Him I rely in religious and worldly affairs, and I say: only God the Great grants firmness and strength.

{63}

STREET SEVEN

On the Most Truthful Expression of Divine Unity, Praise, Glorification, and Affirmation Consisting in Not Ascribing to the Most High the Attributes Found in Things That Exist

We shall say: intellects strive to affirm the oneness of God Most High, to exalt Him, glorify Him, and praise Him in a manner worthy of Him. There are two paths toward this end: affirming the highest attributes of Him, or denying attributes and not ascribing them to Him. Since affirming divine unity and glorifying God by ascribing attributes to Him leads to falsehood and fabrications about the Most High, when things unworthy of Him are associated with Him and He is likened to His own creatures, which are beneath Him, the most truthful way of affirming divine unity and glorifying Him is not to ascribe attributes to Him, but the opposite, namely, to deny them.

Thus, following the righteous affirmers of divine unity, the followers of the pure Imams, we have taken the path of affirming divine unity and glorifying God through the denial of attributes, for this is the very truth. Since truthfulness consists in affirming in a thing something that truly exists in it and denying of it what it does not possess, we hold that if we ascribe some attribute to the Most High, when that attribute belongs not to Him but to something else (for it pertains to something that exists and has received existence from Him, and is distinct from the Most High), we thereby lie—for lying consists precisely in ascribing to a thing what it does not possess, or denying of it what it does possess. But if we deny of Him an attribute that belongs not to Him but to someone else, then in doing so we adhere to the truth. We have therefore embarked upon this path of affirming divine unity, delineated by the guiding pillars that lead along the path of Truth (*ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*)—may God's blessing remain with them! For it is precisely in this way that we shall affirm, glorify, exalt, and praise God with truthful speech, affirming the Most High without any recourse to an attribute, without any comparison (*tashbīh*), assimilation (*tamthīl*), or definition of Him. Our discerning and truthful brother clearly sees this meaning in our words.

{64}

If, in affirming through negation, we say, "He is neither this nor that, nor the other," and everything we have denied is something existing in created Nature, then we have thereby affirmed that no attribute can be applied to Him and that He is distinct from everything that exists. This does not at all mean the negation of God (*taʿṭīl*), as it appears to certain clever men who imagine themselves sound of mind but are in truth their own enemies. The all-consuming fire of negation of God blazes as a beacon of godlessness only when the particle "not"—which expresses negation—is deliberately directed at the *Onostʾ* of the Most High in order to negate it, for example, when someone says "not-He" or "not-God." This is precisely what open denial of God means, and it is what plunges the soul into the abyss of destruction and the fiery pit of Hell. Here, however, the particle "not" is directed toward the negation of attributes, not toward the all-glorious *Onostʾ*; it is the attributes that are denied, and by no means the all-glorious *Onostʾ*.

The situation is exactly the same as when we first say of God, "that He is not describable by an attribute": the particle "not" applies to attributes and to bodies possessing attributes, denying them of Him, while He Himself is mentioned in the words "that He is"; the one mentioned is affirmed, and it is the attributes that are denied. Or when we then say, "that the Most High is not even an attribute that is indescribable by an attribute," this phrase resembles

the first, since it denies of the *Onostʾ* of the Most High what was not negated in the first phrase—that is, in the phrase "that He is not describable by an attribute." Specifically, the negation in our phrase "He is not even an attribute that is not describable by an attribute" is directed at those things for which being devoid of attributes is characteristic, such as souls and Intellects, which are above bearing bodily attributes. Its purpose is to deny of the *Onostʾ* of the Most High what belongs to these things as the selves that they are; the *Onostʾ* of the Most High itself is mentioned by us when we say "He," and the one mentioned is affirmed and exists, while everything said of these things is subjected to negation. Thus there is no corrupt denial of God here, nor anything of that kind.

Reflecting upon this impartially, anyone will understand that all those who erred against the truth embellished their doctrines while striving, in affirming divine unity, toward the same goal that we pursue when we use the particle "not" to deny of the Most High what belongs to something else. This applies especially to the Muʿtazilites, who, beginning with their exposition of the principles of doctrine and embellishing their writings, said that the Most High is not describable by the attributes of created things. This phrase resembles ours when we say that the Most High is not describable by an attribute and that nothing said of something possessing a definition can be said of Him. This statement, in turn, resembles our saying that the Most High is not described by an attribute and at the same time is not an entity that is indescribable by an attribute—that is, He does not resemble something for which the negation of definition has itself become an attribute. Their statement is the foundation of our doctrine, and relying upon it we affirm that we say nothing of the Most High that is said of created things: this is precisely what we seek to achieve by affirming divine unity, and this is precisely what our words are directed toward.

Yet the Muʿtazilites affirmed divine unity with their tongues while retaining in their hearts the convictions of the godless, for their initial assertion that God is not describable by the attributes of created things was overturned when they ascribed to the Most High attributes that properly belong to what is not God, saying that He is Living, Knowing, Powerful, and so forth. God forbid! For we say: "[He] is not such-and-such," for example, "[He] is not describable by an attribute"; this statement affirms that which is not described by an attribute. If we then say "nor such-and-such"—for example, "nor is He an entity that is not describable by an attribute"—and if this "not describable" is not the same as what was negated by the particle "not" in the first phrase, then this will affirm that which is not what was affirmed in the first negating phrase. Specifically, it will affirm that which is neither describable nor indescribable by an attribute. And so on, until the particle "not" encompasses all that exists without remainder, negating in each statement what it affirmed in the preceding one and affirming something else that possesses no attribute at all: the negation of everything will mean the affirmation of something else, stripped of everything (*mujarrad*), namely, the Most High, who is above the attributes of that which possesses attributes, and exalted beyond the reach of the particle "not" when it attempts to negate what properly belongs to Him—for the gates of this path of knowledge are thereby locked. The Most High possesses nothing that the particle "not" could cut off, diminishing His majesty; in the dazzling brilliance of His lordship and exaltedness, He is such that the intellects' power of apprehension is exhausted and the lamps of knowledge are extinguished.

This method of affirming divine unity, in which an existent thing is taken and both it and its attributes are negated in order to affirm the sought-for reality, free of its characteristics, is not unknown. The Arabs used it for other purposes, offering examples of eloquence. A well-known description of a generous and hospitable man, for example, is: "They graze little,

kneel often, and flee when they hear the sound of the lute: destruction awaits them." This phrase describes camels that the man often makes kneel in his courtyard and does not allow to graze, so that they can quickly be slaughtered for a feast; when the camels hear the melody of the lute, they immediately understand that they are about to be slaughtered. This phrase affirms that the man is generous and hospitable, without directly ascribing this attribute to him in words specifically bearing that meaning. It is not because of an inability to follow this eloquent path toward the ultimate goal of expression and understanding that clear speech becomes obscure and eloquence turns into inarticulateness. No: we have followed an entirely clear path of divine unity, upon which there is not a single blemish.

In short, the untenability of affirming divine unity by affirming (*ithbāt wa-ījāb*) [4] attributes of the Most High (though He is above them) as true attributes (rather than metaphorically or in some other such manner, to which people may be compelled for the sake of eloquence) becomes clear upon investigating this question. Specifically, when attributes are ascribed to Him, this either leads to an impossibility that cannot be said of the Most High, or leads to infinity, which means the nonexistence of what exists; both possibilities destroy divine unity. More precisely, if that upon which things depend for their existence is not itself established (that is, if it were established through itself and needed nothing else), but requires something else in order to establish its *Onost'*, and the *Onost'* of that other thing is of the same kind as its own, so that this other thing requires yet another, and so on ad infinitum, then no act would proceed from it itself (for the establishment of its self is secured by another, and it is thereby distracted from acting), and consequently things would not exist through it itself, but would always exist through something else. You can see the same thing in the case of numbers, whose existence is connected with the unit: if the unit is not established, the other numbers cannot remain in existence either. Yet the very fact that things exist bears witness to the falsity of what leads to infinity; and the falsity of what leads to infinity entails the falsity of statements that ascribe attributes to Him (for He is above and more glorious than attributes!).

We shall show, using one attribute as an example, how this leads to an impossibility, from which the same conclusion will follow concerning all the other attributes. We shall therefore say: existence is one of the attributes. The assertion that it must be ascribed to the Most High as a true attribute necessarily leads to the conclusion that, first, there is the self of God Most High (may God Most High be glorified!), which possesses existence as an attribute, and, second, the attribute itself, existence, for the Most High is not this attribute, and this attribute is not the Most High. This attribute, then, when ascribed to the Most High, must necessarily be conditioned either by His self (though it is above such a thing!) or by something else. If His self itself gives rise to and conditions this attribute, then its necessity would be connected with the establishment of this self in and through itself, prior to this attribute and without it, so that it could then produce this action—that is, bring about the necessity of the attribute. But the primordial establishment of the self means that nothing obstructs it in this respect and that it needs nothing that would in any way divert it from this established state. If, then, the self is established without this attribute and needs nothing that would divert it from its established state, while existence is an attribute with which this established state has no connection, it is perfectly clear that the self has no need of this attribute (since it is itself established), and therefore has no necessary need of it, such that by conditioning it, it might acquire something it did not possess. Since it neither needs it nor has any necessity for it, such that by conditioning it it might acquire something it did not possess, it is clearly impossible and inconsistent with His glorious majesty to ascribe it to Him as something necessary; and what is impossible cannot be ascribed to the Most High.

{68}

This is the case if the necessity of this attribute is related to His self, which is established prior to the attribute. If, on the other hand, the attribute is ascribed to the Most High in such a way that the self does not precede it in being established, but both are equal in this respect, this would entail the need for something else that made the self particular, so that it was not this attribute, and made the attribute particular, so that it was not this self. For the self is not free from this attribute, as it would be if it made the attribute necessary; yet this attribute, equal to the self, is neither brought about by it nor made necessary by it. It follows, then, that the establishment of the self is connected with the necessity of something else; and if something else is necessary, the same must be said of it, and so on ad infinitum, which is clearly impossible.

Thus, if something other than Him brings about the necessity of this attribute, as we have said, the argument will proceed to infinity, which reason rejects, for things that exist are established. Since the necessity of this attribute leads to what we have demonstrated, which is false, and all attributes similarly entail the impossible, the Most High is therefore free of attributes—which are under the dominion of His creation—and exalted above them; He is the agent of these attributes and of all things.

Therefore, if we speak of the existence of God Most High, we do so only as a necessary form of expression, for the soul can use nothing except that which has come into being and whose knowledge is acquired through sense; and existence is one of the attributes of action that proceeds from the Most High into the cosmos, designated as the First Existent and the First Intellect. The action that proceeds from Him does not turn back upon His self or act upon it, as happens with our actions, which, as they pour forth into existence, affect our souls and bring them what they did not previously possess (we shall explain this, with God's help, in the appropriate place). No, His action is established and actual, and herein lies the difference between these two actions. Let no obstinate person assert the contrary, likening the necessary establishment of the [divine] self to the attributes of which we have spoken, thereby falling into confusion, entering upon a diabolical path, obscuring the matter, leading others astray, and constructing the impossible. Here one must say only what is necessary: that the established self [of God] is above attributes (all-glorious and great is God!), while the existence of things requires establishment by the Most High, upon whom things depend for their existence, as we demonstrated earlier. Thus the gates of godlessness are shut. Blessed and exalted is the Lord of the worlds; nothing that exists shares in His being, insofar as He is He, and there is no other god but Him. Only God grants firmness and strength. In God I place my trust and to Him I call in all my affairs; God is a vigilant guardian over His servants.

[4] The original contains two terms that are difficult to distinguish in translation. We draw attention to this statement, in which *ithbāt*, "affirmation," and *ījāb*, "making necessary," are used as synonyms. This identification is important for understanding the term *thubūt*, "establishment," derived from *ithbāt*.

WALL THREE

On the Pen, or the First Existent

With Seven Streets

STREET ONE

On the affirmation of the Created (*mubdaʿ*), which is the First Existent; on the fact that its existence does not derive from its own self, that it is the sustaining cause of all that exists, and that it is neither a body nor a power in a body and does not belong to the corporeal world

We shall say: the Exalted One is exalted above all degrees of perfection and deficiency, unity and multiplicity; the particle "not" is powerless to deny Him attributes or bearers of attributes from which the mark of createdness cannot be separated. He, as we have shown, lies beyond the limits of that to which intellects can find a path through the power of their own light and the movement of thought, and the path to comprehending Him through any attribute is closed. Yet that which is below Him is an existent, a bearer of attributes, and it lies within our power to find a way to speak substantively about it.

Thus, since it is within the power of intellects to speak, using attributes that exist in created nature, precisely about that which is "other than Him," whose existence was created by Him, we shall say that what comes first into existence, as it appears, was not, and then came to be through creation from nothing, not from anything, not through anything, not in anything, not by means of anything, not for anything, and not together with anything. It is the First, and in the order of existence its existence is established and first; it {71} is the first limit (*nihāya*) and the first sustaining cause (*ʿilla ʾūlā*), to which the existence of all other existents is connected, directed toward the second limit. Likewise, in the order of the existence of numbers, the unit is first and established, for it is the first limit and the first cause, to which the existence of all other numbers is connected, directed toward the second limit. Such is its establishment (that of the First Existent.—A.S.) in the order of existents.

As for the direction of action and its necessary outpouring into existence, if the existence of the first were not established, the path to existence would be closed to the second; and if the existence of the second were not established, the path to existence would be closed to the third. This means that the second and third can possess existence only when the existence of the first has been established for them, and this is the cause of their existence.

Thus, the existence of the third, fourth, and other existents proves the existence of the first among them, the established one, which is a cause such that, were it absent, nothing else would exist. In this way, the existence of an existent establishes the existence of a certain First Principle (*mabdaʾ awwal*), from which the order of existents in existence proceeds. We call this First Principle the First Intellect and the First Existent, whose existence does not derive from its own self but is due to its creation by the Exalted One.

Let us proceed further by way of the converse and say: since all that exists relies for its existence upon sustaining causes that precede it, and every existent in its own self is an act of

that which precedes it, matter for its action, and an agent acting upon something else that is below it and serves as its matter, it follows from the existence of an existent that it ascends to that sustaining cause which is established and to which all sustaining causes ascend as their limit; which in its own self is an act proceeding from Him of whom it cannot be said that He is an agent, and which undergoes an effect but is not matter, and acts not upon matter distinct from itself. For the existence of any existent is connected with the establishment of the sustaining cause that precedes it: were that cause not established, it too would not exist. Nine, for example, is the sustaining cause of the existence of ten, and if its existence is not established, ten cannot exist either. From the fact that an existent is established in existence, it follows that the sustaining causes are established as well, and that, in the direction of the first among existents, the existent loses its multiplicity and becomes fewer in number until it reaches a single, established thing, which is the ultimate sustaining cause of all causes. Thus, among numbers, the existence of nine proves the existence of eight, and the existence of eight proves the existence of seven—and so they (the numbers.—A.S.) gradually lose their multiplicity, breaking down into that from which they arose, until they reach the established unit, which is the sustaining cause of them all and from which they are all formed. The existence of this unit, which precedes them in the order of existence, does not derive from its own self; rather, in its own self it is an act [proceeding] from Him of whom it cannot be said that He is an agent, and it undergoes an effect but is not matter, and it acts not upon matter distinct from itself.

We said that it (the First Principle of existents.—A.S.) is an act in its own self because it is the First Existent, as we shall demonstrate below, having come forth from Him of whom it cannot be said that He is an agent; for if He were an agent, He would also be an action, and if He were an action, He would require that from which His *Onostʾ* proceeded—and this, as we demonstrated in our treatise *Gardens*, leads to infinity.

The establishment, as we have said, of the First, upon which everything else depends, is attested by our analysis of the sustaining causes of existents and their ascent toward the one whose existence does not derive from its own self but from another. Specifically, we found that the human being, the last of existents and their second limit, breaks down into numerous things that undergo effects, which are as it were matter undergoing an effect, and all these constitute the realm of Nature; and into numerous things that act, for which the realm of Nature has become matter. It is in this matter that action takes place in order to bring into existence what can exist, such as a human being or something else. All these are actual; they are angels entrusted with the world. The human being, in turn, acts upon other matters distinct from himself when he creates an artificial form; he undergoes the effect of the realm of Nature, and he is also an action for the angels that exist in actuality, while his efficacy (*fāʿiliyya*) derives from the fact that he is an {73} action of something else that made him actual—that is, created him.

We further found that the realm of Nature and the agents within it break down into things fewer in number than the realm itself and its agents, namely, into prime matter and form, and that angel among them (that is, the actually existent element [*ʿunṣur*]) for which they became matter in the creation of the celestial spheres and primary elements. The realm of Nature and its agents act upon the human being and the other kinds of existents; they undergo the effect of that from which they arose (the realm of Nature undergoing the effect of prime matter and form, and its agents undergoing the effect of an agent like themselves that precedes them), and they are also an action of the actually existent Angel who precedes everything and everyone. Their efficacy derives from the fact that they are the action of the one who made

them actual. We found that prime matter and form, together with that which acts within them, break down into one single thing, for analysis ends at the first of the multiple selves, behind which—namely, behind the dyad—stands only the unit. The two can no longer be broken down into two things that would be to them as fathers and mothers acting within them, as is the case with the human being or prime matter; for then this would continue to infinity, entailing the nonexistence of existents. Through the ascent of analysis to the one upon which the existence of everything else depends, it is established that this one is an established sustaining cause, an act in its own self, acting upon its own self and undergoing an effect in its own self.

Let us further say that every potentially existent thing is deficient and attains actuality (which is a degree of perfection) only through that which exists actually, is complete (*tāmm*) in its own self and in its actuality, and upon which it therefore relies. Human souls in the realm of Nature are potential and deficient, and thus attain actuality only through that which exists actually and is complete in its own self and action. Since there are among human souls some that have attained actuality, such as the prophets, legatees, and imams (peace be upon them!), and their followers who have attained both perfections and both forms of happiness, become filled with virtues and purified of vices, it follows that there exists something actually existent, complete in its own self and actuality, through which they attained perfection and rose to the degree of actuality. Their completeness depends upon it, and were it absent, they would not have become actual. Thus, such an actually existent thing exists. And if there exists something actually existent, complete in its own self and actuality, through which what exists potentially attains actuality, then the essence of this actually existent thing is either a body, a power in a body, or neither a body nor a power in a body, so that it does not belong to the corporeal world.

It cannot be a body or a power in a body, for the bodies and powers in bodies present in the corporeal world are matters that undergo effects, which, owing to their deficiency, exist through receiving an outpouring (*fayḍ*) that brings them to perfection; and they cannot themselves, but only through another acting upon them, give a thing what properly belongs to it and bring it to the limit of its perfection. For example, celestial bodies act not by themselves but only because terrestrial bodies subject to their influence receive their action; or terrestrial bodies act not by themselves but only through celestial bodies that influence those terrestrial bodies. All of them, both those that influence and those that undergo influence, are powerless (*ʿājiza*), for they belong to the class of things that undergo effects and are deficient in their action: even if they can produce many things, they do so only with the help of another acting agent and through its processing. For example, Nature is powerless to produce glass in the same way as it produces gold or other [minerals], and the most it can do is produce that from which glass is made: a human being processes this [raw material], making it into glass. The same applies to iron, which Nature is powerless to bring into existence in the way it brings silver into existence; the existence of iron depends on the work of a human being, who brings it to the stage of an existent from the state to which Nature could not bring it. Likewise, Nature is powerless to bring women into existence adorned and clothed, with painted cheeks and hands dyed with henna, in which their perfection consists; the most it can do is simply bring them [into existence], and it is then the human being who undertakes to adorn them fully. Likewise, Nature could not produce human souls already complete, without their needing something else for their actuality.

All of these undergo effects, need something else in order to complete their action, and are deficient in their own self and act, for their essence is composed of two distinct parts, such as the human being's essence, which consists of body and soul, which need one another to sustain their existence. That which is deficient is preceded by what is perfect and complete in its own self and complete in its actuality. We, however, have supposed that it (the First Existent.—A.S.) is full and perfect in its own self and complete in its actuality; and if it is perfect and complete in its own self and act, it cannot in any way be deficient in its own self and act. If it cannot be deficient, it therefore cannot be a body or a power in a body, for the body and that which is in the body are in need and are deficient. Thus, it is neither a body nor a power in a body; and since it is neither a body nor a power in a body and nevertheless exists, it follows that it does not belong to the world of bodies. It is thus established that it does not belong to the corporeal world.

Moreover, if it needed something else for its actuality, existing through receiving the effect of that other thing, as souls do when they pass from potentiality to actuality through receiving such an effect, this would mean that it was deficient in its actuality, even if complete in its own self. But that which is deficient in its act while complete in its own self comes after that which is complete in both its own self and its act, which is higher in rank and precedes it. This establishes that what comes first into existence and surpasses in rank that actual existent through which the potential passes into actuality is the First Existent, self-sufficient in its act and needing nothing else for its actuality.

Once this has been established—namely, that the self-sufficient one, which needs nothing else for its actuality, is the First Existent, perfect and first—we shall ask whether or not this First Existent can be that very Exalted One, transcendent above attributes, upon whom the existence of existents depends. Let the soul accept the results of our investigation with calm assurance: it absolutely cannot. For this Existent is either the one that brought all created things into existence, or it is itself the First Creation. It cannot be the One from whom creation came forth, for that which exists from it (the First Existent.—A.S.) is deficient in its act; {76} whereas the incontrovertible judgment states that, if it were the one that brought creation into existence, what existed from it would be perfect and would need nothing else for its actuality. Since it is false that created things came forth from it, it is the First Creation, perfect in its act and needing nothing else for it; that other thing which exists from it is deficient and needs something else for its actuality. It is first in existence, preceding all other things in existence, complete in existence, the completeness of existence, the First Intellect, the First Limit, the First Creation, occupying the first rank of existence. This is what, as it appears, was not and then came to be, created perfect and eternal; it is the Proximate Angel, the Greatest Word; and there is no god but its Creator.

The correctness of what we have said concerning the breaking down and ascent toward one established thing, the limit of all things, is confirmed by what follows deductively from the existence of the world of religious legislation (*ʿālam al-waḍʿ*), a prophetic creation about which the commandments testify to us with certainty, and from the fact that this world corresponds to the divine creation. We divided that which gives the human soul perfection, life, and actuality into the things from which it arose, and discovered that it is multiple but united by two things. The first is the Law (*sharīʿa*) and its pillars, which are acts of worship through knowledge and through action: the former supplies forms to the soul, while the latter sets it right. This Law relates to the perfection of the human soul in the same way that the macrocosm, containing the celestial spheres, primary elements, planets, and natural powers, relates to the human body and soul (and this multiplicity is balanced by and corresponds to

the prophetic creation). The second is the imam, who unites the earthly ranks that preserve the Law, disseminate knowledge of it, and call people to know and act according to the Law; it is only through them, through their instruction, that a human being becomes human. By influencing the human soul through their instruction and guiding it along the right path, bringing it to the degree of perfection and the level of intellects, they stand to the perfection of this soul in the same relation as the actually existent angels entrusted with the world stand to the world, influencing its bodies and natural powers so as to bring into existence everything that can exist among animals, plants, and minerals. Their (the angels'.—A.S.) {77} existence in the divine creation is balanced by and corresponds to the existence of these earthly ranks (the earthly ranks.—A.S.) in the prophetic creation: just as the primary elements and their powers are incapable, by their own act, of producing something derived from themselves, but can do so only through something acting upon them—and that which acts upon them is itself incapable of doing so by itself, but only through the primary elements and their powers, which undergo its action—so too the knowledge of the Law and its foundations spreads only through the earthly ranks, which disseminate this knowledge by disclosing what is concealed within it; and these ranks themselves cannot act upon souls by themselves, but only through the prescriptions, ordinances, and sciences of the Law. Such is the balance and correspondence between them.

Then, in order to obtain truthful testimony confirming the correctness of what we have said about the things into which the world and the agents within it break down, we examined the things into which the Law, with its pillars and parts, and the earthly ranks that implement it break down, and the things from which they all arose. We discovered that they break down not into a multiplicity equal to the multiplicity of the pillars of the Law, the knowledge it establishes, and the actions it prescribes, but into fewer things. The first of these two is the Scripture, with the inimitability of its eloquent forms; it balances and corresponds to that into which the world, with its pillars, celestial spheres, and planets, breaks down, namely, prime matter, which forms a unity with its form. The second is the Foundation (*asās*), which preserves this Scripture and from which the Law proceeds; the Scripture is to it as matter, for within it the Foundation acts, extracting the knowledge concealed in it, disseminating it, preserving the Law, and strengthening it. It is balanced by and corresponds to the Angel who acts upon prime matter and form, from which [the corporeal world] and the world of Nature were formed.

We further divided the Scripture and the Foundation into the things from which they arose and found that their existence comes from the Speaker (*nāṭiq*), who is one: thus, the world of religious legislation ascends to its limit, beyond which there is nothing belonging to its kind. This balances and corresponds to that into which prime matter, form, and that which acts upon them break down, which is one: the existent ascends to its limit, beyond which there is only that which does not belong to the kind of existent. Moreover, it is impossible for the existence of the Foundation and the Scripture to derive from two things; it must derive from only one, for there is no intermediary between the Speaker and the Foundation and Scripture (the source and support of the Law), just as prime matter, form, and that which acts upon them cannot break down into a dyad: the limit of division is the first of existents, and if it did not possess unity, this would lead to the limitless, while that which has no limit cannot exist.

We further found in the world of the Law (*ʿālam al-sharʿ*) disciples who can rise to the degree of knowledge and attain perfection only when there is a teacher and guide who teaches and influences them, instructing and correcting them. This corresponds to the necessity we established for the existence of that upon which what exists potentially relies in

attaining its actuality, and balances it. We found that all those who carry out instruction and guidance among the ranks of religion, whether more or less worthy among them, are incapable by themselves of extracting and grasping the sciences, and need someone to explain them to them. This corresponds to the powerlessness of existents, whether influencing or undergoing influence, to bring things to their limit, as we established, and balances it. We found that the one who is powerless to extract the sciences independently is deficient in its own self and in its act: in its own self, because it has not been set right by the ordinances of the Law; and in its act, because it has not acquired the form of divine religious knowledge. This is balanced by and corresponds to what we said about every being that undergoes an effect and needs something else for its actuality being deficient in its own self and act—in its own self, because it consists of two different parts, and in its act, because it needs something else.

We also found that one who is complete in its own self but deficient in its act is established for one deficient both in its own self and in its act. Such is, for example, the Foundation, which is complete in its own self because it is perfect, but deficient in its act because it needs the Scripture and the Law for that act, so that through them it may influence souls, call them to interpretation (*ta'wīl*), and guide them toward knowledge of the balance between the worlds in the prophetic creation, which sets right the outward and is connected with action. This corresponds to and balances what we established concerning that which brings the potential into actuality, does not belong to the corporeal world, and is complete and perfect {79} in its own self but deficient in its act, because for its completion it needs something receptive that serves it as matter undergoing an effect. We found that the Foundation becomes the Foundation through the Speaker, who is complete in its own self and act, through whom the Foundation exists and to whom it returns. This corresponds to and balances the existence we established of that which precedes what is complete in its own self but deficient in its act (through which the potential passes into actuality), and which is complete both in its own self and in its act—that is, the first of existents, the first limit of existence.

We found that in the world of Law and religious legislation, the Speaker is the foundation to which all the earthly ranks ascend as to their limit, and above him there is only the One who granted him this exalted rank. The Speaker is complete in his own self because he has attained perfection, and complete in his act because he established and explained the Law and brought the clear Scripture, needing nothing else and relying on no one else for assistance, but only on the One through whose mediation he exists and has attained completeness, the One who is above him. This corresponds to and balances what we established concerning the First Existent as the foundation to which all that exists ascends as to its limit, above which there is only the Exalted One who created it, and which is complete in its own self and act.

Since the Speaker is the sustaining cause to whose limit everything in religious legislation ascends, whether potential or actual, and since what exists from him (the Speaker.—A.S.) is balanced by the divinely created nature, it is thereby proven that the First is the sustaining cause to whose limit all sustaining causes ascend; and just as the Speaker is the first foundation (*aṣl awwal*) from which the Scripture and the Foundation arose, so too the First is the first foundation from which prime matter and the form distinct [from it] arose. Just as the Speaker became a Speaker without the assistance of anyone belonging to his own human kind, so too the existence of the First does not proceed from anything belonging to its own kind; and just as the Speaker came to exist through another, through whom his existence came about, so too the First came to exist through another, through whom its existence came

about. Such is the interpretation of God's saying, "The likeness of a good word is a good tree": like through like.

From what we have said, the establishment of the First {80} Existent is clear: its existence proceeds not from itself; it is an act that acts and undergoes an effect in itself; it is the limit to which all that exists ascends; it is neither a body nor a power in a body and does not belong to the corporeal world.

What follows is a visual representation of these existents in their mutual balance and correspondence. The Lord of the worlds is full of goodness; there is no god but Him, the All-Glorious and Exalted, immeasurably exalted above what the children of darkness have imagined. I seek refuge in God and place my trust in Him in all my affairs: He is an ever-watchful guardian over His servants.

WHAT THE WORLD OF UNITY CONSISTS OF

ʿĀlam al-Waḥda min jihat al-tarkīb

The First Intellect (*al-ʿAql al-Awwal*)

The Second Intellect, actual (*al-ʿaql al-thānī al-qāʾim bi-l-fiʿl*)

The Potential Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-qāʾim bi-l-quwwa*), namely prime matter and form (*al-hayūlā wa-l-ṣūra*)

The angels entrusted with the world of Nature (*al-malāʾika al-muwakkalūn bi-ʿālam al-ṭabīʿa*); they are numerous, and each derives its existence from another

The world of Nature (*ʿālam al-ṭabīʿa*), with its celestial spheres, planets, and all that it contains; these are many things

The human being as body and soul. The perfection of the human being in the body consists of two aspects encompassing many things:

(1) The angels entrusted with the world of Nature; they are numerous, and the existence of each derives from another, until the series reaches the Second Intellect, whose existence derives from the First Intellect.

(2) The realm of Nature (*dār al-ṭabīʿa*), with its celestial spheres, planets, and all that it contains; these are many things, whose existence derives from prime matter and form.

Praise be to God, who guided us and gave us the strength to follow the guidance; may the guidance of God and of His vicegerent on earth remain with us (may God bless him!); there is no power and no strength save through God, the Exalted, the Almighty.

{81}

WHAT THE WORLD OF RELIGION CONSISTS OF

ʿĀlam al-Dīn min jihat al-tarkīb

The Speaker (*al-Nāṭiq*)

The actual Imam (*al-imām al-qāʾim bi-l-fiʿl*), namely the Foundation (*al-Asās*), peace be upon him	**The potential Imam** (*al-imām al-qāʾim bi-l-quwwa*), namely the Scripture (*al-Kitāb*)
The Imams entrusted with preserving the Law (*al-aʾimma al-qāʾimūn bi-ḥifẓ al-sharīʿa*); they are numerous	**The Law** (*al-sharīʿa*), comprising the two forms of worship, through knowledge and through action; these are many things

The human being is truly human through the perfection of the soul. The perfection of the human being in the soul consists of two aspects encompassing many things:

(1) The Imams entrusted with preserving the Law; they are numerous, and the existence of each derives from another, until the series reaches the Foundation (*al-Asās*).	**(2)** The Law, comprising the two forms of worship, through knowledge and through action; these are many things, whose existence derives from the Scripture (*al-Kitāb*).

Praise be to God, who guided us; we would not have been guided had God not guided us. May the guidance of God and of His vicegerent on His earth remain with us. May God bless him. There is no power and no strength save through God, the Exalted, the Almighty.

[1] *The world of the Law* — one of the designations used by al-Kirmani for the "world of religion."

[1] This is what al-Kirmani calls the ten Intellects.

[1] *The pillars (arkān) of the world* — the four primary elements (fire, air, water, and earth). Al-Kirmani calls them the pillars of the world, emphasizing the analogy between the "world of Nature" and the "world of religion": just as the latter rests upon the actions obligatory for every Muslim ("the pillars of religion"), so the former is founded upon four "pillars."

[1] Qur'an, 14:24.

STREET TWO

On the fact that it (the First Existent.—A.S.) proceeds from the Exalted One not by way of emanation, as the philosophers claim, but was created by Him, and that the manner of its existence cannot be comprehended

We shall say: if we accept that the existence of existents proceeds from the Exalted One by way of emanation and not by way of creation, we shall impress upon our souls a form of its existence that does not correspond to the true reality of that existent, for this necessarily entails the existence of something that causally conditions the Exalted One, who is transcendent above attributes, and such a thing cannot exist. For emanation characteristically belongs to the same kind as that from which it emanates, shares something in common with it, and stands in relation to it. Emanation as such is, as it were, the embodiment {82} of that from which it emanates, for the latter is, as it were, the very essence of the emanation: in that from which emanation proceeds there is contained as much of the nature of the emanation as the emanation itself contains of the nature of its source, and in this respect there is no difference between them. For example, light, the emanation of the sun's embodiment, is, insofar as it is light, as it were the embodiment of the sun, for the sun itself is, as it were, the essence of its [own] emanation (that is, light.—A.S.): the essence of the sun contains as much light as has emanated from it, and in this respect there is no difference between them.

Thus, that from which emanation proceeds is multiple, for one thing in it is shared with the emanation, while another differs from it and is not shared with it. Its essence is therefore dual: one aspect is common to both of them (the source of the emanation and the emanation itself.—A.S.), and in this respect they are indistinguishable; in another respect, however, there is a difference between them, and the otherness (*ghayriyya*) is observed without which it would be impossible to say that this is not that and that is not this. The multiplicity of what is multiple proceeds from the fact that one part of this multiplicity needs another part for its existence, without which neither part would exist; and if both exist, this is because one depends upon the other and both fall under the power that encompasses them both.

All this means that the Exalted One, if the existent proceeding from Him were an emanation, would be multiple and would depend for His existence upon the power of something else, and would be preceded by something whose existence is impossible. But if the Exalted One is such that His *Onostʾ* does not proceed from another *Onostʾ*, then He is above possessing attributes of paucity or multiplicity, and it is therefore false that He is dual. And if it is false that He is dual, it is false that what proceeds from Him is an emanation that conditions multiplicity in its source, from which its own essence would proceed.

Moreover, one of the intellect's primary judgments states that what is simpler, freer from signs of multiplicity, and more correct in its own self is higher than something else. Here we find that emanation is simpler than that from which it emanates, for it is one thing, whereas its source is dual: one aspect in it is shared with the emanation, while the other differs from it. It follows that emanation is more entitled to precedence {83} than its source, for it is higher than it: multiplicity in it is negligible, whereas multiplicity is present in its source. Thus, if it (the First Existent.—A.S.) is an emanation, it is higher than the One from whom it emanated, namely, the Exalted One, who is transcendent above attributes. Where else, if not in this matter, should we adhere to the opposite conclusion?

Furthermore, emanation occurs only through the fullness (*tamāmiyya*) of the essence from which it emanates, whereas the Exalted One is far above being filled or complete in a way that would make Him and something else share even this one meaning, for that would entail the existence of something from which His *Onostʾ* proceeded. For there is something in common and a relation between that which is filled and that which is complete, just as there is between that which is complete and that which is filled; and commonality and relation between two things mean that something necessarily precedes them both. If the Exalted One shared anything at all in common or in relation with something else, this would necessarily mean that something preceded them both; and if that which preceded them had anything in common with something else, this would necessarily mean that something also preceded those two, upon which both would depend for their existence. Ultimately, this would mean that existents do not exist; and since this is false and impossible, it is false that what exists from the Exalted One is an emanation.

Moreover, if the First Existent, which is none other than the First Intellect, were an emanation from the Exalted One (glorified and exalted is He!), it would follow that the intellects that pass from potentiality to actuality through it—the First—in the realm of Nature, namely, the intellects of the Speakers, Foundations, and imams, would belong to the same kind as the First Intellect and resemble it in their actuality and attainment of fullness. And since the First Intellect is an emanation, and this emanation belongs to the same kind as the Exalted One (the All-Glorious, transcendent above attributes!), they should encounter no obstacle in comprehending the Exalted One and describing Him through attributes befitting Him. Moreover, the intellects should then be glorified (*tasbīḥ*) just as the Exalted One is glorified, by denying Him attributes, since they would be like Him. However, {84} since it is not fitting to say of intellects that attain actuality in the realm of Nature, namely, the intellects of the prophets (may God bless them!), that they are transcendent above attributes, relations, and that which possesses attributes—for they are, among other things, described by attributes—and since it has been established that they cannot properly communicate anything about the Exalted One, and that it is they who glorify the Exalted One by denying that He possesses attributes and can be described through something that possesses attributes (greatly exalted is the Exalted One!), it follows that the First Intellect resembles these intellects in its inability to comprehend the Exalted One through the attributes found among the things He created, and resembles them in glorifying Him and exalting Him above all the characteristics of what He created. And since the First Intellect is precisely thus, and its essence is such because of this inability (great is the Exalted One, and His names are majestic, magnificent, mighty, radiant, lofty, brilliant, luminous, and exalted), it is false that what arose from the Exalted One is an emanation; and since it is false that what arose from the Exalted One is an emanation, nothing remains for it but to be a creation.

Thus, it is that creation whose existence is from nothing, the First Existent whose existence is not from matter, a First such that, if one asks about the manner (*kayfiyya*) of its existence, there is no answer: this manner is veiled from intellects, for they are beneath its shadow, while it is above them in their existence. For when intellects strive to acquire knowledge of an existent, they characteristically turn toward their own essence and comprehend that existent insofar as they grasp it. Yet it is not fitting for intellects to encompass this knowledge, for it is closer to the One from whom creation proceeds than to the Created (which is the essence of Creation), and also because it precedes the essence of the intellect and lies outside it. For the intellect is an essence that comes into existence through the power (*qudra*) by which creation occurred—the true soul of the intellect—and therefore it appears that knowledge of how it (the First Intellect.—A.S.) exists, and how anything that arises from

nothing exists at all, lies outside the essence of the intellect and precedes it. Thus, here we have not an attempt to know the essence of creation, in which case that creation, namely, the First Created, would turn toward its own essence and encompass it, but an attempt to know the One from whom creation proceeded and through whom it came into being. This One precedes creation; and when the intellect strives to know that which precedes its own essence, it attains only bewilderment, for it would then have to abandon its own essence. But by abandoning it, it ceases to be an intellect, and by ceasing to be an intellect, it falls into ignorance (*jahl*). Thus, if an attempt to know what precedes its own essence plunges it into bewilderment and ignorance, and the manner of creation precedes its essence in rank, then one who strives for such knowledge will attain only ignorance and bewilderment, and so this knowledge cannot be attained.

Furthermore, if intellects could acquire this knowledge, then, having comprehended, encompassed, and acquired it, they would, being capable (*qādir*), have no difficulty in creating embodied essences from nothing, without the mediation of anything and not in anything. For one who has comprehended knowledge of a thing, if capable, is characteristically not impeded in reproducing it. For example, a person who has learned a craft will easily manufacture the corresponding object if nothing obstructs him; and when such an obstacle exists, it is not difficult for him to explain clearly and in detail what he has learned. Yet we do not see that they (the intellects.—A.S.) can do this; and if they cannot do it and do not know how to do it, there is no path to acquiring such knowledge; and if there is no path to it, there is no point in expecting the impossible from intellects.

Thus, since this object of striving is unattainable, and the Created is the First Existent (which arose from nothing prior belonging to its own kind) and the limit of the intellect's cognitive activity, at which it ascends to this First Existent, it is necessary to stop at this boundary and firmly acknowledge our inability [to know] what lies beyond it, so as to exalt and glorify it: there is no god but Him, the All-Glorious and Exalted, immeasurably exalted above what the children of darkness have imagined. I call upon God and place my trust in Him; I seek His help and guidance: He is the best support; only God, the Exalted, grants firmness and strength.{86}

[1] By *philosophy* (*falsafa*) and *philosophers* (*falāsiṭa*), medieval Arab thinkers meant the teachings of Arabic-language Peripatetic philosophy and its followers.

STREET THREE

On the fact that it is the embodiment of Creation, the embodiment of the Created, the embodiment of unity, and the embodiment of the one, and that it is the First Existent, which is preceded by nothing and which nothing precedes in existence

We shall say: since actions are multiple and each action that occurs in existence differs from the others by the name given to it according to the nature of its existence, and since creation is also a kind of action, the name "creation" applies only to that whose existence derives neither from something preceding it in existence and serving as its matter, nor through anything mediating between it and the One from whom it receives existence, nor with the help of any instrument, nor for any cause, and which cannot serve as an indication of the One from whom its existence comes. This name points precisely to it, signifying that it received existence, that it possesses an embodiment in existence, and that its existence does not derive from something preceding it [in existence].

When we say "creation," one thing is meant; when we say "the Created," something dual is meant, namely, Creation and that which became created through Creation (for, as is known, that which undergoes an effect is what has become such under the action of an agent: the action is one thing, and that which has become the recipient of that action is another). However, it is false that something precedes Creation in such a way that Creation would be for it like receptive matter (for this entails the existence of something not created by the Exalted and All-Glorious *Onostʾ*, which is inconceivable), in which case each of these two things (Creation and that which precedes it.—A.S.), possessing the particular feature that made them different, would be distinct from the other. This would entail the necessary existence of that from which the existence of both proceeded. But since this is impossible, it is established that the embodiment of Creation is the Created, and the Created is Creation.

Let us further say that this Created, which is Creation itself, being what it is—namely, free from matter through which its existence would be realized, free from any causal conditioning of the One who gave it existence, being True (*ḥaqq*) and Pure (*maḥḍ*)—is nevertheless not free from the characteristics of that whose existence is not through its own self, for it is such as to unite two states: an attribute and that which possesses an attribute. Such is the nature of everything produced, although it (the First Existent.—A.S.), by virtue of its simplicity, is not like the existents around us, in which the attribute is one thing and the bearer of the attribute another: a bed, for example, is a certain form in matter, the form not being matter and the matter not being form, but each being different from the other, and through them the embodiment of the bed comes about. Rather, the attributes by which it (the First Existent.—A.S.) is described belong (*tābiʿa*) to the very essence that, in its existence, becomes the bearer of attributes through relations, as, for example, a human being, in relation to his own self, is an existent; in relation to his parents, a child; in relation to his parents' other children, a brother; and in relation to his brother's child, an uncle, while in himself and as such he is one, and all these attributes are ascribed to him through relation.

These two states (the attribute and the bearer of the attribute.—A.S.) are the first perfection, with which the existence of the essence as described by an attribute is connected, and the second perfection, with which the existence of the exalted rank (*sharaf*) of that essence as an attribute is connected. Let us liken the first perfection to the bearer (*ḥāmil*) and the second perfection to that which is borne (*maḥmūl*). They are, as it were, two members (*fardān*) of this essence, through which the one exists, and this one unites unity and that which became

one through this unity. It unites them in such a way that, while combining unity and multiplicity, it is nevertheless free from the signs of distinctness (*taghāyur*) that would condition its existence and imply that the One from whom its existence proceeds is dual, with each of the two being the cause of the other's existence, which would entail the necessity of something preceding Him. Thus, it remains free from those characteristics that would imply the existence of yet another rank above it. In this way, it (the First Existent.—A.S.) is one in its own self and multiple through its relations: for example, it is Creation when related to the One from whom its existence proceeds, and the Created when related to its own essence—{88} such is its distinctness, even though these relations do not affect its essence.

These two perfections (as it were, the two members of the essence of the Created) are created, and both are equally subject to createdness. Specifically, the first perfection (likened to the bearer) is created, and the second perfection is created; yet as Creation they constitute one member, for both are Creation, while as the essence of the Created they constitute two members, for they are two created things: the first perfection and the second perfection. Moreover, it is impossible for one of them to leave the bounds of Creation and become, as it were, the bearer of Creation, something other than Creation itself; nor is it possible for either to precede Creation in any respect, for then, as has already been explained, there would necessarily exist something conditioning the One from whom its (Creation's.—A.S.) existence proceeds. Thus, the existence of a bearer of Creation distinct from Creation itself necessarily entails the existence of something that is the cause of the Exalted and All-Glorious *Onost'*; yet the Exalted One is hidden behind a veil, and nothing conditions Him as a cause. It is therefore false that Creation has a bearer distinct from Creation itself. And since it is false that Creation has a bearer distinct from Creation itself, such that this bearer is created by Creation, it follows that the meaning of Creation is that it is itself the Created; it (the First Existent.—A.S.) is the embodiment of Creation and the embodiment of the Created.

Furthermore, since Creation is the essence of action, it is impossible for anything to mediate between it and the Exalted One from whom it proceeds (for if there were such a thing, that thing would rather be Creation). Since there is no intermediary between it and the One from whom its existence comes, nothing precedes it; and since nothing precedes it, it is first in existence. The first is one; therefore, it is the one.

The essence of the one is dual because it possesses two members: unity and that which bears it. Unity, one of these members, is a sustaining cause such that, if it were mentally removed, the one would also be removed; and the bearer of unity, the second member, is also unity insofar as it is a member, and if it were mentally removed, the one too would be removed with it, disappearing from existence. Thus, these members are the sustaining cause of the existence of the one; and since they are a sustaining cause, traces of their action are present in the one. These members, therefore, which serve as a sustaining cause, are members of the very one that is the supported effect. Thus, it (the First Existent) is the embodiment of unity and the embodiment of the one.

Creation (which is the Created) is also such a First Thing that, if one searches for something in existence before it, one finds nothing deserving the name "thingness" or "existence." For this First Thing is the limit from which all things begin, arranged in degrees of existence; it is the First Principle from which all existents proceed. Among existents, it occupies the same rank as the unit among numbers. It is the one because it is first among existents, just as the unit is first among numbers: it (the First Thing.—A.S.) must be the One, the First among existents.

Thus, this rank—the smallest of the small, the beginning of multiplicity—was assigned to it. Glorified and exalted is the One from whom it received existence, and He is above this rank. For if He, the Exalted and Transcendent, had to possess this rank and did possess it, that which existed from Him would be a dyad rather than a unit, since the dyad follows the unit in the order of existence. But since that which exists from Him is Creation, and Creation is one rather than dual, it is established that He is above this rank. Thus, the rank of primacy and unity belongs to the Created (which is Creation): it is one, it is the Created, and it is Creation. It is the One that nothing precedes; it is also the Proximate Angel who is called in divine tradition and prophetic Law the Pen (*qalam*): a single essence, multiple through its relations and connections. Blessed is God, the Lord of the worlds; there is no god but Him, immeasurably exalted above what the children of darkness have imagined. I call upon God for help and rely upon Him; I place my trust in Him in all my affairs: He is an ever-watchful guardian over His servants. God is sufficient for us; He is the trustworthy protector!

{90}

STREET FOUR

On the fact that it is perfect, that it is eternally enduring without end (*azalī al-ākhir*) but not eternal from the beginning (*azalī al-awwal*), that it remains as it was created without undergoing transformations, that it is unique and has no likeness, and that it understands only its own self

We shall say: it has already been stated that the One from whom the existent received existence (glorified and exalted is He!) is inexpressible: He cannot be expressed by either a word or a pronoun. Among the ultimate ranks of existents and their attributes, none is more exalted than perfection, through which a thing preserves the state of its existence unchanged. Since the Exalted One, in His great glory, is transcendent above this rank, this attribute must be assigned to the First Existent, which received existence from Him. It can be no other way: if it does not possess this attribute, then it possesses the attribute of deficiency; yet it is known that the deficient comes after the perfect in the order of existence, and if the First Existent were deficient, God the Exalted, from whom it received existence, would have to be perfect, for the perfect precedes the deficient. However, His perfection would mean that His existence proceeds from another, which cannot be; and since His perfection entails the existence of something that cannot exist, it is false that He must be perfect. Thus, this attribute is assigned to the First Existent, whose existence is likewise impossible without the One from whom its existence proceeds, who is free from characteristics of multiplicity and attributes that necessarily imply that their existence derives from another.

Thus, the [First] Existent, which received existence from the Exalted One, is perfect; yet it cannot be perfect without remaining in one state, without any transformations. For transformation (*istiḥāla*) is the lack of constancy (*qillat al-baqāʾ*) of a thing's remaining as it is; it is a sign of transition from one state to another, and transition from one state to another occurs only for the sake of acquiring something and because of some need. Yet it has been established that the First Existent is perfect and experiences no need; if there is no need, there is no transition; and if there is no transition, there is no transformation. If there is no transformation, it follows that it remains in the same state of its existence, undergoing no transformations, not passing from its original state into another and not changing in the slightest—just as fire does not depart from its state, remaining fire when it illuminates, heats, or burns, and in the movement of its particles: in all these things, it performs only an action corresponding to its own existence.

Furthermore, the transformation of things that undergo transformation proceeds either from their being potential, and thus transforming through transition as they strive toward actuality, or from their being actual and perfect, and thus striving to return to potentiality. In both states, accidents enter into them and depart from them, for these things, although they themselves possess a form, are matter for other forms that have not yet come into existence, or become common matter for accidents that alternate within them, when none of the accidents already present has precedence over another that is just appearing. Thus, the appearing accident possesses the force of establishment, while the established one possesses the force of dissolution and disappearance, for an accident established in a thing has already received its share of existence, whereas an accident appearing [in it] is directed toward existence. Neither the accident established in it (although that in which the accident exists serves as its matter) nor the accident appearing in it can prevent this force of emergence (*al-ṭalab al-ṭāriʾ*), since the accident preceding it in existence (for example, one that has already received [its share of existence]) is overtaken by the accident established within it, while the

accident arising in it becomes like the established one. In this way, these things, transforming through accidents, fluctuate between potentiality and actuality, performing all that they are meant to perform.

Thus, only that which is potential transforms as it moves toward its perfection and subsequently returns to potentiality; it is precisely such transforming things that belong to the world of generation and corruption. Moreover, something precedes this world of generation and corruption in existence, for it is potential, just as something precedes our souls in existence, since they are potential. Yet it has been established that nothing precedes Creation (which is the First Created); consequently, it does not belong to the world of generation and corruption. And if it does not belong to the world of generation and corruption, it is false that it undergoes transformation: it remains as the Exalted One created it (transcendent above attributes). Glorified is that whose flame of perfection never goes out, whose waters of majesty never run dry: it is eternally enduring (*sarmad dāʾim*), never disappearing, eternal (*azalī*), never perishing and never changing.

Moreover, its eternal duration and persistence are not primordial (*awwalī*) but without end (*ākhirī*), for it, as it appears, persists for ever and ever, for it has been established that its existence is not due to its Creator. The ultimate aim of intellects belonging to the realm of Nature is to become like it in eternal duration and persistence through the perfection acquired from the earthly ranks: having become eternally enduring and persistent, they will never undergo transformation.

Furthermore, transformation is a kind of corruption in that which undergoes it and ceases to be what it was before; corruption in it arises from deficiency, while the deficiency of any thing is rooted either in its own self or in that from which it arose. But Creation (which is the First Created) embodies perfection itself, and therefore it is above being deficient, whether its deficiency were rooted in its own self or in the One from whom it arose. Since it is above [such deficiency], it is eternally enduring and undergoes no transformation.

Nor can there be another existent qualitatively like Creation (which is the First Created), such that there would be two of them (*mithl bi-aynihi wa-nawʿiyya*); for this would mean that the One from whom it arose was somehow divided, so that from each of the separate parts there arose that which corresponded to it. Yet it has been established that the One from whom it arose (namely, the Exalted One) cannot be divided in any way, whether explicitly or implicitly: this would mean that something preceded the Exalted One, which cannot exist. And since He cannot be divided in any way, whether explicitly or implicitly, that which proceeded from Him cannot be a dyad; and if it cannot be a dyad, it is unique and has no likeness.

Furthermore, it is precisely Creation (which is the First Created) that possesses the attribute of fullness and completeness. If there were another thing in existence like it, similar and equal to it, fullness would be divided between them (so that only both together would constitute fullness), and neither would be complete, but deficient. If it (the First Created.—A.S.) were deficient, there would necessarily exist something causally conditioning the One from whom it arose; but since it is false that anything causally conditions the Exalted One, it is false that it is deficient, for it is the creation of the Exalted One. And if it is false that it is deficient, it follows that it is complete and full; and if it is complete and full, there is nothing outside it of its own kind that resembles it. The sun, for example, is complete and possesses fullness, and there is nothing outside it that, together with it, would form two qualitative

likenesses; or consider a body filled with power, outside which there is nothing else that would be a body: it is unique and has no likeness.

Creation (which is the First Created) can understand only its own self. For it is the highest existent, and if so, that which it understands must also be the highest of existents; yet among existents there is nothing higher than itself. Therefore, it understands only its own self. Moreover, since it is the simplest of produced things, it must understand what is simplest; and among existents there is nothing simpler than it. Therefore, it understands only its own self and nothing else. Furthermore, one who understands does so in order to attain perfection and set the self right; but its (the First Created's.—A.S.) perfection does not lie in understanding something higher than itself, and therefore it must understand itself and thereby attain perfection. For if it attained perfection by understanding something else, it would not be entitled to this entire rank: its perfection would be one-sided rather than comprehensive. This would mean that something preceded the One from whom {94} it arose; but since it is false that anything precedes the Exalted One, the rank of perfection in its entirety belongs to it (the First Created.—A.S.). And since the rank of perfection in its entirety belongs to it, it has no need to understand anything else that might give it perfection.

Thus, it understands only its own self, for, created in sufficiency and majesty, it needs nothing else. This is the Angel, Great, Majestic and Brilliant, Perfect and Eternally Enduring, Understanding and Eternal in Duration, called in divine tradition the Word.

The correctness of what we have said is attested by the existence of the Speaker in the world of religion, the origin of the cycle (*dawr*), upon which the existence of all the others belonging to the world of religion depends. He is perfect and established in his state of perfection; correspondingly, in the world of Creation, it (the First Created.—A.S.) is perfect and eternal, remaining as it came into being, without any transformations. He is unique: no one shares in his prophethood, and none is like him in rank; correspondingly, it is one: nothing shares its rank, nothing resembles it in that rank, and nothing is like it in what it possesses. He needs none of the ranks of the world of religion whose existence depends upon him, and he requires neither anyone's obedience nor anyone's knowledge in order to attain perfection; correspondingly, its (the First Created's.—A.S.) existence is all-encompassing. We shall leave the establishment of the balance of all other things here and there to one who is truly our brother: let him follow our path under our guidance, since it has been firmly established that it (the First Created.—A.S.) is perfect and eternal, undergoes no transformations, has no likeness, and understands only its own self. Blessed is God, the Lord of the worlds, and glorified is He; there is no god but Him; only God the Great grants firmness and strength. I place my trust in God and seek refuge in Him: He is loving and merciful; He is our sufficiency and our trustworthy protector!

{95}

According to al-Kirmani's teaching, the soul is the Intellect in potentiality.

STREET FIVE

On the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of its substance, on which attributes must belong to it, on what in its essence is the bearer and what is borne, and on how it is one in one respect and multiple in another

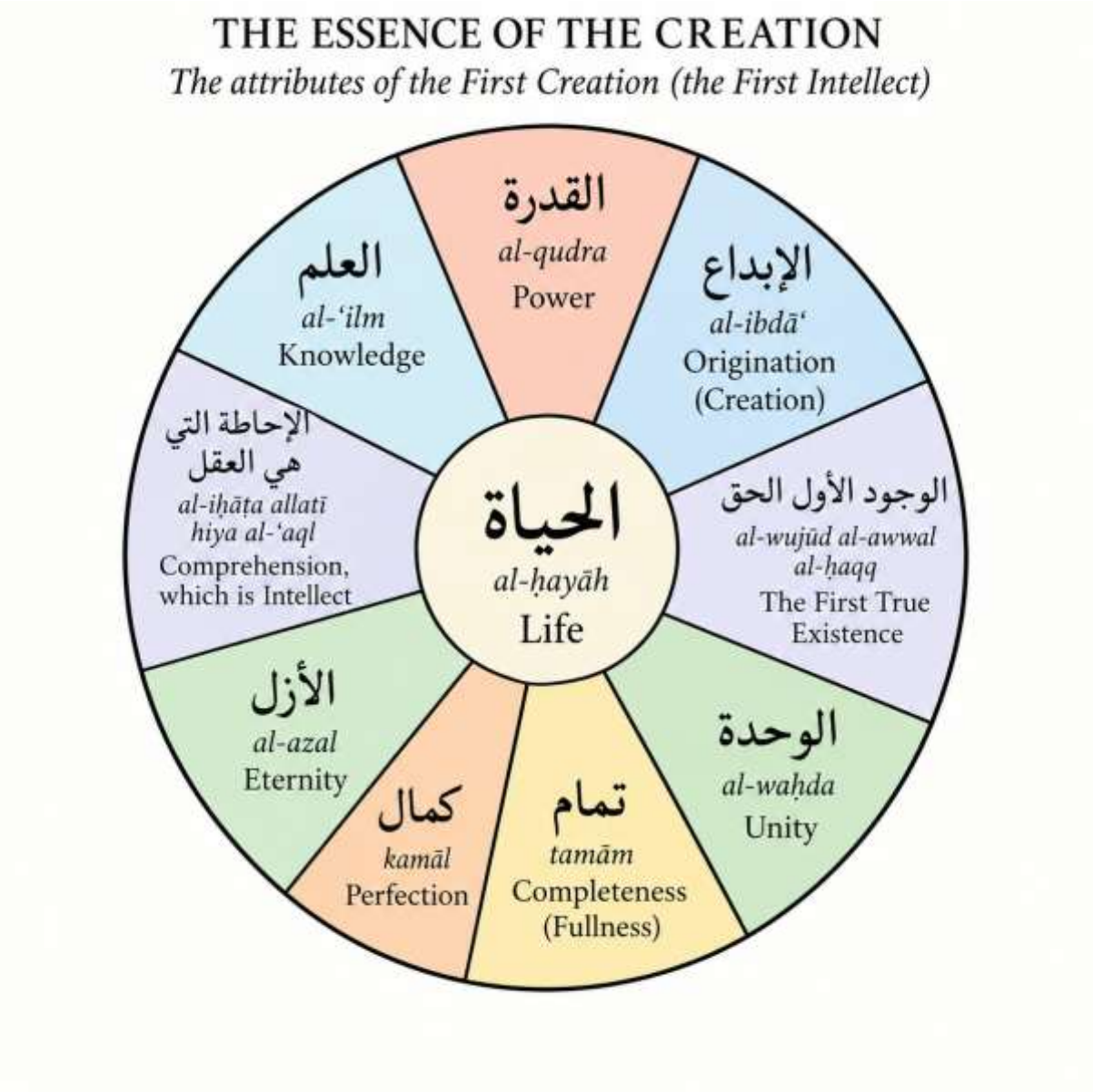
We shall say: the Exalted One is too glorious to possess any of the attributes found in His creation, and, as we showed earlier, He is inexpressible, whereas the highest and most perfect attributes are ascribed to His Creation, for it is impossible that such nobility, perfection, and other excellent attributes should belong to anything other than this Creation; that would mean that something had causally conditioned and given existence to God, the Exalted and Most Great. Since this is impossible, the highest attributes and the highest bearers of attributes belong to that Creation which is the First among the ranks of existents.

Creation, proceeding from the Exalted One, cannot but be the First Immutable True One (*ḥaqq awwal*), the ultimate end to which all that exists ascends in existence. Yet it could not be the True One without being the First Existent, for it is immutable precisely insofar as it is the First Existent. If it is false that it is the First, then it cannot be the True One either; and it could not be the First Existent without being the One, for it is the First Existent precisely because it is one: were it not one but dual, it would not be the First Existent. Nor can it be the One without being Complete, for completeness is the cause of its unity: nothing resembling it exists outside it, just as the completeness of a body consists precisely in there being nothing outside it that resembles it in corporeality. Nor can it be Complete without being Perfect, for perfection is the cause of its completeness: were it not perfect, it would not be complete. Nor can it be Perfect without being Eternal, for its perfection consists in remaining in one state without deviating from it. Nor can it be Eternal without being Understanding, for it can be eternal without undergoing transformations {96} only if it preserves its own essence and understands it. Nor can it be Understanding without being Knowing, for it understands precisely because it knows its own essence and encompasses it. Nor can it be Knowing without being Powerful, for the aforementioned encompassing, that is, knowledge of its own essence, is possible only through divine power, through which the action is accomplished, namely, this encompassing. Nor can it be Powerful without being Living, for it is powerful precisely because it is alive. Nor can it be Living without being Acting, for it is alive insofar as it acts in relation to a certain action that is its limit and is directed outward from its own self, so that it exists outside it, in that which undergoes an effect.

Thus, Life is an essence that encompasses all the attributes listed above, through which it acts; for were it not Living, it would not be Acting, and were it not Acting, it would not be Powerful, and were it not Powerful, it would not be Knowing, and were it not Knowing, it would not be Understanding, and were it not Understanding, it would not be Eternal, and were it not Eternal, it would not be Perfect, and were it not Perfect, it would not be Complete, and were it not Complete, it would not be One, and were it not One, it would not be an Existent, and were it not an Existent, it would be neither the True One nor the Created, and were it not the True One and the Created, existence itself would not be. This has been demonstrated, with the explanation of its cause, in the book *Degrees* (*Maʿārij*), before [the chapter on] the simplest letters.

Since this is so, and since the existence of every existent thing is through something such that, were it to disappear, the thing itself would disappear, so that this something is as it were the established root and support of the existent thing in its existence, and since everything

listed among the highest attributes is such that, if it were removed from Life, Life would not disappear, whereas it itself cannot exist when Life is absent, it follows that all these things (namely, power, knowledge, existence, true immutability, and the rest) are connected with the existence of Life and persist only by depending upon it. Life is the receptive substance to which all these things adhere; it is, as it were, an essence whose existence comes from the All-Glorious Exalted One, the first perfection and support of everything else, while the existence of the rest {97} follows upon its existence, finding support in it and serving it as it were as a second perfection. It is like a centre, while the rest is the circle drawn around it (this may serve as a visual representation):



This circle is an image of the essence of Creation: in its totality it is living, and in its totality powerful, and in its totality knowing, and in its totality understanding, and in its totality eternal, and in its totality encompassing, and in its totality perfect, complete, and one. It is the First Existent, immutable and created.

Since it is Creation, the first of all things produced in existence, and everything else that exists arose from it as branches from a trunk, it encompasses both all the virtues recorded in this diagram and everything implicitly contained within those virtues or proceeding from them. It is immutability and truth; the first existence and the first existent; unity and the one; eternity and the eternal; the First Intellect and the first intelligible; knowledge and the first knower; power and the first powerful one; life and the first living one—a single essence to which these attributes adhere. Some of these attributes belong directly to its essence, while others belong to it through its relation to something else, without multiplicity thereby arising in its essence. Rather, the situation here is like the word "give": if this word is used in relation to someone higher than the speaker, it is a plea; if used in relation to someone lower than the speaker, it is a command. The word itself remains the same, unchanged, but through its relation it changes and becomes something different. All of this belongs to it necessarily, for it is first in existence and necessarily contains the highest perfections and the highest existents. Likewise, if there is fire, there must necessarily be heating, illumination, burning, the decomposition of what fire decomposes, and the combination of what fire combines, for the existence of all these things is entailed by the essence of fire (A.S.): when it exists, they exist too.

Thus, the substance of this Creation is the substance of Life, and its embodiment is the embodiment of Life. Life precedes all other attributes, and therefore God the Exalted mentioned it first among the attributes: "Alif, Lam, Mim. God... there is no other object of worship besides Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting"; and also: "God... there is no other object of worship besides Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting; neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him." It is singular insofar as it is Creation and one, and it is also multiple insofar as it possesses, as we have shown, attributes.

As for Life, it receives all perfections proper to it in a manner corresponding to its rank of existence. If its existence is the First Existence, which is Creation, then its second perfection exists as entailed by and together with its existence, for nothing precedes it here; the matter is not such that its existence is its first perfection, while its encompassing of what precedes it is its second perfection. On the contrary, here its essence is the very first; and since it is so, its first perfection, namely, the perfection of its essence, is simultaneously its second perfection, namely, the perfection of its attributes. Here there is no need for anything else, and perfection is complete.

If, however, its existence is subsequent (*mutaʾakhkhir*), its second perfection consists in encompassing something else that precedes it in existence. Such, for example, is the existence of a human being: at first, the human being is life possessing power; this is the first perfection, called the soul, for the soul is potential and open to receiving the second perfection. Indeed, it continually receives, learns, acquires knowledge, and performs actions until it reaches the degree of intellect: it adheres to the prescribed rites of the community that can bring the soul to actuality and to the attainment of the degree of the second perfection, provided the soul diligently practises these rites and prescriptions, having learned their outward and inward meanings and not departing from them. When it restrains itself, holding back its passions within the bounds of the Law, it should no longer be called a soul, for it has attained the degree of perfection. Such are the souls of the Speakers (may God bless them!): their states continually alternate, enabling them, having initially possessed only the first perfection of a powerful life, to acquire the second perfection, attaining the degree of encompassing and knowledge and becoming actual. When they encompass the selves that

precede them and unite with them in their entirety, the lights of Unity shine forth within them, and they attain the second perfection in this second state.

That which encompasses what precedes it is precisely the essence of that soul itself. For if that essence attains the degree of happiness, acquiring, like the selves that precede it in existence, both the first and the second perfections (for it reaches the limit of perfection, at which nothing of the exaltedness and fullness of those things is alien to it), then it is those things—but not in the sense that these intellects, which pass from potentiality into actuality in the world of Nature, are simultaneously the primordial and highest principles. Rather, they are like those principles in their actuality, their attainment of perfection, and the flowing of the light of Unity within them, when all multiplicity comes together in them. They (the intellects.—A.S.) are arranged according to the arrangement of those principles (the primordial principles.—A.S.), so that when they turn toward their own essence and draw the lights of knowledge from it, this is because they seem to perceive those other things that do not enter into their essence. For there is no difference between them except in the first perfection (for both are one thing as Life) and in the second perfection (for both are one thing as actual, eternally enduring and persistent). Every one of the lights of Unity flows through both groups, and the only distinction between them lies in their rank of existence: those first in existence are higher than those that come later.

In this way, intellects that pass from potentiality into actuality in the realm of Nature become possessors and administrators of something else; in relation to everything else, they are givers of perfection, for from them originate the eternal powers that flow into souls, so that these souls experience the second resurrection as pure intellects, eternally existent, set right through obedience to the Law, and given form by eternal divine sciences. Glorified is the All-Sovereign of creation and the cosmos: there is no god but Him; only God the Great grants firmness and strength. I call upon Him and place my trust in Him, the ever-watchful guardian over His servants.

[1] *Ḥaqq awwal* — this expression may also be translated as “the First True One” or “the Primordial True One.” In addition, *al-Ḥaqq* (“the True One”) is one of the epithets of God.

[1] Let us recall that in Arabic the word “intellect” has a connotation with the idea of binding or securing.

[1] See note *2* to I.7.

[1] Qur’an, 3:1–2, S.

[1] Qur’an, 2:255, S.

[1] *The Lights of Unity* — that is, the lights of the Intellects; al-Kirmani calls the “world of the Intellects” the world of Unity (or the world of Holiness, the world of Perfection).

[1] *The Highest Principles* — al-Kirmani means the one Created Intellect and the nine Emanated Intellects.

STREET SIX

On the fact that its glory, splendour, beauty, and joy in its own essence are indescribable; that it cannot know the One outside it, from whom its existence proceeds, and that this is the source of its yearning and bewilderment; and that it is the Greatest Name and the greatest thing named

We shall say: the greatness, splendour, power, exaltedness, dignity, glory, loftiness, delight, radiance, bliss, and joy of every thing lie in its second perfection, which is either substantial or accidental. The second perfection of kings, for example, is accidental, for it consists in their subjects, army, wealth, adornments, beauty, and art of governance; it is so great that it takes one's breath away. Yet the splendour, glory, joy, and bliss contained in substantial second perfection are greater than these. Since the second perfection of Creation, which is the First Existent, is substantial (and is not attained through something else), its greatness, power, exaltedness, glory, and the bliss and delight inherent in its own essence are indescribable and exceed all our joy. For everything immeasurably exalted and incorporeal in the realm of Creation is a source of the utmost bliss and joy, and its pleasure, well-being, joy, and beauty stand in relation to those found in our corporeal realm of Nature just as the latter (that is, those found in the realm of Nature) stand in relation to those found in the world that is coming into being, so that the states of the First Existent are such that "no eye has seen them, nor has any ear heard them," as the Speaker (may God bless him!) said.

Moreover, one who apprehends something perfect, good, and beautiful is blissful and rejoices when seeing that the existence of things is arranged in harmony with it rather than in contradiction to it. The more the thing apprehended contains perfection, beauty, adornment, splendour, good order, and radiance, and the more compatible it is with the one apprehending it, the greater the joy it brings to the one apprehending it and the more evident that one's delight becomes. Since Creation, which is the First Intellect, is the limit of perfection, splendour, and beauty, for it is first in existence and the sustaining cause to which all existents ascend, and since nothing resembles its essence in perfection and beauty and nothing is closer or more suited to it than its own essence, while it apprehends its essence through its own essence, it follows that the delight and bliss it experiences from its own essence are as great as those arising from what in its essence causes them, so that they exceed all description. May the great Creator of it be glorified; may He who created it so majestic be glorified—the One from whom this existent arose, and besides whom there is no god!

The First Creation (which is the complete and perfect Creation), despite this fullness and perfection, has absolutely no knowledge of the One from whom its existence proceeds and does not understand Him. Every such attempt on its part is fruitless; in this matter it can understand only what it has found within its own essence and drawn from it, since it is itself the most perfect and highest: it finds only the forms of its own essence, then withdraws in exhaustion, knowing that this is beyond its power. It is just as when any of us wishes to grasp a handful of water: he will see only an empty, tightly clenched fist—his own palm—and will not catch the water; or when he tries to slap a sunbeam like a butterfly or seize it in his hand, he will not obtain what he desires, but rather the opposite. For it is His action, His creation. Actions characteristically depart from that from which they proceed, so that when they exist, their faces are turned not toward the agent but toward their own selves, which undergo the effect, so that they may adhere to them and preserve them; for if the faces of actions were turned toward the agent instead of toward the action, they would not proceed into existence but would instead disappear from the arena of existence. Since Creation is an action and pure

existence, and its face is turned toward its own being an existent, it is thereby turned away from the One outside its essence, from whom it emerged into the arena of existence. Thus, it is not granted to see or encompass Him, and therefore it is in bewilderment (*mutaḥayyir*); and being in bewilderment, it yearns to see Him so as to encompass Him. Yet this is not granted to it, and this inability envelops it like a veil: it is in the same bewilderment as one who wishes to grasp a handful of water or longs to catch a sunbeam.

Moreover, intellects characteristically understand their own selves through those very selves and act upon their own selves through those very selves. If this is so, they cannot understand and encompass what lies outside them and from which their existence proceeds. For they can encompass what lies outside them only by going beyond the limits of their own selves; but once they go beyond those limits, they are no longer intellects, and when they are no longer intellects, they are ignorant. Since, by going beyond the limits of their own selves, they cease to be intellects and become ignorant, they cannot, while they are intellects, understand what lies beyond the limits of their own selves. Therefore, the First Created, which is the First Intellect, does not understand the One outside it, its glorious Creator. Since it does not understand Him, it is in bewilderment (*ḥayra*); it knows of its own self no more than that it is created, but it does not know the One from whom it received existence, concerning whom it is bewildered.

Thus, it is incapable of understanding and comprehending the One from whom its existence [proceeds], and it is in bewilderment, but not because of any deficiency in its own essence, as is the case with our own selves when we are ignorant of what is unknown to us. Rather, this is because the Exalted One is above all comprehension and intellectual encompassing, for comprehension means that the one comprehending turns toward the object known, seeking in it something by which it may be described and characterized. For intellects this is unbearably difficult and impossible, and in this they find their bewilderment and powerlessness. Our sight likewise cannot withstand encountering the solar disk, not because it is incapable of apprehension, but because such is the *Onostʾ* of the sun: it blinds the gaze directed toward it, so that the gaze cannot withstand its radiance and, weakened, turns away.

Thus, the First Intellect yearns and is bewildered, unable to comprehend the One from whom its existence [proceeds]. Confirmation of this is also found in divine tradition and exegetical reasoning, which forbid speaking about the Creator, for the Prophet (may God bless him and his family!) said to his companions: “Speak about created things, but do not speak about the Creator.” He (may God bless him!) knew that this subject is inaccessible to intellects, and that turning to it produces nothing but doubts and assimilations (of God to created things.—A.S.), which bring ruin upon the soul (may God protect you!).

Moreover, it is the Greatest Name and the greatest thing named. Many names are used for the Exalted One in the corporeal world (that is, in the realm of Nature), but the greatest of them, befitting Him alone and no one else, is God. The most worthy of His names is the one that conveys the meaning of the Named One in a manner consistent with the existent that proceeds from Him, which declares Him through its own nature and points to Him through its state. This name (that is, “God”—*Allāh*.—A.S.) conveys the meaning of “passionate attachment” (*ilhāniyya*), that is, yearning, and “bewilderment” (*walah*), that is, confusion. For when someone yearns with passion, it is said that he is “strongly enamoured,” and of someone bewildered it is said that he is “upset” and “confused.” This name, therefore, in its two meanings, properly belongs to Creation, which is the First Existent, for these two meanings are present in it: yearning for the One from whom its existence comes, and

bewilderment concerning Him. Thus, since this name, with the meaning found in it, properly belongs to it, and since the name is the greatest and the thing named by it is the greatest, its yearning and bewilderment are established. Great is God, transcendent above attributes, and great and beautiful is His creation; there is no god but Him. I call upon God and place my trust in Him in everything: only He grants firmness and strength. God is our sufficiency; He is the trustworthy protector. Excellent is this guardian, and excellent is this helper!

{104}

[1] Hadith.

[1] These lines present almost word-for-word parallels with Sufi images of bewilderment and yearning. The essential difference, however, lies in the fact that in Sufism "bewilderment" (*ḥayra*) is regarded as a necessary prerequisite for the true knowledge of God, while "yearning" (*shawq, ishtiyāq*) is an attribute of true love, in which God reveals Himself to the lover as knowable, whereas al-Kirmani affirms the absolute unknowability of God.

STREET SEVEN

On the fact that it is the mover of everything that moves and on how it moves; on the fact that it is the sustaining cause of everything else, needs only its own self for its action, and is an intellect in its own essence, understanding its own self and understood by its own self

We shall say: since movement is an action, and all actions, whether occurring in matter or subsisting in themselves, necessarily have a First Principle, from which their existence proceeds, movement too has a First Principle from which its existence proceeds. And since movement exists in the world, it is established that it has a First Principle.

Having established that it has a First Principle and investigated it, we shall find that it breaks down, first, into a First Moving Mover, such as the life that flows from the world of Unity and Perfection (that is, the world of Intellect) into the corporeal world, a life called Nature, which moves bodies in the manner proper to them according to the prescription of the divine ordering and is itself moved by their movement, because it is within them; and, second, into a second moving mover, such as the second perfection in the world of Intellect and that perfection in the souls supported [by heaven] (*muʾayyadūn*), which is called sometimes prophethood and sometimes messengership. This perfection moves the souls of the human race toward the worship and adoration of God, makes them yearn for virtue and happiness, and calls them to action; and it too, when it kindles these desires within them and awakens their awe, is itself moved, because it is within them.

Moreover, the movement of both is not inherent in their own selves, but proceeds from another and is an incidental, unintended movement that causes a mover unintentionally to move itself as well when it intends to set in motion something else in which it exists. This happens with the mover of bodies because it is within them when it moves them, seeking to attain what is achieved through glorification and to reach the bliss of eternal persistence, which it can attain only by setting them in motion. Likewise, a sailor sets his ship in motion and moves along with it, or the soul comes into motion when it moves the parts of its body. As for the mover of souls, its movement occurs because it belongs to the human race. When it calls people to reverence for God, worship, instruction, the awakening of aspiration and awe, seeking to acquire a special rank attainable only through such calling, instruction, adoration, and worship, it too necessarily comes into motion, even if moving its own self was not part of its intention.

Since the movement of both is not inherent in their own selves but proceeds from another, both come into motion only because, in moving—that is, in performing their action—they need their own selves to come into contact with that through which the action takes place. For if, in setting something in motion for some purpose, they did not need something else necessary to attain the purpose of that movement, and did not need their own selves to come into contact with it, they would not move at all. For example, if a soul seeking vengeance did not need to move the hand (which is something other than the soul) to strike a blow, the tongue to utter insults, and the whole person to advance against the enemy, it would have no need to move at all. Since this movement occurs only because both need something else in order to perform their action, something that in a sense receives their effect (for Nature this is the body, and for the souls of teachers it is the souls of disciples), so that the perfection of the action is achieved through both sides, and since the deficient and needy stand below the perfect and self-sufficient, it is necessary according to the divine ordering that the moving

mover that is in motion and needs something else to complete its action be preceded in existence by something that, by virtue of this precedence, needs nothing else to complete its action and is therefore not deficient, but possesses a perfection that removes every need to seek the assistance of another in bringing its action into existence. Since the existence of such a thing is necessary according to the [divine] ordering, and nothing other than Creation, which is the First Created and the First Existent, precedes these two moving movers while possessing perfection, power, greatness, brilliance, radiance, lights, and self-sufficiency, it is precisely Creation (the First Created and the First Existent) that is the Unmoved First Mover.

Moreover, it moves something else in the same way that a lover moves toward the beloved, or iron is attracted to a magnet. The point is that, for the First Moving Mover (one of the two emanations), the ultimate end and second perfection—that for whose sake it glorifies, magnifies, and exalts [God], and in which it finds its pleasure, joy, and eternal persistence—consist in understanding the Mover that precedes it in existence, namely, the First Created and the First Existent. If it understands this, it means that its essence contains a form made right by its actuality and the perfection it has attained through exalting, praising, and glorifying, rejoicing in its own perfection, persistence, and attained bliss. A form always acts upon that of which it is the form, setting it in motion toward that to which it is naturally inclined to move. Thus, this form that sets it in motion causes it to act in the manner determined by its perfection (which is attained precisely through this form), a perfection that entails glorification, praise, and blissful eternal persistence. Yet, in intending to perform these actions, it must necessarily make use of the body in which it exists, for its perfection consists in existing through this body and its own self, rather than through its own self alone. This is precisely why it is said that the first perfection of the body is attained through its mover, a point also used in the definition of the soul: it is the perfection of a natural body endowed with organs.

When, in order to perform its action, it makes use of the body, movement arises, namely, the most eternal and perfect of all movements. In this way it becomes the mover of that body and itself moves along with the body's movement. Because its action lasts eternally (*dawām*) (as determined by the perfection of praise, glorification, exaltation, joy, bliss, and delight), this movement too lasts eternally. For the cause of the movement of this [moving] mover {107} is the understood form of the Created (that is, the First Existent), which is its (the moving mover's.—A.S.) perfection: a form that requires the reception of the outpouring diffused throughout all that exists, which grants existence and persistence to everything. Through this form the First Mover became the first mover of something else, and the moving [mover] became the first mover in its own self. If movement is to be conceived in it (the Unmoved Mover.—A.S.), it can only be the self-contained encompassing of its own self, the self-contained enjoyment of its greatness, the affirmation of [God], and the inability to comprehend the One from whom it arose.

Moreover, this First Moving Mover is unlike the Intellects outside it, which are free of everything that would serve as a support (*mawḍūʿ*) for them: the essences of those Intellects are understanding, the one that understands, and the thing understood, whereas the essence of the First Moving Mover is not wholly understanding, for its essence contains something that is not intellect, namely, the body that serves it as matter or support and within which it acts. It understands not through its support but through its form, whose perfection consists in understanding that which lies outside it.

Furthermore, it is the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else. For existents are effects sustained by their causes, which precede them in the gradation of existence and are their ultimate ends; among existents, however, the ultimate end of all ultimate ends and the antecedent of everything antecedent is Creation (the First Created and the First Existent). Therefore, it is the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else.

Moreover, if Creation (that is, the Created before every thing) were not the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else, no existent would exist. But since existents do exist, it necessarily follows that the limit of existents—the point beyond which, if one crossed it in search of something else lying further on, one would find nothing in existence—is the sustaining cause upon which the entirety of existents depends. The limit of existents, beyond which there is nothing, is none other than Creation (that is, the Created). Thus, the First Created is the sustaining cause of existing things, like the unit, the first of numbers.

{108}

Moreover, a thing is unable to become a cause sustaining the existence of another thing only because of some obstacle rooted either in itself or in something else. Yet the First Created, owing to the fullness of its power, encounters no obstacle to its action, either from something external that precedes it or from its own essence in which such an obstacle might exist. Therefore, the First Created (that is, Creation) is the sustaining cause of the existence of existents.

Moreover, something receives existence from another only when that other has attained its ultimate perfection and utmost fullness, when its essence is abundantly rich and possesses a power that makes it excellent and opens the way for the existence of what proceeds from it. Such, for example, is a learned man, filled with sciences, who pours their bounty upon a student; were he not learned, he could not have a student. Or consider a vessel that spills water when it is full of it; if it contains little water, it will guard it zealously, needing that water more than anyone else, and will not spill a drop. Since Creation (that is, the First Created) represents the culmination of perfection and the limit of fullness and overflowing abundance, it is the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else.

Moreover, since the First Created is the First Living One, and that which is living cannot be inactive, the First Created acts. Since it acts, and that which acts is the sustaining cause of the existence of that which undergoes its effect, the First Created is the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else.

Thus, it is the First Mover and the first sustaining cause.

Furthermore, owing to its perfection, it needs nothing external in order to perform its actions. For its action takes place within its own essence, and its essence is for its own essence the matter upon which it acts (*yafʿal*) and the form through which it acts (*yaʿmal*). It is so because the *Onostʾ* of the One from whom it received existence is transcendent above all otherness: that which He produces cannot need something else in order to act, for if it did, the existence of that other thing would mean that the existence of the One from whom they both arose was causally conditioned. For two different things can exist only from two different sources, and that which unites two different things is multiple; something always precedes what is multiple. Since the Exalted One cannot be multiple in any way or possess any attribute, two different things cannot receive existence from Him. And since the existence of

two different things proceeding from Him is impossible, that which proceeds from Him is one; and since it is one and nevertheless acts, it cannot need anything else in order to perform its action.

Thus, the First Created needs nothing in order to perform its action because it is first in existence and the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else. This is why we say that souls needing the support of the senses (which are something other than themselves) to perform their actions resemble animal souls and are deprived of the afterlife; whereas every soul that has ascended to the highest degree of action and stands firmly upon it, and that has risen in knowledge to the highest of existents, encompassing it in the lights of Unity that shine forth within its own essence, will no longer need the senses to perform its action. Having long sought and striven toward the light of Unity, it will acquire its bounty for ever and find its support within it.

Furthermore, the First Created is understanding, the one that understands, and the thing understood: it is understanding because it is pure Intellect, existing from the Exalted One; it is the one that understands because it acts upon and encompasses its own essence, that is, understands it—and in order to understand its own essence, that is, to perform its action, it needs nothing else, unlike us, who need outside assistance when we encompass and understand our own selves. No, the essence of this Intellect is itself self-understanding. It is the thing understood because its essence becomes understood by it, and in order to become understood it does not need the help of something else that would understand it; rather, its essence is understood by itself. That which understands within it is simultaneously that which is understood, and that which is understood is that which understands: [they are] a single essence. The same applies to intellects in the realm of Nature when they encompass their substance and know their own essence, seeing that it is a living substance that has ordered the forms preceding it in existence. The one who encompasses this substance and knows that this essence is a living substance is not something distinct from it; rather, they (the intellects.—A.S.) themselves are the ones who encompass and know their own essence, and that which is encompassed and known is not something distinct from them: it is them, and they are it. They know their own essence and are known by their own essence. The one known is the one knowable, and the one knowable is the one known: [they are] a single essence. Moreover, these natural intellects understand the Intellects outside them because they resemble them: they are understanding when they rise to the degree of perfection and of an existent possessing perfection; they are that which understands insofar as this understanding understands its own essence; and they are the thing understood insofar as their essence is understood by that understanding, which is itself the one that understands.

Thus, the First Created needs nothing that serves as matter for an agent in order to act, for if its action were performed only through matter, it would not deserve to be called the first in existence, and something that causally conditioned the One who gave it existence would precede Him. But since the Exalted One is too glorious for anything to precede Him, that which exists from Him is likewise above having something else beside it. And since there is nothing else beside it, while it is itself the sustaining cause of everything else, it needs nothing else.

The Exalted One explained this in His saying: “O humankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate.” He also manifested it in the lands and souls He created, which are the religious scales and the truest criterion by which the truth of all deeds and things is recognized through inner balance and mutual correspondence. This is

expressed in the saying of the Exalted One: “We shall show them Our signs in the [distant] lands and within their own souls, until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth.” This testifies that, since the Speaker stands first among the ranks of his cycle, carrying his summons to everyone, urging them toward worship of the Lord, influencing their souls and shaping them according to the form of divine unity, the First too is the mover of everything that moves toward glorifying the Creator. It also testifies that, since the perfection of the Speaker, who has attained the highest limit, inclines people to follow his summons through perfect actions and good words, and since this perfection is the cause of people following and obeying him, loving him and leaving their own kin, the ultimate perfection of the First is likewise the cause of its moving everything else, just as the beloved moves the lover. It further testifies that, since the Speaker is the cause of the existence of everything in the world of religion during his cycle, in which he stands first as the origin of its ordinances, rituals, and ranks, the First is likewise the sustaining cause of the existence of everything else that arose from it. It also testifies that, since the perfectly complete Speaker needs no assistance from anyone to establish the laws of worship and the foundations of divine unity, the source of happiness, the First likewise needs nothing in order to perform its action. And it testifies that, since the Speaker is understanding in his own essence, understands through his own essence, and understands his own essence through that same essence, while his essence is understood by him through itself, and since he has attained perfection, the First too is understanding, the one that understands, and the thing understood. Glorified is the One who is exalted above conception and thought, hidden behind the veil of this dazzling Creation from comprehension through any attribute; there is no god but Him; only God, the Exalted, grants firmness and strength. I call upon God and place my trust in Him in all my affairs: He is an ever-watchful guardian over His servants. God is our sufficiency; He is the trustworthy protector. Excellent is this guardian, and excellent is this helper!

[1] *Those supported* [by heaven] — those who are endowed with revelation from above (*waḥy*), which grants “all-encompassing” (absolute) knowledge that cannot be obtained by any other means. For more on this, see VII.14.

[1] *The Mover of Souls* — al-Kirmani means the heaven-supported messenger.

[1] Qur’an, 4:1, K.

[1] Qur’an, 41:53.

WALL FOUR

On the Pen, the Tablet, and the Highest Principles (which are the Heavenly Letters), existing from Creation, which is the First Created

With Seven Streets

STREET ONE

On the Manner of Emanation

We have already said that, since existent things are multiple, each thing is given a name corresponding to it and indicating it, whereas the First Intellect (that is, the First Created), having been produced from nothing, received the name Creation, for it is the very essence of the act that flowed forth into being from the Most High without anything resembling matter among the essences of existent things. We have also shown that knowledge of how creation was accomplished is hidden behind a veil that intellects are powerless to lift, for their essences do not contain such a thing, and, in striving to comprehend it, they would have to cease being intellects; but when they cease being intellects, their essence is lost, whereby it is demonstrated that the manner of creation is not like the manner of emanation, which luminous minds have comprehended and of which they have informed us. For if the manner of creation were like the manner of emanation, creation would be emanation and emanation creation, and therefore what has previously been shown testifies that these manners are not alike.

Emanation is an unintentional, spontaneous act (*infiʿāl*), and also a being arising from an essence that joins two things: it is both encompassing and encompassed. Such an essence, beholding itself and experiencing delight in itself, becomes illumined (*tushraq*), and from that duality, outside this essence, there arises something established just as that essence itself is established. Namely, Creation (that is, the First Created), as we have previously shown, being the limit of all excellent qualities, is living through its essence, powerful through its essence, knowing through its essence; it is perfect and eternal; it is intellect and intellecting, and so forth; and thus its essence, by virtue of its power, encompassed itself, and, having encompassed itself, beheld and intellected; thus its essence (which is intellection) became self-intellecting and self-intellected. Moreover, in this actualization of its complete power it encountered no obstacle, neither external nor essential; it saw its essence and loved it, beholding that it is the First in being, that nothing precedes it, that it is the supporting cause with which the being of all existent things is connected, that it is the limit of radiance, light, brilliance, glory, exaltation, greatness, magnificence, power, and beauty, a pure act that appeared in being without any intermediary between it and the Most High.

Beholding all this, it experienced the greatest essential bliss, and its rejoicing was incomparably greater than that which arises in our souls when we comprehend what we seek and attain what we love. And because of this bliss, which illumined its essence (when, rejoicing, it encompassed its essence, intellected it, and beheld it), a radiance of light proceeded from it. Something resembling this occurs when, because of the soul's joy at

possessing the object of passion or meeting the object of love, a blush, previously hidden in the depths of the body, suddenly rushes to the cheeks and appears upon the skin. Only this blush does not pass beyond the limits of the essence in which it appeared and penetrates from the depths of the body no farther than the skin of the face, because of internal impediments and the weakness of that essence; but it is otherwise with this light, for the essence from which its radiance proceeds is free from every impediment and possesses complete power with respect to the radiant light departing from it: it becomes established outside it, immutable, just as its supporting cause is immutable.

Likewise, the sun illuminates the surface of water or of a well-polished mirror with rays proceeding from it and subsisting independently: these rays are always present so long as the radiant sun is present. If we imagine that the sun were eternally to remain motionless at a single point in the firmament, continuing forever to illuminate the perpetually enduring surface of a mirror or of water, then the rays flowing from it would likewise shine eternally. Yet the essence of Creation (that is, the First Intellect) is far more radiant than the sun, its essence far purer than the surface of water or a mirror, and in beauty and magnificence it surpasses everything magnificent and beautiful. Just as the sun sees the surface of the mirror and illuminates it, so the First Created (which is the First Intellect) beholds and intellects its own essence, encompassing it; just as the mirror shines with the light of the sun, so too the essence [of the First Intellect] is intellected and emits light; just as the rays exist outside the mirror, which has reflected outward the light of the sun that shone upon it, so too that which has emanated exists outside the First Intellect; just as the sun and the mirror are one essence and one thing from the standpoint of corporeality, so too the Intellect and the intellected are one essence and one thing; just as the sun is nobler and higher than the mirror illuminated [by it], although they are something one as corporeal essences, so too the essence of the First Intellect as intellecting and intellection is higher than that same essence as intellected, although as created it is one.

Thus, emanation is the radiance of an immutable light proceeding from the essence of the Created (which is the First Intellect), such as we have shown.

Something similar also occurs with certain intellects in the kingdom of Nature, when they advance (*inbiʿāth*) toward actuality and acquire the second perfection in time. Namely, the souls of the Speakers (may God bless them!), having become pure intellects, at first still employ the senses as instruments, apprehending and acquiring knowledge from without, until they dispense with their support once the radiant lights of the world of Holiness shining within them become sufficient for them. Then the soul, which previously was served by the senses that brought knowledge to it, itself places its power at their service, having become joined to the sources of radiance and light and surveying its own essence through the forms impressed upon it: it displays to them (the senses.—A.S.) its might and power, while they transmit outward the powers of the soul that have been actualized within its essence and increased through the impression of forms.

The soul compels the common faculty, namely the faculty of representation, to receive the form of what is transmitted outward—the same faculty that had received from the senses the forms of sensibles (which are closest to it) and transmitted them to the soul. As the power in the thinking essence increases, the faculty of representation begins to transmit outward just as it previously received forms from without and conveyed them to the soul, and then the faculty of representation imparts images to the air just as it previously acquired images from it: the sense sees something manifested, and this manifested form is the emanation of the soul that

has ascended to the rank of the Intellects and acquired the second perfection; moreover, this form exists in an order opposite to that of the forms produced within the essence through sensory perception. There something is apprehended and transmitted inward, thereby forming the soul, whereas emanation proceeds from the Intellects of the Speakers (may God bless them!) from within outward, actualizing the sense.

We perform exactly the same inversion when we wish to ascertain that the truth of a thing has been grasped in a definition: by converting the definition and seeing that its converse form is also true, we know that this is the definition sought. For example, we say: “A body is that which has length, width, and depth”; seeking certainty and knowledge of the truth, we convert this and say: “Everything that has depth, width, and length is a body”; and if, upon conversion, the original meaning is confirmed and nothing in it proves false, we attain certainty of its truth and know that this is its (the body's.—A.S.) natural definition. Or, for example, we say: “The human being is a living, speaking [being], resurrected by the second resurrection”; seeking certainty and knowledge of the truth, we convert this and say: “Every [being] resurrected by the second resurrection, speaking and living, is a human being”; and if, upon conversion, the original meaning is confirmed and nothing in it proves false, we attain certainty of its truth and know that this is its (the human being's.—A.S.) natural definition. For if a formulation is not, when the word “every” is added to it, a convertible definition (so that its meaning differs from the true thing sought), then it does not correspond to [the thing defined] and is not taken as its definition. Suppose we say: “Every human being is a living [being],” and then consider whether this is truly the natural definition of the human being; we then convert it: “Every living [being] is a human being”—and we see that the meaning of this formulation does not correspond to the first statement, for it joins to humanity that which is not human: thus we recognize the falsity of this statement and do not accept it as the definition of the human being.

Likewise, what the Speakers (peace be upon them!) have known concerning the world of Unity, the form of which shone forth in their holy souls, the knowledge apprehended by them through the lights of the Kingdom that descended upon them, that which turned from within outward (that is, passed from the essence of the soul into sense, which is external to it) and appeared before them in an image—this is an immutable truth admitting no doubt. As for that which is not converted and does not appear to sense, they (even though they may believe in it) do not pronounce a final judgment upon it, but await what emanations will occur within their essences from the divine power—for something can appear before them in an image only from that power. This belongs to the category of what is imparted by revelation (*waḥy*), concerning which we shall speak exhaustively in its proper place, with God's assistance and through the blessing of His Vicegerent.

Thereafter the matter is the same; however, with regard to the heavenly ranks (which exist in the kingdom of Creation), what is at issue is the First Emanation, which timelessly joins the two perfections; this is the ultimate degree of the perfection of the Intellects, and by this also the human being of the kingdom of Nature, who passes from potentiality into actuality, differs from the human being who is a Near Angel, existing through the First Emanation in the kingdom of Creation. Praise be to God, Who has guided us, for otherwise we could not have found the way; praise be to His Successor (may God bless him!); upon God I call and in Him I place my trust: He is the vigilant guardian of His servants.

[1] Al-Kirmānī returns to this same subject in VII, 14.

[1] *...is distinct...* — In the original, a verb with a stronger sense is used: *yanfaṣil*, i.e. **is separated, cut off**.

[1] The soul passes from potentiality into actuality and becomes intellect through the "second resurrection" (recall that "resurrection" and "emanation" are expressed by the same term). Thus, ordinary human beings attain the second (ultimate) perfection after the lapse of a certain period, whereas the First Intellect possesses both perfections from the outset.

STREET TWO

On the First Emanation, which is the Second Intellect (called the Pen in the divine tradition); proof that its being is second, that it is as perfect as the First [Intellect], that it is neither a body nor in a body, and that its being is not the primary object sought

Since the First Existent (which is the First Intellect) is endowed with the name Creation (for its being is from nothing) and truly exists, the Second Existent, following it in being, namely the Second Intellect, is endowed with the name First Emanation, for it exists from Creation necessarily, and its being inevitably follows from the existence of that which gave it being and possesses the perfection of createdness. Namely, the First Intellect (that is, the First Created) exists from the Most High as created, while it is an Intellect because God created it as such. Since it is both intellect and intellected (for its essence is intellected by itself), it has one relation as intellect and another as intellected, and as intellect it is higher than as intellected, for in the first case (that is, as intellect) it appears as a singular (*fard*), related to the Most High, while in the second (that is, as intellected) it appears as a pair (*zawj*), related to its own essence. Furthermore, it is the supporting cause of the being of existent things, it is supremely perfect and complete, so that it need not seek the assistance of another in order to bring its act into being; it beheld its essence through itself, encompassed it through itself, blissfully rejoices in all its essential states, and it alone is such. From all that has been set forth above it follows (in accordance with what has already been said concerning the manner of emanation) that from it there exist two existent things (one of which is higher than the other) corresponding to those two relations of its essence.

Thus, since the First Intellect is characterized by two relations, one of which is higher than the other, the existent arising from the higher relation is actual; it is a pure singular Intellect, an abstract (*mujarrada*) form. It is second in the order of being, but first in the order of emanation (just as the First Created is first in the order of creation). The existent arising from the other relation is lower in rank; it is the potential Intellect, called prime matter and form, and its essence is dual just as is the relation from which it exists. Of it we shall speak in its proper place.

Confirmation of what has been said is furnished by the content of the divine tradition. For in the world of religion the Speaker, in establishing and spreading the Law and the ordinances, is the supporting cause of the being of the natural intellects; and since he is the likeness of the First Intellect in the world of Creation, it necessarily follows from this that Creation (that is, the First Created and the First Intellect) is the supporting cause of the being of the Emanated Intellects of the world of Holiness. From the fact that the Speaker possesses ultimate perfection and has no need of the assistance of those like himself (that is, human beings) when spreading grace and divine governance (*siyāsa*) and drawing souls into the nets of Holiness, it necessarily follows that the First Intellect possesses ultimate perfection and need not resort to the assistance of another in establishing wisdom. He has two relations: one with the world of Holiness, the other with the world of Nature (I am speaking here of the Speaker); and from him two received being corresponding to these two relations: one of them, the higher, namely the Legatee, to whom he transmitted his *maqām* and concerning whom the Most High declared in the verse of mutual imprecation that his soul is as the soul of Muhammad (may God bless him and his progeny!), for he is equally perfect and complete; the second is the Scripture and the Law in their interconnection. From this it necessarily

follows that the First Intellect has two relations, one of which is higher than the other, and that the existent things arising from it in accordance with these two relations are two, one of which is higher than the other.

Being thus ordered, that which exists from him (the Speaker.—A.S.) (may God bless him and his progeny!) confirms that what precedes him in being and is hidden from the senses is ordered in the same manner—for he (may God bless him and his progeny!), in establishing ordinances and laying down the Law, followed paths pointing toward these invisible and obscure things. Therefore the Most High says: "We shall show them Our signs in the [distant] lands and in their souls, so that it may become clear to them that this is the truth." Thus, the existence from him (the Speaker.—A.S.) of the Legatee and of the Scripture connected with the Law clearly proclaims that from the First Intellect there are two existent things, one of which is higher than the other, that the higher is an Intellect existing, like it (the First Intellect.—A.S.), in actuality (just as the Legatee exists like the Speaker), whereas the other is a potential Intellect possessing a paired essence, namely prime matter and form, which are paired just like that which was brought by the Speaker, namely that which divides into two: Scripture and Law. Just as the Legatee is the first Imam in the world of the Law and religion, so too the [First] Emanation is the first among the Intellects emanating in the world of Holiness (whose number and ranks will be described later).

Thus, the Emanation is an Intellect existing in actuality just as its source does—just as a ray proceeding from the sun and a mirror (which here belongs to the genus of the efficient cause, which is the sun) is perfect radiance and light, as we discussed in detail in the chapter on the manner of emanation. Its perfection, however, is not like the perfection of the First [Intellect], which, in intellecting its own essence, has no need to intellect anything else (for it is first in being and the existent truth), but is one rank below that perfection (for it is second in being): likewise the rank of the Legatee is below the rank of the Speaker. It (the Second Intellect.—A.S.) intellects both its own essence and the essence of that from which its being proceeded, that is, the First Created—the supporting cause of its being. And indeed, something can subsist only when it is connected with its supporting cause that gave it being: that supporting cause then communicates subsistence to it, and were it absent, it too would not exist. Its (the Second Intellect's.—A.S.) supporting cause, preceding it, is the First Created—and therefore it established a connection with it, and that connection is intellection (by the Second Intellect of the First.—A.S.).

Moreover, it is impossible that it should not intellect both its own essence and the essence of that which gave it being, for if it did not intellect the latter, it would be deficient, since the form of the existent preceding it in being would then not be impressed upon its essence—just as the souls of human beings in the kingdom of Nature are deficient because they are deprived of the forms of what precedes them in being and need to acquire them. If it is deficient, it cannot be a first for another, but only a limit beyond which nothing else exists, just as the souls of human beings, being deficient, are the second limit of existent things, beyond which no other existent stands. Thus, if it is such a second limit beyond which nothing else exists, then only it and that from which it received being exist—but things exist that are neither the one nor the other, and therefore it cannot be such a limit beyond which nothing remains. If it is false that it is the second limit, then it cannot but be a principle; if it is false that it is not a principle, then it cannot be deficient, for what is deficient cannot give being to its likeness, whereas such a thing (the likeness of the Second Intellect.—A.S.) exists. And if it is false that it is deficient, then it cannot fail to possess the form of that which precedes it in being, and therefore it intellects it. Yet it cannot intellect that which is other to

it: in intellecting its own essence, which is nearer to it than anything external to it, it thereby intellects both it and the essence of that from which its being proceeded.

Proof of the correctness of what has been said is furnished by what has been related to us in the divine tradition. Namely, the Legatee (who is second after the Speaker) cannot be ignorant of the rank of the Speaker who precedes him in being in the world of religion, cannot fail to adorn himself with recognition of that rank and to comprehend his own, for in that case, by reason of his deficiency, he would not manifest obedience. Thus it is ordered that the perfection of that which comes later in being consists in knowing and being connected with that which comes earlier in being; for example, souls attain perfection by encompassing everything that precedes them in being. But if that which comes later in being must necessarily know that which comes earlier, because its being is connected with it, that which comes earlier in being need not necessarily intellect what received being from it (it is sufficient for it to know that it is the supporting cause of the being of all that to which its likeness can give being), for its being is not connected with the being of what exists from it. Therefore the Speaker need not necessarily know the preachers, the commissioners, those appointed in the regions, or the holy Imams (as it is necessary for him to know the Near Angels preceding him in being, with whom his being and actuality are connected): it is sufficient for him to know that he is the cause of the existence of the Imams, *ḥujjas*, preachers, and believers, whereas the preachers, commissioners, *ḥujjas*, and appointed Imams must know the Speaker and acknowledge his rank, as well as know the guides and the Imams (peace be upon them!), with the obligation of obeying them.

Thus, by virtue of all this, the First Emanation is the first of the emanational principles (which are the Heavenly Letters), for it is the first of every pure (*maḥḍ*) thing that received being from another pure thing. Insofar as it is Intellect, there is no difference between it and the First [Intellect], just as the Legatee is the first of the ranks of the cycle and the first in the preaching of divine unity, and in perfection is equal to the Speaker; the difference between them lies only in rank, for one precedes the other.

It (the Second Intellect.—A.S.) cannot be a body because its being proceeds from the higher relation, and this requires that, like that which gave it being, it be a pure Intellect whose essence encompasses and intellects itself—whereas a body does not intellect its own essence, nor does its essence encompass itself; and also because the essences of the Intellects are not heterogeneous and their substances are not composed of opposites, whereas a body by its essence is composed of heterogeneous things, where one needs another and where certain aspects are sensible, and such a thing cannot be Intellect. Moreover, if it were a body, there would have to exist something else that was a pure Intellect, for there would have to be a supporting cause from which its being as a body proceeded—but no other pure Intellect, the First Emanation, exists.

Nor can it be in a body. For its being proceeds from such perfection as requires that it too be perfect and not deficient, whereas what is in bodies (their powers and souls) is deficient and needs another to provide it with completeness. Thus it is free from connection with bodies and matters.

Its position corresponds to the position of two among the numbers, which comes second in being and whose being follows after the unit that precedes it in rank in being. Just as the essence of two proceeds from one, and just as two is ordered and supported by the unit preceding it in being, so too it (the Second Intellect.—A.S.) is ordered and supported by the

First Intellect preceding it in being, and its essence exists by virtue of its conjointly intellecting both itself and that which precedes it in being.

It (the Second Intellect.—A.S.), like the First [Intellect], conjointly possesses both perfections. Namely, the Created (which is the First Intellect) is distinguished by those ten characteristics that make it what it is: it is the Truth, the First Existent, the One, the Complete, the Perfect, the Eternal, the Intellecting, the Knowing, the Powerful, and the Living. All this is said of it, which has one essence, by virtue of relations; and all this likewise belongs by right to the [Second Intellect] emanated from it by virtue of the meanings (*maʿānī*) existing within it. It (the Second Intellect.—A.S.) is the Truth because it is the limit for all that emanated from the Created; it is the First Existent because it is the First of all emanations; it is the One because it is one pure Intellect—the First Emanation; it is Complete because its being is from Completeness; it is Perfect because its being is from Perfection; it is Eternal because it is connected with that which preserves its being; it is Intellecting because it intellects its essence through itself; it is Knowing because it knows both its own essence and that which precedes it; it is Powerful because it encompassed its essence; and it is Living because action proceeds from it.

Thus, it is Perfect and Complete. Moreover, giving it being was not the primary object sought (*qaṣd awwal*) by the [First Intellect] preceding it. Indeed, when the First Existent beholds and intellects its essence through itself, what it seeks is not to give being to something non-first, but to perform within its essence those acts that necessarily follow from its essential perfection. It then intellects and encompasses it, blissfully delighting in its state, exalting and glorifying Him Who bestowed being upon it, affirming that He is exalted above resembling it in anything (although it is the summit of the virtues and their first limit). From this, its perfect act, which is first, the light of emanation necessarily shone forth, secondly—the very completeness of perfection, that fruit whose being is inconceivable without this essence, as has already been said; and when something exists in this manner, its being is not the primary object sought.

The correctness of what has been said—that such indeed are the laws of divine ordering—will be confirmed for us by our consideration of the Foundation (which Foundation is the Legatee), whose rank proceeds from the rank of the Speaker preceding him in being. Namely, when the Speaker issued his call, affirming his prophecy and determining the rites for the world of worship and religion, he did not seek above all to appoint for himself a Legatee, such that speaking of that Legatee would have been the first purpose of his call and such that by this object sought he would have been brought down to what is lower, confined to it, and thereby rendered deficient. No; what he sought was the act necessarily following from his essential perfection, through the performance of which he would become firmly established in the empyrean of eternity, establishing a connection with that which preceded him in being, intellecting it and intellecting his own essence, rejoicing in the state of his perfection, and glorifying the Most High. From this, his perfect act, which was first, the rank of the Legatee was produced, secondly, in being, which rank proceeds from the completeness of his perfection and the state of his essence. Thus, since this necessarily followed from his perfection, that rank, whose being depends upon that perfection, necessarily had to exist.

We observe something similar also in the higher animal considered from the standpoint of its animality. When it reaches perfection, that is, when its organs are completely formed, it begins through its organs and senses to seek pleasure in copulation. Yet what it seeks is not to give being to something else, but to perform everything required by the perfection of its

organs, senses, and powers for pleasure. From all this, accomplished first, the being of its likeness then proceeds, secondly.

Thus, the First Emanation exists from the First Intellect (which is the First Existent) not as the primary object sought. Moreover, it is as majestic, exalted, brilliant, beautiful, and magnificent, and experiences as much bliss and rejoicing from its state, rank, and perfection, as does the First [Intellect] from which its being proceeded. Yet its bliss from the form of that which precedes it in being, which it intellects and has attained, exceeds the bliss afforded it by encompassing and intellecting its own essence. Proof of this is furnished by the Legatee, who occupies in the world of religion the same place that the First Emanation occupies in the world of Creation. Indeed, having known the rank of the Speaker and the laws of his ordering, having encompassed that which is above him, he experiences greater bliss than from that which is entrusted directly to him according to his own rank; every such moment in which he encompasses and knows it, ascending to this degree of knowledge, affords him more joy and bliss than when he beholds his own rank, for the former is higher than the latter, and the latter lower than the former. Therefore our master Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (may God bless him!) said: "My connection with ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib gives me greater joy than my kinship with him."

Through that which precedes it in being, the Second Intellect experiences perfect bliss; it glorifies and praises, and, like the First, languishes madly in bewilderment while offering praise—it, that Near Angel of which the divine tradition speaks as the Pen: it is called the Pen because it belongs to the same genus as the First. Full of goodness is He Who created it so infinitely high and great: He, the Most High, is more glorious than every impious assertion concerning "great exaltation." There is no god but Him; upon God I call and in Him I place my trust: He alone bestows strength and power, and whoever relies upon Him, He suffices him. Glory be to God, Who sent down to us Muhammad and the holy Imams that they might guide us, for without the guidance of God and His Vicegerent (peace be upon him!) we would not have found the way.

[1] Qur'an, 41:53.

[1] *Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq* — Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad Abū ʿAbdallāh (c. 700–765), the sixth Imam in the Imami line, who exerted a significant influence on the formation of Shiʿi doctrine. The emergence of the Ismaʿili branch of Shiʿism is associated with the recognition of the imamate of Ismāʿīl, the son of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, rather than Mūsā al-Kāẓim, who was recognized as Imam by the majority of Shiʿis.

Abū Ṭālib — Abū Ṭālib ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim, Muhammad's uncle, who assumed responsibility for the Prophet after the deaths of his parents and grandfather and remained his faithful guardian and friend. ʿAlī, the son of Abū Ṭālib, later married Muhammad's daughter Fāṭima and became the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

STREET THREE

On the second, potential First Emanation, namely prime matter, called the Tablet in the divine tradition; on the fact that its being proceeds from the First Created not as the primary object sought; on the fact that it resembles neither the First [Existent] nor the First Emanation and on the reason for this; and also on the fact that it is the root (*aṣl*) of the corporeal world and, among created existent things, is what three is among the numbers

We shall say: in the chapter on the First Emanation (that is, the Second Intellect), it was said that the being of that which exists from the First Existent necessarily proceeds not as something sought. Since the First Created in its essence is an intellect whose being is connected with its having been created by the Most High, and it is also an intellected whose being is connected with its encompassing its own essence, it thereby has two relations. By virtue of this, and also by virtue of its perfect state from which the existent emanates, and since, as we have shown, there is no third relation, the existent things from it are two. The first of them, the better, proceeds from its relation as Intellect and is an actual Intellect, in which it resembles that higher relation from which it was formed. This is the First Emanation, called the Pen in the divine tradition, while "Pen" is said both of it and generally of all the Intellects existing in the kingdom of Creation and Emanation, for all of them are something one, as has already been said, in respect of their perfection and actuality. The second existent proceeds from its relation as intellected and affected, and is an affected, living potential Intellect, in which it resembles that lower relation. This is the second First Emanation; the divine tradition calls it the Tablet, for it receives forms and exists through reception, just as a tablet receives the forms of letters left upon it by the pen. It is known as prime matter, whose being is conjoined with form.

This state of affairs, whereby one of the two existent things that received being from the First Created is related to that First as to an actual agent, while the second is related to it as potential and receptive of action, and whereby one of them is higher than the other, is a necessary consequence of those two relations, for they are in no way equivalent or equal, but on the contrary, one is higher than the other. Precisely in this lies the reason why it (prime matter.—A.S.) is in no way similar either to the First [Existent] or to the First Emanation. In exactly the same manner, the sun and the mirror, the two causes for the being of what emanates from them, are in no way equal as relations, but on the contrary, one of them is higher than the other, while the ray emanating from them is related to the sun as light and to the mirror as something ordered and given form. By virtue of this, it—I mean the second First Emanation, that is, prime matter—is similar neither to the First nor to that which, like it, is a First Emanation.

Giving it (prime matter.—A.S.) being was not the primary object sought by the First Created. In encompassing its own essence, Creation (which is the First Created) did not seek that prime matter (that is, the second First Emanation) and the rest should arise from it, for such an aim is low, unworthy of it, and would itself turn it into something base instead of exalted. For if what it sought were not the highest but rather such a thing, that is, something low and contemptible, then it itself, in seeking such a thing, would be contemptible rather than exalted. It is impossible that this exalted First Created should seek what is low and base; no, in encompassing its own essence, it seeks the highest: to glorify the Most High, Who in no respect resembles this essence of its. At the same time it experiences essential bliss and

rejoicing, while it (prime matter.—A.S.) necessarily emanates from it by virtue of its perfection and greatness: the fruit of this perfection must inevitably appear when it beholds its own essence while glorifying (which was the primary object sought) the Most High, Who is exalted in every respect above that essence. We have already spoken of this, as also of how, when the sun illuminates the pure surface of a mirror, a ray appears as an inevitable necessity; or how, when a fire is kindled, the appearance of light becomes inevitable.

The fact is that the coming-to-be of an existent is twofold: one is sought, while the other is not sought. Sought, for example, is the existence of living beings, for which reason the sun is placed in the fourth sphere: if it had been placed in the highest sphere, the excessive weakness of its heat would have prevented the generation of living beings, while had it been situated in the lowest sphere, an excess of heat would have prevented it, so that when it was placed in the middle position, the generation of living beings from it was sought. As something not sought occurs, for example, the destruction of living beings or their failure to arise in regions remote from the temperate climate; the cause of this is excessive heat or excessive cold, likewise proceeding from the sun, although the purpose of its position was to cause living beings to arise and exist (and not to prevent this).

Thus, one thing exists as something sought and another not as something sought. The second First Emanation, that is, prime matter, exists, as we have shown, not as the primary object sought, but rather as three exists already by virtue of the existence of one and two: when we say “one and two,” three remains unspoken, but it exists as their sum, although it is not what is sought.

Furthermore, prime matter does not possess the nobility and rank of that which stands upon the higher degree. By virtue of this, since this emanation, that is, the potential Intellect, called prime matter among the sages and the Tablet in the divine tradition, was deprived of the exaltedness of the actual Intellects, the divine providence diffused through the incorporeal Intellects directed itself, as a second object sought, toward transforming it, by making it resemble the highest, into the best thing it could become without attaining that rank (that is, the rank of the First Intellect.—A.S.). By spreading their lights within it, these Intellects bestowed upon it the perfection appropriate to it: from the rank of possible being, that is, the first perfection (for it admits increase), it moved to the rank of necessary being, that is, the second perfection, where no increase is admitted, where the state does not change, and beyond which there is no limit attainable through the reception [of forms] (this is the definition of the first and second perfection).

Thus there were formed from it (prime matter.—A.S.) both that which acts and that which is acted upon, so that causes might exist for the being of everything that could exist from it: through this its correspondence to the First Existent preceding it in being and perfection was attained. The acting things are the moving things, namely the heavens and planets, while those acted upon are the natures and the generated things. When the incorporeal Intellects directed themselves toward arranging in order and establishing in its proper place everything that had acquired form, the heavens and planets were elevated, while the natures were established in their place, so that, acting and being acted upon, they might produce the three generated kingdoms.

As a result, certain matters did not receive exalted forms—not because they (the Intellects.—A.S.) desired this, but because their (these matters'.—A.S.) being proceeded from non-exalted relations, by virtue of which they fell below those higher ranks and, being remote from them,

became limited and constricted. Then divine providence, implanted in the nature flowing through existent things for the purpose of granting each thing the being appropriate to it, turned, as a third object sought, toward these matters that had not received exalted forms, and according to wise ordering gave them forms worthy of them, in order to confine them (the matters.—A.S.) within the boundaries of several species and through such confinement to protect the air from corruption and preserve living beings—for if those matters had remained in their putrefactive state, the air would thereby have been corrupted and every living thing would have perished. Thus this providence produced from those matters what was most worthy in the circumstances, namely such creatures as snakes, scorpions, flies, bedbugs, and other poisonous creatures.

This was done so that nothing created should be lost, but should receive the being most worthy of itself, and also so that it might be known that this providence neglected nothing among existent things, but flows and pours downward into every thing. Therefore Nature, with the power of the divine world flowing within it, turned toward that which resulted from the strivings of the incorporeal Intellects standing above it and, having properly ordered the bodies formed from those matters that had acquired form, from which heavenly bodies could not be formed, produced from them the higher animals and thus introduced them (as though creating them) into the number of existent things (for those matters could no longer become those heavenly bodies), as was fitting for them; and in this act of hers she resembled the act of the incorporeal Intellects directed toward that which resulted from the strivings of Creation (that is, the First Created) standing above them, when it, glorifying and praising the Most High, encompassed its essence and rejoiced—that is, toward prime matter, which did not possess the rank of the actual Intellect exalted immeasurably above it: by means of their lights they made it resemble their own actual essences, transformed it into a cause of the being of another, and endowed it with the forms appropriate to it—the celestial spheres, planets, and the rest.

Corresponding mutually to one another, existent things mutually balance one another; they proclaim the completeness of the providence that has taken care to give each everything of which it is worthy. This providence ordered matters so that the prime matter formed from the First became matter for the action of the incorporeal Intellects; the matters formed from the action of the incorporeal Intellects in the sublunary corporeal world became matter for the action of Nature, from which matters she draws forth the generated things; and those matters which, after Nature had drawn forth the generated things, remained without receiving [form], representing the limit of corruption—to these too it (providence.—A.S.) graciously turned, blocking the path of everything harmful to living beings that proceeded from them. And for those that received [forms], this providence brought forth (as the limit) the one to whom it communicated its perfection, so that he might become for it the one raised up (may God greet him!) after the expiration of all movements and the completion of all cycles. All-glorious is He Whose providence and creation are such; having known, keep silence concerning Him, and you will glorify Him and purify Him from comparisons in the best manner.

The correctness of everything we have said is testified to by the scales of religion, which those brought near to God employ for knowing the truth of things. Namely, since the Speaker in the corporeal world has two relations: one, the higher, with the world of Holiness by virtue of his exaltedness (which exaltedness constitutes his second perfection), and another with the world of Nature insofar as his essence possesses being (which being constitutes his first perfection), it follows that Creation (that is, the First Created, or First Intellect) has two relations: one, the higher, with Him from Whom it received being, and the other with its own

essence. Further, from him (the Speaker.—A.S.) proceeds the Legatee: the Speaker explicitly proclaims him and establishes him, not potentially but actually, in his own place; the Legatee resembles him and belongs to his genus. And from him likewise exists the Scripture, which constitutes the object of action. This testifies that the existent things from the First Created are two (as has already been said): one of them is its likeness, namely the Intellect emanating from it and, like it, existing actually (just as the Legatee, resembling the Speaker, actually occupies his *maqām*); the other, existing potentially and unlike it (the First Existent.—A.S.), is the affected prime matter (just as the Scripture is the object of action and, with all the knowledge contained within it, exists potentially).

The Scripture is not like the Speaker and the Legatee, which testifies that prime matter is not like the First Created and the First Emanation. The Scripture is the root (*aṣl*) of the ordinances and prescriptions of the Law; it is one of the Imams replacing the Speaker in matters of instruction and governance, like the material of craftsmen from which the sciences, which are the eternal forms of the intelligible, are extracted; this testifies that prime matter is the root of the existing heavens, luminaries, natures, and their generated things, and that for the incorporeal Intellects it constitutes something like material from which sensible bodies possessing form are produced. The Scripture does not exist in abstraction from the prescriptions and ordinances of the Law, but on the contrary through their collection and union, which testifies that the being of prime matter is not a being abstracted from form, but on the contrary that it always exists conjointly with form. The Scripture, the Law, and everything given by the Speaker, although full of wisdom, nevertheless require, in order to acquire actuality and act upon the soul, interpreters and explainers, namely the Completers (*atimmaʾ*) (peace be upon them!), which testifies that prime matter existing from the [First] Created, although possessing form, nevertheless requires the action of the Emanated Intellects so that, becoming complete through their lights shining within it, it may acquire its formal ordering and act upon another.

When the Speaker bestows and spreads [among the people] what he bestows and spreads, when he establishes the Legatee in his place, he does not thereby seek worldly supremacy or swift dominion, nor does he do this out of love for vain superiority or from a desire to oppress others; rather, this proceeds from the fact that, in the Holy lights that have descended upon him, he encompasses his essence through itself, seeking to glorify God Most High and attain the most complete happiness, performing worship, bringing perfection to others, and preserving his second perfection acquired at that degree to which he was raised, directing his call toward eternal subsistence. This is testimony that prime matter exists from the First Created not as something properly sought by it (as we have already said), but as the result of the glorification it seeks and its essential rejoicing (as we have already said). The Speaker teaches everyone, and his grace pours over everyone, while the Legatee and the Completers who replace him are knowledgeable in everything in which he is knowledgeable, so that they are as perfect as he is: in this is testimony that the light of Creation flows through all existent things and that the First Emanation and all those Emanations whose state resembles its state are similar to the [First] Created.

The Speaker encompassed with his vision what he brought to the people, what was proclaimed and fulfilled by him, what was then elaborated in detail and whose foundations were spread by those who replaced him (who exist because he appointed them); and thus, knowing its foundations and fulfilling its pillars (which are the words of the confession of faith, ablution, prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, *ḥajj*, *jihād*, *fiqh*, and the norms of judgment and governance), he became the cause of the being of spiritual generated things, as we have

represented visually in the diagram. This is testimony that the incorporeal Intellects turned toward prime matter: their rays began to flow within it and the corporeal world arose with all its heavens, planets, and natures, so as to become the cause of the being of corporeal generated things (as we have represented). The Speaker (and those who replaced him) strove to set aright those who had gone astray, who were far from accepting his signs and did not hasten to accept the burden of his kingdom; they especially manifested their hostility when he instructed his Legatee and then, in view of his good faith and receptivity [to the teaching], preferred him to others; in the world of religion and worship they could not constitute even the lower ranks. To them he addressed good preaching, in which lay their benefit; to them he gave according to their convictions; to them he gave what their souls craved in this lower life, to them, the "newly reconciled," so that they might turn away from evil, which would be a good both for them and for others. In this is testimony that Nature turned a gracious gaze toward those matters that did not receive exalted forms and, removed from the center of their being, underwent putrefaction and corrupted the air: she bestowed upon them appropriate forms, creating from them snakes, scorpions, flies, wasps, bedbugs, and the like, so that the air corrupted by them might not lead to the destruction of all living things.

The Speaker (and those who replaced him) deliberately made some of his followers guides in the rank of those that act (such are the Legatee and the Completers—peace be upon them!), others learners in the rank of those that simultaneously act and are acted upon: they learn from those above them and instruct those below them (such are the *ḥujjas*, preachers, and commissioners), and still others learners in the rank of those that are exclusively acted upon. In this is testimony to the ordering of [divine] providence operating in the kingdom of Nature through the incorporeal Intellects: some bodies it made exalted and acting, such as the celestial spheres and planets; others acting and acted upon, such as the four natures, which are acted upon and act upon another, namely upon the generated things; and still others exclusively acted upon, such as all the generated things that undergo the actions of the heavens, planets, and natures.

Since the balanced ordering of the world of religion corresponds to and balances this balanced ordering, shown by us, of that which precedes it in being, it is thereby clearly demonstrated that the Speaker spoke the truth, that truly he is merciful and guides along the right road, that the path toward what is sought is true and correct; no doubt whatsoever remains concerning this, and it is firmly demonstrated that prime matter is something capable of receiving forms and thereby becoming sensible, that its being proceeds from the First inevitably, that it is that Tablet to which all forms are entrusted, that, being existent potentially but not actually, it resembles neither the First Created nor the First Emanation, that for the Emanated Intellects it is what material is for craftsmen, that outside the soul it possesses no being without form, but such being exists only in the mind (*dhihn*), while outside the soul it is apprehended only in the embrace of forms, that among existent things it is like three among the numbers, which comes third in being and, even when not named as a number, already exists by virtue of the fact that one and two exist, and that the ordering of the heavens and luminaries, which received being because opposite each of them there was established an incorporeal Intellect and in each of them its light shone forth, balances the world of religion, where all the pillars of worship proceeded from the Scripture because opposite each of them one of the ranks was established to care for that pillar (as we shall depict later). Glory be to God, and glorified is God, besides Whom there is no god; God the Great alone bestows strength and power (how good and beautiful this is!); to God I take refuge and in Him I place my trust: He is the vigilant guardian of His servants. Let us then raise a word of praise and gratitude to God, Who has given us to taste the sweetness of

following and obeying Him, Who has established at the treasury of His knowledge and in the palaces of His light doors for His near and chosen friends, while with us are their keys and locks; of Him, the Merciful and Powerful, we ask that He ordain good for us and direct our path toward the good.



This is the representation of the world of prime matter and of the incorporeal Intellects external to it in their action upon it, so that from it the world of Nature comes into being, by the grace of God—glory be to Him.

{133}

Thus (with God's help) is depicted the world of prime matter and the incorporeal Intellects that act upon it in order to produce from it the world of Nature.

[1] *The Three Products (mawālīd)* — This is al-Kirmānī's term for the three classes of existent beings—minerals, plants, and animals—formed through combinations ("mixtures") of the four primary elements.

[1] Qur'an, 9:60. In the Qur'an, this expression, by which converts to Islam are meant, does not carry the derogatory connotation that al-Kirmānī gives it.

STREET FOUR

On why that which exists from the First Created, or the First Existent, is heterogeneous

We shall say: since the Most High is beyond the limits of that of which one speaks as existing substances and accidents (for they themselves exist only because He created them), and is exalted above having any rank in being (such that, if another existent shared something with Him, there would necessarily exist that which conditioned the being of them both—and He is more glorious than that!), the existent created by Him, being first in being, has the first rank of being. Since the existent created by Him, being first in being, has the first rank of being, then, having received its being from Him Who is exalted above substantiality and accidentality, it cannot have a multiple essence in which one thing is unlike another. For if such multiplicity were present in its essence, it would signify the causal conditionedness of Him from Whom it received being and would entail the necessity of something upon which the All-glorious, Most High *Onostʾ* (being-as-He / "He-ness") as such depended, which would make the being of existent things impossible (unless it were abstracted from the attribute of being), and the necessity of which is excluded. Indeed, multiplicity in an essence (when one thing in it is unlike another) can arise only from a supporting cause that determined that it should possess such multiplicity in some manner, whether through relations or through meanings—for in the supported effect there can be only that which either already existed in the supporting cause or was communicated to it by another supporting cause.

If the First Existent had a multiple essence, multiplicity would necessarily also have to be present in Him from Whom it received being; if He were multiple, some *Onostʾ* would necessarily have to precede Him; if that *Onostʾ* too were multiple, yet another *Onostʾ* would be required—and so on without end, and then it would be impossible for the existent to rest upon something that gave it being while itself being established and free from that from which all existent things are not free—from connection with the support of their being, which connection is the mark of that which has come to be. Then the being of an existent not resting upon something that (as we have shown), being established, gave it being would be impossible. But since the existent does exist, it is thereby established that in its being it rests upon something that differs from every existent and is comparable with it in nothing—neither in essential or meaningful multiplicity, nor in paucity, nor in anything whatsoever said of substances and accidents—something such that, were it not thus, the existent too would not be (as we have shown). If, then, the existent received being from that which possesses neither multiplicity nor paucity nor any attribute whatsoever, the First Existent is not multiple in essence and, as we have shown, cannot be such.

If, then, it is not multiple and cannot be so, it must be something in whose essence there are not one thing and another distinct from one another; it must be pure, all-encompassing (*kull*), indivisible (*fard*), one (*wāḥid*), and unique (*aḥad*) insofar as it is an existent from the Most High. Since the First Existent is indivisible and unique, as we said in the introduction, that which exists from it, from this unique indivisible existent, cannot be one, indivisible, and first, for this First Existent has already occupied the rank of singularity, to which it is nearer and which belongs to it by right. And since this is impossible, that which exists from the one, unique, and indivisible is a pair. This pairedness is the rank of that which comes in being after this indivisible one and corresponds to the relations of its essence, which relations (as

we explained earlier) are relations through conjunctions and not through essence. Thus we have ascertained the reason why that which exists from the Created (that is, from the First Existent) does not belong to one genus: it lies in the fact that the All-glorious is exalted above the rank of singularity and unity (which rank is an attribute of His creatures), while that rank is assigned to the created First Existent; and since this rank belongs to it, that which exists from it cannot be of one genus (in which case it would be one), but must be of two genera with different essences, so that these existent things may be two corresponding to those two relations characteristic of their supporting cause (as we discussed in its proper place).

And if that which exists from the Created (that is, the First Existent) were one and of one genus, then that which is exalted above every singularity, every unity, and every primacy (namely that from which the One and First Existent is formed) would be that from which it received being, that is, the First Existent; but since this is not so, it is a pair. And if it is a pair, then, for the establishment [in the rank] of duality, each of the two individuals constituting the essence of the pair must in some respect differ and be distinguished from its companion, otherwise there will be no difference [between them]. Thus, the exaltedness of the Master of creation and guidance above the rank worthy of what He created, and the assignment of the rank of primacy to Creation, which is the [First] Created—this is the supporting cause of the fact that what exists from it, the First Existent, does not belong to one genus.

And the fact that the existent proceeding from the First Existent occupies the second rank of being is itself a supporting cause of its heterogeneity. For this rank is the rank of duality, and duality does not exist without difference in essence, without each of the two sides of the duality belonging to a different genus.

Furthermore, since the Created, that is, the First Existent, simultaneously has two relations: the first consists in the fact that, by conjunction with Him from Whom it was formed, it is Creation, while the second consists in the fact that, by conjunction with its own essence, it is created—then that which exists from it (since it is the supporting cause of existent things) must be a dyad, and duality does not exist without difference. Thus, in the fact that the Created is precisely such lies the supporting cause of the fact that what exists from it is heterogeneous—in agreement with what we said earlier.

The final testimony to this will be the consequences entailed by applying the scales of religion to the divine tradition. Namely, the Speaker in the world of religion is what the First Created is in the world of Creation. Multiplicity is present in his essence, for one thing in it is intellect and another is body (*shakhṣ*); this ordering of his means that there is a world of Creation, to which his intellect belongs, and a corporeal [world], to which his body belongs. From this it necessarily follows that the being of both these worlds, which are the supporting cause of his being, is connected with something that resembles neither of them, for the multiplicity of his (the Speaker's.—A.S.) essence proceeds from the multiplicity present in these worlds, while the multiplicity in these worlds entails the necessity of that with which their being is connected. If, then, the multiplicity in his (the Speaker's.—A.S.) essence proceeds from the multiplicity present in the two supporting causes of his being, we shall say that the First Existent, or the Created, being the limit of all existent things beyond which there is no being, must be multiple in a manner different from that in which the Speaker is multiple. For if its multiplicity were the same, this would condition in Him from Whom its being proceeds the same thing that the Speaker, multiple in essence, conditioned in that from which his being proceeds—and such a thing is impossible. If, then, it is multiple in a manner different from that in which the Speaker is multiple, then in the fact that it is the First of

existent things and their limit lies the supporting cause that removes essential multiplicity from it, so that the being of existent things is necessary, so that the First establishes everything existing from itself, and so that it is free from everything that would entail something preceding it. Thus, since the Speaker holds primacy in the world of religion, and this rank, the rank of singularity, belongs wholly to him, for it is occupied by none of the earthly ranks, and his essence, as we have said, is multiple, and therefore that which exists from him cannot be either one or homogeneous, but belongs to two genera (which are the actually existing ranks and the potentially existing Scripture and Law, which need the ranks to preserve them), then on the scales of religion this means that the Created is first among existent things, and this rank, the rank of singularity and unity, belongs wholly to it, while the Master of creation and guidance is exalted above that rank; and that its multiplicity through relations is the supporting cause by virtue of which that which exists from it is not one and homogeneous but of two genera, namely actual Intellects and potential intellects.

Thus we have ascertained what the supporting cause is by virtue of which that which exists from the First Created is heterogeneous.

Praise and glory be to God. God alone bestows strength and power: upon Him I call and in Him I place my trust, for He is the vigilant guardian of His servants, and I say: O God, ordain good for us, grant us a good end, and ease for us the path toward good through Muhammad (may God bless and greet him and his pure and good progeny!).

{138}

STREET FIVE

On the Heavenly Letters, which in the world of the First Emanation are the Highest Principles; on their number, on what proceeded from each of them, and in what manner

All people who strive to know and attain something have their own laws to which they turn. These laws are like scales by which the correspondence of what has been found to the true ordering is tested. For linguists, for example, the laws of knowing language and the scales by which they distinguish their erroneous utterances from correct ones are represented by grammar; for the philosophers (and philosophy, as they maintain, is knowledge of the meanings of being, *maʿānī al-wujūd*) such scales are logic; for poets such scales consist in knowledge of the rules of versification and meter; for surveyors determining the dimensions of a plot, its length and area, the cubit; and for weighers, weights and the steelyard.

As for the people of faith and worship of God, who follow the descendants of the glorious lineage, our masters (may God bless them!), they too possess scales by which everything connected with their confession is truly known. Through them is known the correctness of reports concerning divine unity and the position of the ranks, communicated by the prophets of God who preached worship of Him. These scales are such that what agrees with them is truth and what does not agree is falsehood; they are what so attract the intellect striving through them to know both what is given to it and what escapes it. They are the signs of God's creation both "in the lands," which are the corporeal world with everything in it that moves and rests, and "in the souls," which are all those brought near to God: the Prophet, the Legatee, the Imam, the follower—and also in the Scripture sent down by Him and His ordinances, erected in the likeness of the worlds preceding them in being. Concerning this it is said in the decree of the Most High, the true saying: "We shall show them Our signs in the lands and in their souls, so that it may become clear to them that this is the truth." Thus, those indications and laws that agree and correspond with God's creation they hold to with certainty of their correctness, while those [laws] that do not agree with it and contradict it they abandon, certain of their incorrectness; and what is hidden from the senses they regard as ordered according to those scales, such as the regularity of the Law and the root of the created.

The Most High appointed the Prophet (may God bless and greet him!) to guide the progress of His servants toward that which grants them good, that is, toward worship through knowledge and action. He strengthened him with His Kingdom and made him perfect, so that through his perfection he might correct their manifold deficiency and through his virtues close the breach of their weakness in seeking goods both worldly and religious, so that he (and those replacing him) might take upon himself the burdens of those searches, burdensome and unbearable for the people, bringing them to the pure springs of instruction. Thus He manifested to them His beneficent gift, His power, and His merciful care for them.

Concerning this the Most High said: "He produced gardens with supports and without supports; palm trees and crops from which the foods are diverse; olives and pomegranates, resembling and unlike one another: eat of their fruits when they bear fruit, but give what is due at harvest time, and do not be immoderate, because He does not love the immoderate. Of the cattle some are for carrying burdens, while others are small. Eat of those which God gives you for food, and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan: he is your manifest enemy!" As the

Speaker taught his followers, its interpretation is this: the Most High created for Himself ranks, some in the kingdom of Intellect and others in the kingdom of sense; each of these ranks is like a garden abounding in divine sciences, concerning which the Most High says: “He produced gardens.” Some of these ranks have no need to rest upon another for their being, concerning which He says: “without supports,” while others must in their being rest upon another, as He says: “with supports.” The fruit given by those ranks (that is, the sciences communicated by them) is diverse: there is that which proceeds from support and is intelligible, and there is that which is connected with instruction and is sensible; concerning this He said: “Palm trees and crops from which the foods are diverse.” The instruction of the two Foundations, their summons in their times, and the two channels in their days resemble and do not resemble one another: “olives and pomegranates, resembling and unlike one another”—and let it benefit you when one of them calls to divine unity and worship through action and knowledge: “Eat of their fruits when they bear fruit,” and may you render to God what is due by strengthening faith and performing the rites of religion (which is what is due from you to God); but do not thereby depart from what is necessary in matters of worship, lest you fall into immoderation: the Speaker or the Imam of his time, the Vicegerent of God upon His earth, does not desire this from you and does not teach you to take upon yourselves what has not been entrusted to you, for excess in matters of God's faith is no longer God's faith.

Then the Most High said: “Of the cattle some are for carrying burdens, while others are small”—that is, the earthly ranks established by Him will take upon themselves in your stead the hardships and burden of seeking what is proper and true in matters of God's faith, will instruct you and bring you to the springs of the grace of divine unity and unquestionable worship of Him in the manifest and the hidden, just as camels carry your loads for you on journeys or travels. For example, the heaven-supported Imam (peace be upon him!), through his ranks (namely the *ḥujjas* and preachers), gives you an accessible explanation of religion and an elucidation of its symbols, which serves you as clothing and bedding, just as bedding and clothing are made from the down and wool of animals. Do not, then, miss the benefit that is yours in God's having established among you the Imams and their *ḥujjas*; nourish yourselves from them with the sciences of divine unity and worship of Him in the manifest and the hidden, as well as with everything else that we have set forth in the treatise known as *The Nocturnal*.

He also established him (the Speaker.—A.S.) as the likeness of the First Rank, so that by knowing him and his rank we might know that Rank as well. For the Most High said that the likeness of a good word is as a good tree, the meaning of which decree is interpreted as follows: the likeness of the Word, which is the First Rank existing actually in the world of Creation, is as a good tree, that is, as the Speaker existing actually in the world of Nature.

Therefore he (Muhammad.—A.S.) (may God bless him and his progeny!), in teaching us concerning existent things, guiding us toward the attainment of happiness, composing the Law, and spreading divine guidance, resolved to manifest a likeness to the work of the greatest Craftsman, so that his Law might be balanced and correspond to the created world: for this Law is the scale for determining divine signs and indications. Thus opposite every existent he established some ordinance or prescription, so that through the lower ranks of God's religion present here the higher ranks might be indicated as they truly are, and so that, by knowing these, those exalted things too might be encompassed and their ranks impressed; and he placed this knowledge fully at the disposal of those who would replace him (so that

they alone are distinguished by the virtue of this knowledge), and established their followers, who adhere to them, obedient and worshipping the Most High.

Since this is so, when speaking of the necessary being of the heavenly ranks, which are neither body nor in a body, and gathering true knowledge concerning their ranks and their number, we confirmed its correctness by the scales of religion, directing our gaze toward the law of the prophetic work and the divine tradition, balancing everything manifested by the Speaker and the ranks of the earthly hierarchy established by him against their likenesses (in which we were nourished by the strength and power of the Vicegerent of God upon His earth—may God bless him!—which overshadowed us), so that we might apprehend the immutable Supreme providence concerning those who are in the world of Nature and render due gratitude for it. Thus, from the position of the Speaker in this world, from the fact that he is the Complete Intellect guiding those below him, the gathering of prophetic virtues and royal lights, that he needs no one else and is the cause of the being of the earthly ranks, we concluded that in the world of Creation there is a created pure Intellect that has no need, the cause of the being, in particular, of the heavenly ranks and, in general, of all existent things. From the fact that he (may God bless him and his progeny!) left to his people the Scripture and his ordinances, as well as the Legatee to whom he gave his place, we concluded that the existent things from that First Intellect are two and that one of them is higher than the other, just as the actually existing Legatee, who guards everything manifested by him (the Speaker.—A.S.), is higher than what was left by him (the Speaker.—A.S.).

From the fact that the completeness (*tamāmiyya*) of his cycle is attained through seven Completers (*atimmaʾ*), each of whom is appointed by his predecessor back to the Foundation, and that each of them labors within one of the pillars of faith and foundations of Islam brought by the Speaker in order to manifest the wisdoms and sciences contained therein, we concluded that from the First Intellect and the First Emanation there are seven Intellects, which exist one from another back to the First Emanation, and that each of them shines and flows into the prime matter and form existing from the First [Intellect], from which the heavens and earth, as well as their motion, came to be. From the fact that the cycle is completed by seven after the Speaker and the Foundation, while the tenth, occupying the position of the Speaker, calls to something new in another cycle (according to the formula previously shown), we concluded that, upon reaching the Tenth Intellect, emanation, according to this formula, ceases and no longer produces its likeness, and that the Tenth [Intellect] occupies the place of the First in the governance of the affairs of the kingdom of bodies. From the fact that between [the advents of] the seven Completers there are many Imams (as we showed in our treatises *The Unique One on the Hereafter* and *The Guide*), we concluded that between the seven Emanated Intellects there are many angels, in accordance with the multiplicity of spheres in the corporeal kingdom. And from the fact that the ranks of [all] the Imams are something one insofar as all of them fulfill the mission of the Imam and are perfect, we concluded that the ranks of [all] the Intellects are something one insofar as all of them are free from bodies and matters.

Then we turned to numbers and to the ranks they occupy in being; and behold, they themselves manifested agreement and correspondence with what we have set forth. Namely, the unit exists because there are two indivisible elements (*fardān*) that constitute the embodiment of its essence: unity and the bearer of unity. Each of them is just as indivisibly elemental as the other, and in this sense they are one pure indivisible element, but they are also two such elements in the sense that one of them is the bearer and the other the borne.

Since this is so, the equilibrium of the ordering means that the being of the Created, which is the Unit and the First in the kingdom of Creation, must proceed from two indivisible elements that are the supporting cause of its being and in which the embodiment of its essence consists: one of them is life, which is the first perfection, and the second is everything added thereto (as we have shown), that is, the second perfection; the bearer is just as created as the borne, and conversely, and in this sense they are one pure indivisible element, but they are also two such elements in the sense that one of them is the bearer and the other the borne. And likewise the Speaker in the kingdom of Nature has two relations: through his form—with the world of Holiness, and through his matter—with the world of Nature; in his essence he is indivisible, for he is one and unique, but in his relations he is a {143} dyad. And Creation appeared indivisible from one aspect and a pair from another, so that through that pairedness, which is a sign that its bearer was produced into being, it might be clearly demonstrated that it is not primordially eternal, but rather begins in its being from its most glorious Creator; and through its indivisibility—that it is the first of what was produced.

Since an elementarily indivisible multiplied by an elementarily indivisible yields a unit, it follows that both aspects of Creation (that is, those two elementarily indivisibles through which the embodiment of the unit was constituted) are summed precisely by the unit, which joins unity, on the one hand, and multiplicity, on the other. And the elementarily indivisible precedes the unit in rank and is its supporting cause because it possesses a greater meaning of singularity; therefore the two elementarily indivisibles are the supporting cause of the being of the unit, which constitutes the essence of the elementarily indivisible. And since the unit multiplied by the two elementarily indivisibles (which constitute its essence) yields two, there must likewise proceed from Creation (that is, the First Created), when it acts upon its own essence, encompassing and beholding it (while it possesses two relations and two perfections), two existent things, namely the two First Emanations: the first and the second, which are the Second, actual Intellect and the potential Intellect (which potential Intellect is prime matter and form); and likewise the existent things from the Speaker are two: the Legatee, actually existing in his place, and the Scripture—the potentially existing Imam (which Scripture is as though prime matter and form, that is, matter containing everything within itself).

Since in the dyad one of its two sides is nobler than the other, for it is nearer to that from which its being proceeded, while the other side is more remote from it (although both sides [of the dyad] exist simultaneously), it is necessary that one of the two existent things from the [First] Created, which, having encompassed its essence and rejoiced in its blessed state, exists actually, namely the Second Intellect, should be nobler and higher than the second [existent], that is, the receptive potential prime matter; and likewise that the Legatee, who replaces the Speaker, should be higher than the Scripture, which serves as the object of action.

{144}

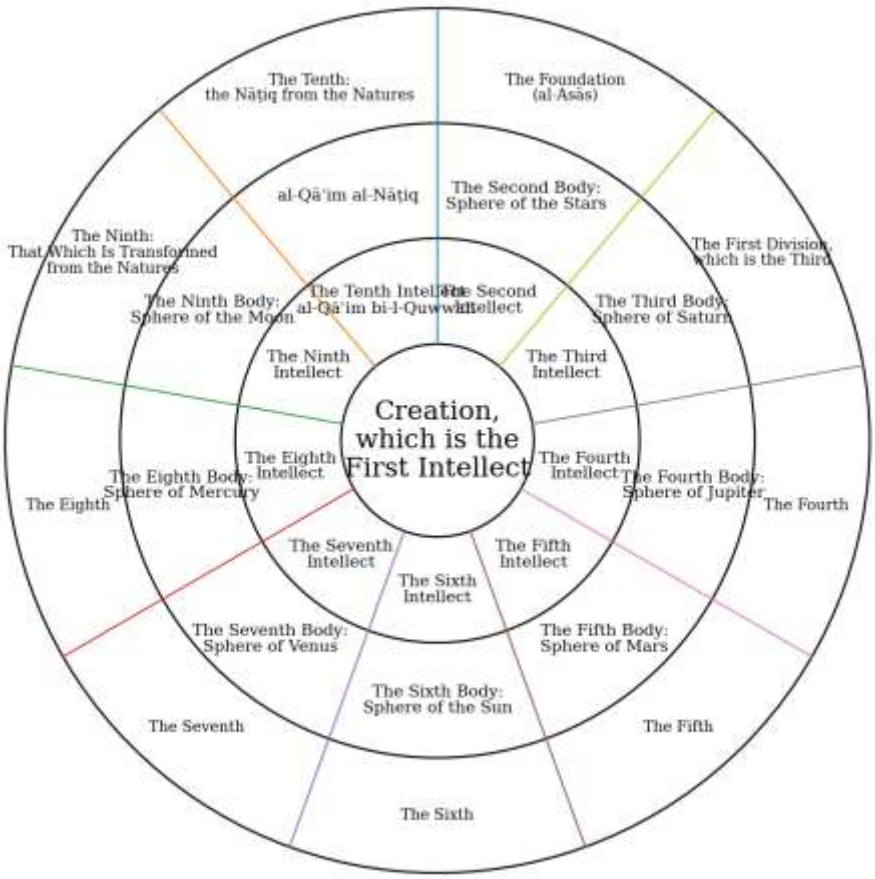
Since two multiplied by two yields four, and this, together with what already exists in being, namely six (that is, one, two, and three), constitutes ten, and since ten occupies with respect to the tens the same position that the unit occupies with respect to the units, it is necessary that the Intellects formed through creation and emanation, acting essentially upon their own essences, should be ten, through which Intellects the world of Creation and Emanation is completed (and these are the noble principles), and

that the tenth of them should occupy with respect to the corporeal world the same position that the First Created occupies with respect to the world of the First Creation and First Emanation; and likewise it is necessary that the first among the ten ranks of its cycle should be the Speaker and the Legatee, that after them should follow the seven Completers (which Completers conclude the minor cycles), while the tenth should occupy the place of the Speaker in his cycle and thereafter open something new in a new cycle.

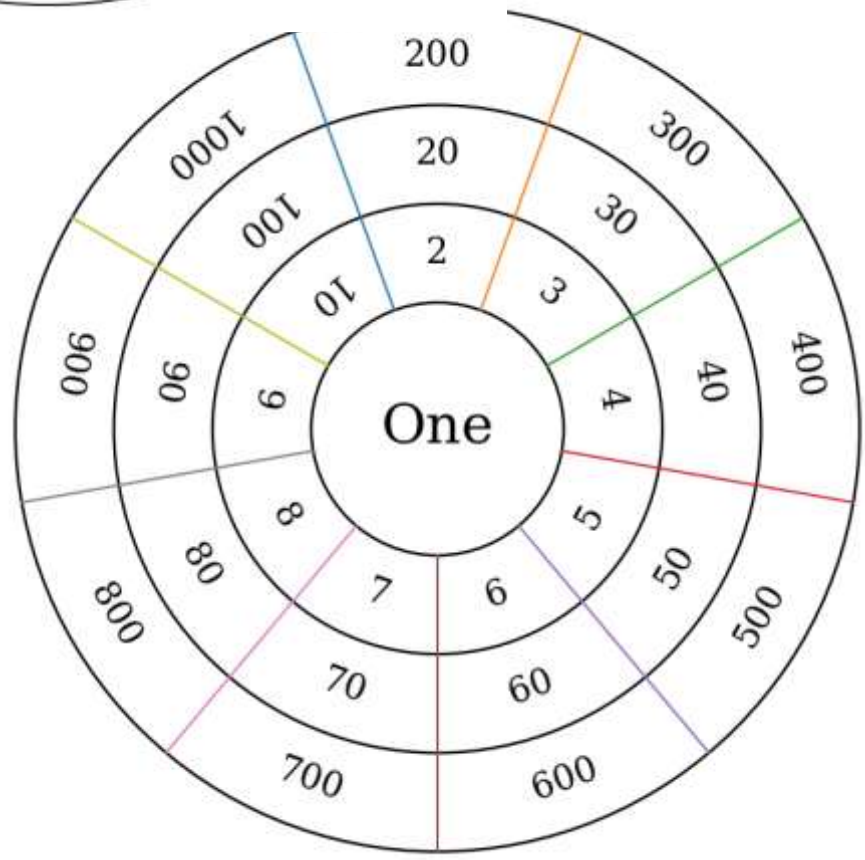
Since [the numbers] from ten to one hundred are ordered in the same way as the units (that is, the numbers from 1 to 10.—A.S.), it is {145} necessary that what acts in the corporeal world should be ordered according to the number of the Intellects existing in the world of Creation and in agreement with their ordering (as we have shown: the sphere of the spheres, the sphere of the luminaries, the seven spheres, and that which lies beneath the sphere of the Moon), which is balanced by the pillars of worship in the world of the Law, which correspond in number to the spheres: the Scripture, the regulations concerning the permitted and forbidden, the words of the confession of faith, [ritual] purity, prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, *ḥajj*, *jihād*, and obedience to the Vicegerent of God, that is, the Imam. Since from one hundred to one thousand the ordering of [the numbers] resembles their ordering from ten to one hundred, it is necessary that in the world of religion the heads of each cycle who act upon souls should correspond in number to the ten [spheres] that act upon bodies, namely: the Speaker, the Foundation, the seven Completers, and the tenth, who concludes these ranks—just as the Intellects corresponding to them belong to the order of units. Since after one thousand there is no rank for any number that did not already exist before that number, this means that after the Raiser (may God bless him!), the head of the seventh cycle, who appears in the full completeness of his rank, there is no rank that did not exist before him, for he is the limit that unites all ranks, just as one thousand unites the ranks of all numbers.

Since the being of existent things is ordered in this manner, the units correspond to the world of unity, which is the kingdom of Creation; the tens—to the world of bodies with everything contained within it; and the hundreds—to the cycles of the Speakers and the ranks, which are concluded by the thousand, which thousand represents the rank of the Raiser (may God bless and greet this pure (*zakiyya*), all-encompassing soul!). Each of the ranks of units, tens, and hundreds proves to be the center of a circle, as, for example, the unit is the center of the units up to ten, which ten, gathering those [units], is the center of the tens up to one hundred, which hundred, gathering those [tens], is the center of the hundreds up to one thousand; while one thousand, gathering all, is the limit of all the ranks. Every center is established opposite one of the worlds, each of which is the supporting cause of the being of the others and the center of the being of another, which worlds are the world of Creation, the corporeal world, and the world of religion and souls. In this lies the true meaning of what is said in the Torah: "*ba-ʿasara {146} maʾamarot nivra ha-ʿolam ve-ʿal-ʿeser dibrot-ya ʿamud ha-ʿolam. Ve-haya Adonai lekha ka-ner ha-ʿolam*" ("By ten commandments was the world created, and upon ten decrees does it stand. And the Lord shall be for you like the light of the world"). The First Intellect is the center of the world of Intellects up to the Active Intellect that intellects all; the Active Intellect is the center of the world of bodies, from bodies exalted and established down to bodies undergoing transformations, called the world of generation and corruption. The world of bodies gathers the effusion of the Intellects and is the center of the being of the purest souls, which are the souls of the Speakers up to the Raiser. The Raiser (may God bless him!) {147} gathers the whole totality, which is the limit of the flowing grace of creation.

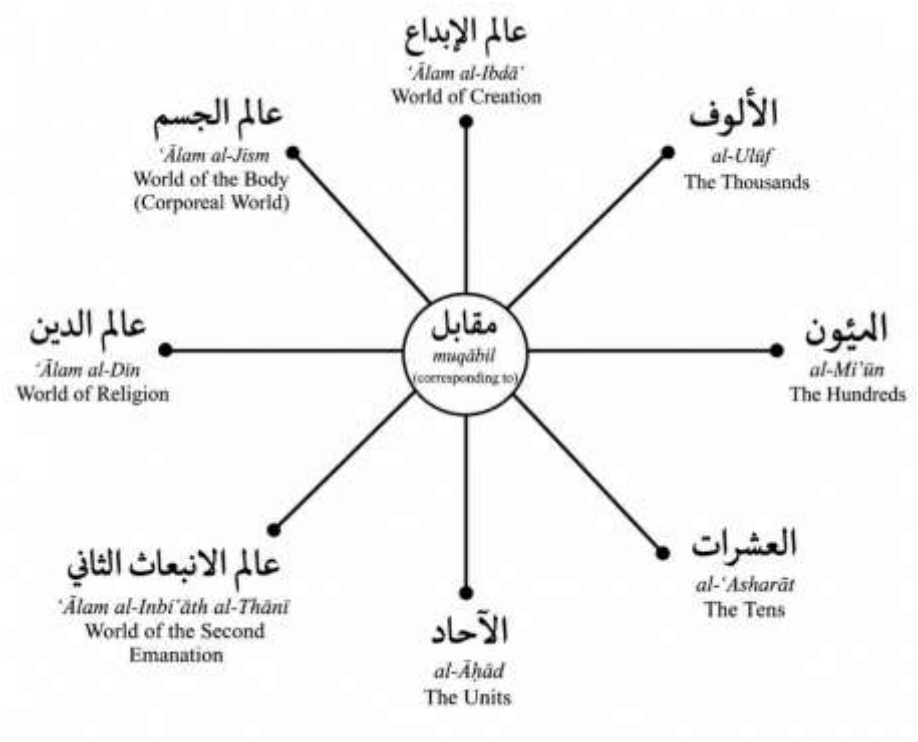
Thus eight circles are formed; each circle, standing opposite another circle, represents an entire world.



One of the circles has as its center the First Intellect, or the world of Creation, and as its circumference the Raiser, as we have depicted in the figure. Another circle has the unit as its center and one thousand as its circumference. Together they represent what is sought and show the opposition and equilibrium, mutual correspondence and isomorphism of existent things.



Of these two circles, the first represents all existent things, and its center, from which the whole totality was formed, is the First Intellect, or First Created, which became the cause of the being of existent things, which existent things are encompassed by the ranks of numbers. Its essence possesses those ten things that constitute the perfection proper to it, just as corporeal substance, possessing nine attributes, one of which is conjoined with the others, possesses the perfection proper to it. Therefore, and also because a supporting cause pours its effects into being in accordance with its own



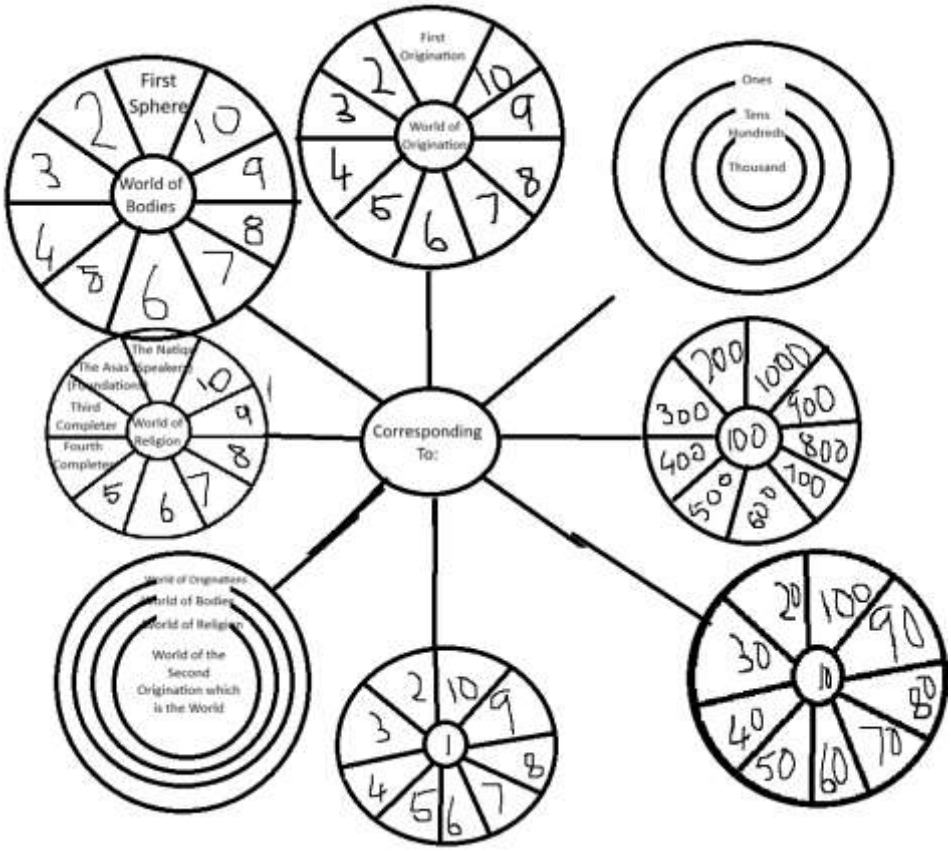
nature, it is necessary that outside it (that is, outside the First Created, which is the supporting cause of everything, and this is what makes it such) and in rank below it there should be some actual existent connected with it in its being; and since the supported effect must receive being from its supporting cause in accordance with the nature of that cause, it is necessary that in being there should not be exceeded those [ten] things conditioned by this supporting cause (that is, the First Intellect.—A.S.) from which the supported effect proceeded—so that the supported effect should correspond to its supporting cause.

Since this is so, when being reached the ninth [effect] (which in being is the tenth, counting from the First Created), when the supporting cause had fully accomplished everything it had to accomplish for the formation of the ranks [of being], pouring its supported effects into being and arranging them one beneath another, so that there remained nothing among [the ten things] outside and below which a supported effect had not been placed, then the emanation of Intelligible being ceased, for existent things had already been distributed throughout all the {148} ranks necessarily conditioned by its supporting cause; then the final limit was reached, and beneath the Tenth [Intellect] there remained no rank of its genus, but only [the ranks of existent things] in the world of Nature, remote from the center of perfection. Then it began to draw toward its own essence every such [existent] that came within the bounds of its horizon, sending its lights to it and leading it toward perfection. Such is the being of the macrocosm, as has already been said; and it is such because it is impossible for the First Intellect, that is, the first supporting cause, itself to become the proximate cause of everything that can exist from it, and also because it is impossible for the material corporeal to receive [its action]. The limit of it (the first circle.—A.S.) is the Raiser, who gathers and encompasses every existent thing.

The second of them is the circle of numbers, standing opposite everything to which number in all its variations can be applied. Its center is the unit, which became the supporting cause of the being of the tens, while its limit is one thousand, which gathers all numbers: hundreds, tens, and units.

{149}

{150}



These are the four worlds of existent things, represented as such, together with the numbers standing opposite them. Here are shown the equilibrium, mutual correspondence, isomorphism, and connection of existent things. It is clearly seen that ten completes the world of units and becomes the center of the being of one hundred, while one hundred completes the world of tens and becomes the center of the being of one thousand; such too are the worlds standing opposite them. Praise be to God, Who bestows, teaches, guides, and explains.

[1] See note 1 to III, 2.

[1] That is, the Imams recognized by the Ismaʿilis.

[1] Qur’an, 41:43.

[1] Qur’an, 6:141–142, S. *“...the small livestock”* — In the original, *farshan*. G. Sablukov and A. Y. Ali translate this word as “for slaughter as food,” while I. Krachkovsky renders it “for bedding.” The word *farsh* means “household furnishings,” “something spread out”; Krachkovsky bases his translation on this meaning, and al-Kirmānī likewise employs it in his subsequent interpretation of this verse. The word can also mean “small livestock incapable of carrying burdens”; it is in this sense that we consider it appropriate to translate the word here, following the *Dictionary of Qur’anic Words and Expressions* (Makhlūf, Ḥ. M., *Kalimāt al-Qurʾān: Tafsīr wa-Bayān*. Beirut, n.d.). By “small livestock” are meant sheep, rams, and the like—animals that are indeed used for food and whose wool is used to make clothing and bedding.

[1] *“...from support...”* — Al-Kirmānī means the knowledge bestowed directly by the “World of Holiness,” that is, by the Intellects.

[1] In the original, collective nouns (“olive” and “pomegranate”) are used, which are grammatically singular. Formally, therefore, the verse speaks of *two* trees, which are correspondingly associated with two hierarchs of the world of religion.

[1] “Hast thou not considered how God sets forth a parable of a good word? It is like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and whose top is high above” (Qur’an, 14:24, S.).

[1] A number amounting to several thousand has the orders of units and thousands; one amounting to several tens of thousands has the orders of tens and thousands, and so forth.

[1] The original gives a transliteration of the Hebrew text in Arabic letters together with its Arabic translation. Al-Kirmānī has in mind not the Written Torah (the Pentateuch of Moses), but the Oral Torah, which also includes the Mishnah and the Talmud. The passage cited is taken from the tractate *Pirkei Avot* (the fourth division of the Mishnah), *Pirkei Rabbi Nathan*.

STREET SIX

On the reason why the Heavenly Letters proceeding from the First Created and the First Emanation are seven Intellects, and why after them the emanation of existent things ceases

We shall say: since every existent thing has a cause preceding it that necessarily conditions it, while Creation (that is, the Created) is the first such cause and also the supporting cause of the being of all emanations, divine providence ordained that they should be ten separate [Intellects], corresponding to ten separate heavenly bodies (that is, the fixed celestial spheres, the brightly shining luminaries, and the body lying beneath the spheres and undergoing transformations), so that, through each receiving the effusing grace proper to it, grace might encompass their whole totality (for likewise, if a thing is too heavy, it is divided among ten people, and it will be carried by each of the ten bearing his share of the burden), and also so that all these emanations, when their lights shine within matters and those matters receive them (the lights.—A.S.), might become causes of that particular constitution (*nash'a*) which consists in bringing the individuals of the human species into being.

This is indicated and demonstrated by the scales of religion, namely the existence of the earthly ranks that administer the portion of the effusing graces. This grace, nourishing the souls, pours forth from the world of Holiness, and through it they acquire being, and through it they pass into the rank of intellects. It is, however, so majestic that souls, by reason of their deficiency, not being near to it and not being of the same {151} genus as it, are incapable of receiving it and being benefited by it. Therefore divine providence, showing mercy toward these souls, established for that grace ten ranks corresponding to ten ranks: the first, highest among them in perfection and completeness, namely the Speaker, is such that as such he can benefit only one who occupies a rank similar to his own, is near to him, and lies within the bounds of his horizon, such as the Foundation; thereafter follow the others down to the tenth, below which rank there is no longer anyone who benefits another, but only the rank of the souls that receive benefit and exist through this reception: it is nearest to them, lies within their horizon above them, and, drawing from it, they first ascend to its degree. This is ordered so that, by distributing grace among ranks and granting all the ranks the ability to actualize it as is proper to them, that grace might be confined within determinate ranks and then, through the action of each of them upon it, brought to that limit at which souls can receive it and ascend through its degrees, becoming involved in the sphere of being and eternal subsistence; and also so that the ranks might thereby become causes of another constitution, namely the passage of these souls into actuality and the granting to them of the status of intellects—just as the ten separate bodies became, as we have already said, causes of the first constitution, that is, of [human] individuals receiving being.

Furthermore, having known that this nourishment, which restores to the microcosm a replacement for what falls away from it, does not benefit it if it arrives in the same state in which it was formed, and that it cannot make use of it without making it homogeneous with itself and similar in state, divine providence ordained instruments for the [human] body, some external and others internal, each of which it endowed with a particular power in such a manner that none of them can receive anything or act upon anything until those preceding it have done so. The mouth, for example, with all its instruments (the teeth and the rest), cannot receive [food] and chew [it] until the hand has performed the necessary actions upon it; likewise the stomach cannot assimilate what has not previously been processed by the teeth

and mouth. These instruments it made intermediaries and lodged them within the microcosm so that, when they had performed all the actions assigned to them, that which nourishes would become corresponding to the nourished, acceptable and beneficial to it.

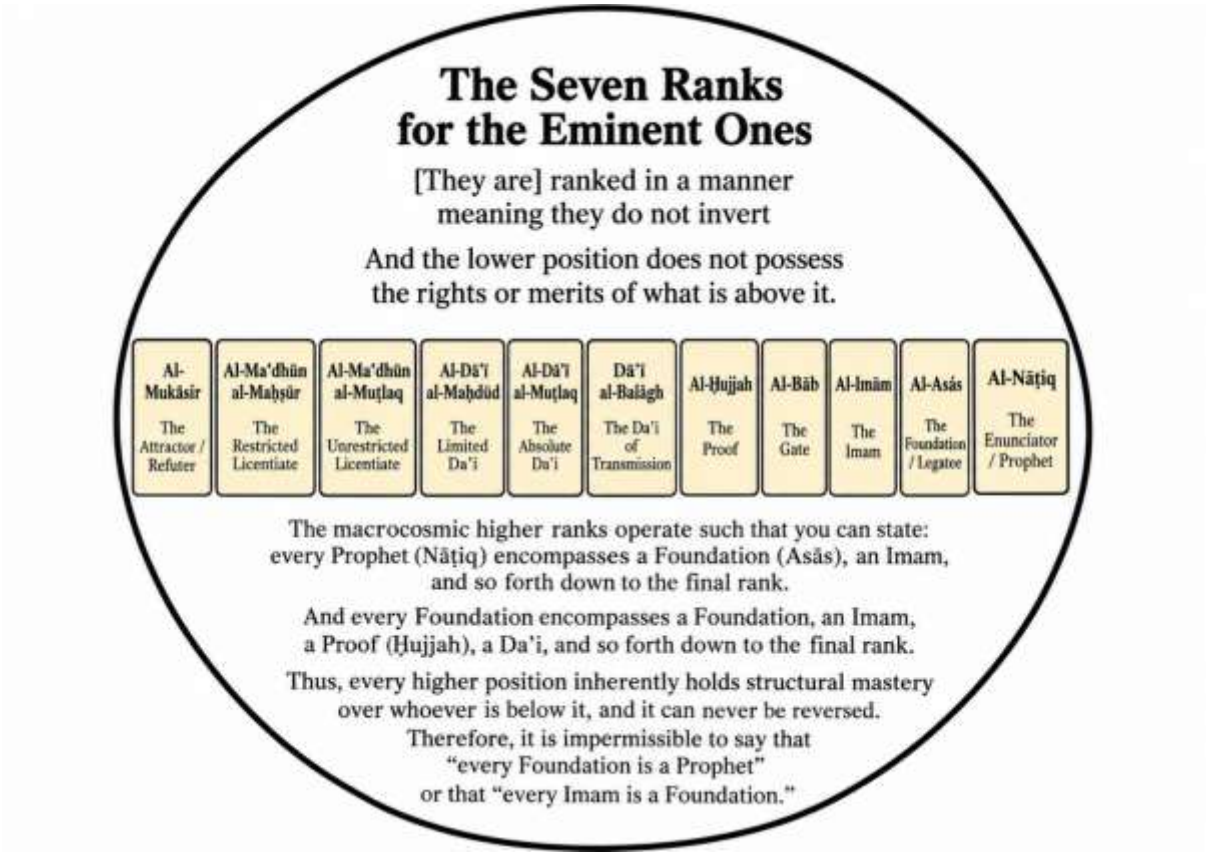
{152}

Let us take wheat as an example—the best of all that serves as nourishment for it (the microcosm.—A.S.), indeed, the foundation and root of all nourishment. When the hand, with the aid of other [instruments], performs upon it everything necessary, removing it from the ear and separating it from impurities, then grinds it and sifts the flour, adds leaven to it, prepares the dough and bakes bread, and then, breaking off a piece, places it in the mouth; when the teeth, with the aid of the tongue, chew that wheat, bringing it to the limit at which, upon entering the stomach, it can be assimilated by it; when the stomach, with the aid of the other organs, assimilates and digests it, bringing it to the limit at which, upon entering the liver, it can be received and processed by it, for which purpose it separates in it the heavy from the light, directing the heavy to the lower part of the body, where it will be expelled, and the pure to the liver; when, finally, the liver processes it, transforming it into fresh blood—then the body is nourished by it and derives benefit from it after all these actions and transformations, in which each of the powers lodged in its organ performs what is assigned to it. But if the wheat reached the liver, which regulates the nourishment of the body, in its natural state, without undergoing all these transformations and without receiving one after another all those states through which it became homogeneous with that which is nourished, then not only would it be of no benefit, but it would cause great harm. Thus all these organs and powers are causes for preserving embodiment and generating likeness.

Since this is so, and since the ranks that through their action upon souls communicate to them perfection—which means their fullness and their passage to the degree of intellects, where they turn from potentiality into actuality and in the stages of eternal subsistence attain the grace bestowed upon them in the world of the Law (which world is the gathering of the divine laws)—since these ranks are ten, all of them proceeding from the first, and each of them is the proximate supporting cause of the being of those below it, while after the tenth teaching rank there is only the rank that is taught, receiving the grace poured upon it, then by virtue of equilibrium this testifies that the Intellects acting upon what is below them in the world of Intellect number ten, and that the being of all of them proceeds from the First among them, and each of them serves as the proximate supporting cause of the being of those below it, for this order {153} of ranking follows the order of being that we previously depicted in the circle of Creation.

When this has been established, we shall say the following: of these ten ranks, three are universal (*kulliyya*), while seven are subsequent (*tābiʿa*). The universal [ranks] are: [the rank] of the Messenger, who brings grace by establishing the laws of manifest worship through action in Revelation and the Law; these contain multiplicity through which souls come into being and acquire the first perfection; then [the rank] of the Legatee, who receives grace universally and actualizes it comprehensively through Revelation and the establishment of the laws of hidden worship through knowledge by means of interpretation (*taʾwīl*); in this is united much that enables souls to acquire an eternal form and attain the second perfection; thereafter [the rank] of the Imam, whose task is to administer and govern all people according to the laws of religion; in this too is included much with which the manifest and hidden governance of movable and immovable, living and dead possessions, as well as the bringing

of souls into being, is connected. Therefore God called them “those vested with authority to decide.”



The seven subsequent [ranks] are as follows. First, {154} that called the “Gate” (*bāb*)—the rank of final decision [concerning questions of truth and falsehood]. Second, rendering judgment concerning the ordering of the ranks, approving particular opinions and views concerning the balanced ordering of the created world, and interpreting the Scripture—this is the rank of the *ḥujja*; therefore the Most High informed us of the grace He bestowed upon David in these words: “We gave him wisdom and the ability to decide conclusively,” that is, he was a *ḥujja* who had fully mastered his degree and attained the graciously bestowed rank of the Gate. Third, affirming the heavenly ranks, their ranks in being, and determining the afterlife is connected with the rank of the proclaiming preacher (*dāʿī al-balāgh*); fourth, instruction in worship through knowledge, dissemination of interpretation, and determination of the ranks is connected with the absolute preacher; fifth, instruction in the order of worship through action, determination of the earthly ranks and their minor and major cycles is connected with the restricted preacher; sixth, reception of the covenant and determination of religious ethics and rites is connected with the absolute commissioner; seventh, close association [with people], guidance toward the Truth and the saving rope [of God] is connected with the restricted commissioner. Each of these ten ranks possesses the ranks below it, but the converse does not hold: the Speaker, for example, possesses all the lower ranks as well, and the Legatee possesses those ranks that are below him but does not possess what is above him: the higher are universal in relation to the lower, while the lower are particular in relation to the higher.

Thus, the Speaker gathers all grace and possesses all its ranks: his are Revelation, interpretation, command, final decision, judgment, proclamation, determination of the

heavenly ranks, determination of the earthly ranks, and reception of the covenant; what belongs particularly to him is Revelation, that is, a distinct rank, and he also established beneath himself the Foundation for the purposes of interpretation. Placed upon the scales of religion, this testifies that Creation (that is, the First Created) possesses ten ranks, of which there belong particularly to it the giving of forms (*taṣwīr*) (that is, the formation of those forms which are the embodiments of the principles in being) in general, and the highest sphere in particular (and therefore God called Him in His Scripture "the Giver of Forms"), and that below it in rank there lies something else formed through emanation. The fact that the Foundation comprehensively possesses the ranks, {155} of which interpretation, that is, a distinct rank, belongs particularly to him, and that below him the Imam is established, testifies that the Second Existent, which emanated and is situated below the First, possesses ranks, of which there belong particularly to it origination (*barʾ*) (that is, granting to the forms existing in being that which is most worthy of them in accordance with wise ordering) in general, and the second sphere in particular—and therefore God called Him "the Originator"—and that below it lies the Third [Existent], which proceeded from it. The fact that the Imam comprehensively possesses the ranks, of which command and governance of the people, that is, a distinct rank, belong particularly to him, and that below himself he established the Gate, testifies that the emanated Third Existent, situated below the Second, comprehensively possesses the ranks, of which there belong particularly to it creation (*khalq*), that is, composition (*tarkīb*), in general, and the third sphere in particular (and therefore God called Him in His Scripture "the Creator"; He said, joining all three ranks in a single verse and relating them to the First: "He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Giver of Forms; to Him belong the beautiful names"—that is, to Him belong the ranks below those mentioned), and that below it lies the Fourth [Existent], which emanated from it.

The fact that the Gate comprehensively possesses all the lower [ranks], while what belongs particularly to him is final decision, that is, a distinct rank, and that below himself he established the *ḥujja*, testifies that the Fourth, situated below the Third, comprehensively possesses all the ranks lying below it, of which there belongs particularly to it something through which existent things in the corporeal kingdom in general, and the fourth sphere in particular, exist, and that below it lies the Fifth, which emanated from it. The fact that the *ḥujja* comprehensively possesses the lower ranks, of which judgment, that is, a distinct portion of grace, belongs particularly to him, and that he establishes the proclaiming preacher, testifies that the Fifth Existent, situated in rank below the Fourth, comprehensively possesses all the ranks lying below it, of which there belongs particularly to it something through which generated things in the corporeal kingdom in general, and the fifth sphere in particular, exist, and that below it in rank lies the Sixth [Existent], which emanated from it. The fact that this preacher proclaims and that below him in rank another [preacher] is situated testifies that the Sixth Existent, situated in rank {156} below the Fifth, possesses the lower ranks, of which there belongs particularly to it something through which generated things in the corporeal kingdom in general, and the sixth sphere in particular, exist, and that below it in rank lies the Seventh [Existent], which emanated from it. The fact that the remaining ranks are likewise such, that each of them has something belonging particularly to it, and that each is situated in rank below another down to the tenth (in accordance with what was mentioned concerning the being of the Existent in [the section] "On Emanation"), testifies that below each [Existent] in rank there lies another [Existent] that proceeded from it, and that to each belongs particularly its own heaven (that is, celestial sphere.—A.S.) down to the tenth, which tenth completes the world of Emanation, while it acts upon the sublunary bodies subject to generation and transformation, corresponding to the tenth rank (that is, the adherent [closest

to the mass of people]), which acts upon souls and is particularly occupied with drawing them toward the true path.

The scales of religion can determine another correspondence that likewise confirms everything we have said. The ranks can be arranged within the cycle beneath the Prophet, the Legatee, and the seven Completers in such a manner that each of them occupies in the world of religion the place corresponding to the respective Intellect in the world of Creation. The tenth among them will then be the Raiser, who completes the cycle and occupies his rank by himself. He administers all souls, possesses the world of Nature and governs it, and after him there will no longer be any other rank, for he, as was shown, is the second limit. It is then clear that he is precisely the tenth of the earthly ranks, for he is the limit of all possessors of ranks (through which ranks, in their totality, the spiritual generated things are completed), and beneath him there is no rank; and that his portion is to care (*ʿināya*) for the souls existing in the kingdom of Nature and draw them into the temple of worship, so that they may ascend upward through the degrees. Since this is so, it is clear that the Tenth Existent in the world of Intellect is the limit of the Emanated Intellects, from which Intellects powers flow into bodies in order to produce corporeal generated things; and that emanation ceases with it, since it is the limit; and that its portion is to care for the world of generation and corruption, connecting itself in that world with what is prepared to receive and supporting it—just as the portion of the tenth among the earthly ranks consists in caring for souls and drawing them toward worship and obedience.

{157}

{157}

HEAVENLY RANKS	Arabic transliteration	Sphere / Domain	EARTHLY RANKS	Arabic transliteration	Rank / Function
First Existent — First Created	*al-mawjūd al-awwal — al-mubdaʿ al-awwal*	highest sphere — *al-falak al-aʿlā*	**first — Speaker**	*al-nāṭiq*	rank of Revelation — *martabat al-tanzīl*
Second Existent — First Emanation	*al-mawjūd al-thānī — al-inbiʿāth al-awwal*	second sphere — *al-falak al-thānī*	**second — Foundation**	*al-asās*	rank of interpretation — *martabat al-taʾwīl*
Third Existent	*al-mawjūd al-thālith*	third sphere (Saturn) — *falak Zuḥal*	**third — Imam**	*al-imām*	rank of command — *martabat al-amr*
Fourth Existent	*al-mawjūd al-rābiʿ*	fourth sphere (Jupiter) — *falak al-Mushtarī*	**fourth — Gate**	*al-bāb*	rank of final decision — *martabat faṣl al-khiṭāb*
Fifth Existent	*al-mawjūd al-khāmis*	fifth sphere	**fifth — Ḥujja**	*al-ḥujja*	rank of determining

		(Mars) — *falak al-Mirrīkh*			truth and falsehood
Sixth Existent	*al-mawjūd al-sādis*	sixth sphere (Sun) — *falak al-Shams*	**sixth — Proclaiming Preacher**	*dāʿī al-balāgh*	rank of argumentation and determination of the afterlife
Seventh Existent	*al-mawjūd al-sābiʿ*	seventh sphere (Venus) — *falak al-Zuhara*	**seventh — Absolute Preacher**	*al-dāʿī al-muṭlaq*	rank of determining the heavenly ranks and hidden worship — *al-ʿibāda al-bāṭina*
Eighth Existent	*al-mawjūd al-thāmin*	eighth sphere (Mercury) — *falak ʿUṭārid*	**eighth — Restricted Preacher**	*al-dāʿī al-maḥdūd*	rank of determining the earthly ranks and manifest worship — *al-ʿibāda al-ẓāhira*
Ninth Existent	*al-mawjūd al-tāsiʿ*	ninth sphere (Moon) — *falak al-Qamar*	**ninth — Absolute Commissioner**	*al-maʾdhūn al-muṭlaq*	rank of receiving the covenant — *akhdh al-mīthāq*
Tenth Existent	*al-mawjūd al-ʿāshir*	natures beneath the celestial spheres — *al-ṭabāʾiʿ taḥta al-aflāk*	**tenth — Restricted Commissioner, or Adherent**	*al-maʾdhūn al-maḥdūd / al-mustajīb*	rank of drawing the responsive souls

{158}

We shall also say the following. It is known concerning premises that if they are similar to something, and that thing is similar to a third, then the third is also similar to the premises. Since this is so, and since the order of arrangement of the ranks in the world of religion resembles the order of existent things in the arrangement of the heavenly bodies, while the order of the heavenly bodies, being a supported effect of the world of Creation, is correlated with the order of that world and resembles it, the earthly ranks likewise correspond to the heavenly Intellects in the world of Creation and Emanation as likeness corresponds to likeness. By what has been said it is established that the Intellects existing from Creation (that is, the First Created) in the kingdom of Creation resemble the ranks existing in the world of religion: nothing here has been omitted, “you will see no disproportion in the creation of the

Merciful"; they are the acting Heavenly Letters, the Near Angels, whose lights flow in the world of bodies, obeying the governance of the Most High. Glorious is He Who governs thus and established such an order; there is no god but Him, God alone bestows strength and power; to God I call and to Him I turn in repentance, upon the aid of God and His earthly Vicegerent I rely: He is the best support. I entrust my whole self to God and rely upon Him alone; and whoever relies upon Him, He suffices him: He is a trustworthy Protector; excellent is this Patron, excellent is this Helper!

[1] According to some reports, al-Kirmānī was a vegetarian.

[1] An allusion to the verse: "O believers! Obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority" (Qur'an, 4:59).

[1] Qur'an, 38:20.

[1] *The Rope of God* — A common metaphorical designation for the "true religion." The expression derives from the verse: "And hold fast, all together, to the rope of God, and do not separate" (Qur'an, 3:103, S.). Sunnis traditionally interpret these words as an injunction to adhere strictly to the "Qur'an and Sunna" and as a condemnation of "innovations," attributed above all to the Shiʿis. Al-Kirmānī, however, employs the metaphor as a reference to Ismaʿili doctrine, which contains the truth that leads to salvation.

[1] In other words, the knowledge of the lower-ranking hierarchs is immanently contained within the knowledge of the higher-ranking ones, whereas the knowledge possessed by the higher ranks transcends that of the lower ranks and can be explained and imparted to them only in parts.

[1] Qur'an, 59:24.

[1] Qur'an, 67:3, S. This verse begins with the words: "He who created seven heavens, one above another as vaults…"

STREET SEVEN

On the fact that the being of the existent things emanated from Creation (which is the First Created) is not temporal; that all of them, with the exception of prime matter, are pure forms, while prime matter is one from one aspect and multiple from another; that they intellect only themselves and what precedes them in being; that their form is the form of the human being, which they do not surpass; that their lights are diffused through bodies and souls, acting upon them; and that the being of existent things is connected with them

We shall say: all actions are divided into three parts. First, the highest and most perfect of them is that which occurs not in time (*lā bi-zamān*); this is called {159} creation. Second is the intermediate, that which occurs with time: it is called emanation. Third, the lowest and most contemptible of them is that which occurs in time: it is called generation.

Creation is not in time because it is the production of an existent from nothing. For if it were in time, time would have to precede it, and then it would not be the first production; rather, there would already be something existent before it. Emanation is with time because the emanated existent is connected with that from which it emanates, without there being between the two a temporal interval: just as the light is with the luminous thing and the ray with that from which it shines, so too the emanated exists together with that from which it emanates. Generation, however, occurs in time because its existence requires motion, alteration, passage from one state to another, and a temporal interval in which these transformations take place.

Accordingly, the being of the Intellects emanated from Creation is not temporal. For if their being were temporal, there would necessarily have been a time in which Creation existed while they did not exist; but since their being proceeds from the perfection of Creation, and since Creation does not pass from deficiency to perfection or from one state to another, there can be no time in which it existed without that which necessarily emanates from its perfection. Their being is therefore connected with its being, without temporal precedence and succession, although there is precedence and succession in rank and causality.

And likewise the scales of religion testify to this. The Speaker and those ranks established beneath him do not stand in relation to one another merely according to temporal priority and posteriority, but according to rank, perfection, and the order of the grace that flows through them. For the rank of the Legatee follows the rank of the Speaker, the rank of the Imam follows that of the Legatee, and the ranks below these follow according to their order, even though the perfection proper to each rank is determined not by temporal distance but by its relation to that which precedes it and supports it.

The Intellects in the kingdom of Creation and Emanation, moreover, are pure forms, free from bodies and matters, with the exception of prime matter, which receives forms and is the root of corporeal existence. For every Intellect among them encompasses its own essence, intellects it, and possesses actuality through itself; and that which possesses such actuality cannot be body or a power in body, because body is divisible, occupies place, and requires

matter and form, whereas these Intellects are free from division, place, and corporeal composition.

Prime matter, however, is one from one aspect and multiple from another. It is one insofar as it is the universal receptive principle underlying the corporeal world, but it is multiple insofar as forms become manifest within it and its receptivity is differentiated according to the different forms received by it. Thus its unity pertains to its essence as matter, while its multiplicity pertains to the forms and relations through which the corporeal world is constituted.

Furthermore, these Intellects do not exist one before another in time, as though one had existed while another did not; rather, their precedence and posteriority are in rank. The First is first because it is the supporting cause; the Second is second because its being is connected with the First; the Third is third because its being is connected with what precedes it, and so on to the Tenth. Thus they exist together, although their ranks differ, just as the index finger and middle finger of the hand may be extended together while one nevertheless stands before the other. Since both are together, one does not precede the other in being in this kingdom (that is, the actual Intellects do not temporally precede the potential intellects, nor conversely), but all of them exist together, while the divine providence flowing therein grants to each of them that which is most appropriate to it.

Moreover, all those existent things, while existing together, are something one insofar as they are all life and insofar as they are all, by encompassing their own essences, intellect; and they are multiple insofar as they are numerous and differ in ranks and exaltation. Such too is the corporeal world and the [bodies] existing within it, for they are something one as body possessing length, width, and height, and multiple insofar as each possesses its own form and they are manifold in their states. Testimony to this is furnished by the ranks established in the world of religion that preserve this world. Namely, the Imams (peace be upon them!) of the minor cycles and the Speakers (peace and blessing be upon them!) of the major cycles are something one as Imams and Speakers: none is exalted above another—no Speaker above another Speaker, and no Imam above another Imam—for all of them are as though one soul, all together occupying the degree of perfection and completeness; and they are multiple from the standpoint of the souls connected with them and their {162} followers—one surpasses another, Speaker surpassing Speaker and Imam surpassing Imam: the better is he whose call became more universal and attained wider diffusion, for he gathers them and brings them to the blessed source where lies the place of their gathering.

Furthermore, they (I mean the Intellects in the kingdom of Creation and Emanation) intellect their own essences and the essences of those preceding them: the multiplicity of each corresponds to the character of what stands above it and is intellected by it. The Fifth [Intellect], for example, is more multiple than the Fourth, because that which precedes it in being and which it must intellect is greater than that which precedes the Fourth, while the multiplicity of the Fourth [Intellect], which intellects what stands above it, surpasses the corresponding multiplicity of the Third [Intellect], for whoever is nearer to the First is simpler.

Furthermore, it is not necessary for them to intellect what lies below them, for their being is connected with the being of what precedes them in being and not with the being of what is situated below them in being.

The truth of this is confirmed by the law of religion, in that part of it where it commands the [lower] ranks to know and acknowledge those above them. The *ḥujja*, for example, must acknowledge the position of the Gate, the Imam, the Foundation, and the Speaker and know their *maqāms* and ranks—that is, know the ranks that precede him—but the same law does not oblige him to know and acknowledge his preachers (and generally all who are below him) in the same manner in which it obliges him to know and acknowledge those who are above him: his perfection consists in knowing what is above him, not what is below. The same applies to the Imam, the Foundation, and the Speaker. To this belongs what the Most High said concerning the believer and his faith: "The Prophet believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and so do the believers. Each [of them] believes in God, His angels, His Scripture, and His messengers. We make no distinction between one or another of His messengers." Let this be proof of the faith and acknowledgment, obligatory upon the believer, of the ranks preceding him and standing above him; and let him know that those Intellects intellect their own essences and the essences of the [Intellects] preceding them in rank, and so on up to the First, for whom it is sufficient (*kifāya*) that it essentially encompass its own essence, its multiplicity being formed only by relations and conjunctions, and in no other way.

Furthermore: they, the Intellects of the kingdom of Creation and Emanation, {163} are the likeness of the human being: their forms do not surpass his form. For the law of wise ordering declares that the first limit of things must resemble their second limit, and the second must be similar to the first, so that, when the second limit belongs to the nature of the first limit, correspondence, order, and equilibrium may be established between the two limits of these things, which will make it possible to gather all these things together in being. Where this is absent, they cannot possess being, for it is proper to like things to draw near and, unfolding, to spread, whereas opposites withdraw from one another and, folding inward, contract. A thing cannot have as its limit that which is heterogeneous to it, whether as first or second limit, for then being would not accord with the wisdom of ordering, which is impossible. The being of things rests upon mutual agreement and not upon mutual difference. The Beginning and the End, which are the first and second limits, are two likenesses through which the whole totality of being is gathered: the first limit became for it (being.—A.S.) the Beginning, and the second limit the End. What is nearest to that which is the first limit, that is, the Beginning, is what is found in the second limit, that is, the End, when the latter is turned back toward it; and what is nearest to that which is the second limit, that is, the End, is what is found in the first limit, that is, the Beginning, when it is turned toward it. This turning back and turning toward are possible only through mutual correspondence; were it absent, beginning and end would be impossible, and when beginning and end are impossible, being is impossible. For the establishment of the first limit, which is the Beginning, consists in its belonging to that for which it is the first limit, and therefore in its being its likeness; and the same applies to the second limit, that is, the End. But if it does not belong to it, it is not its likeness, and if it is not its likeness, it has no Beginning, and if it has no Beginning, it has no End, and if it has neither Beginning nor End, then it has no being whatsoever. If the limit of the limits of things were something unlike them, no likeness could be formed from anything and nothing would be preceded in being by its likeness. But since existent things exist within fixed limits, neither increasing nor diminishing, and there is nothing in being whose likeness did not precede it in being, this proves that the first limits ascend toward their likeness—the second {164} limits, which are the ends; and that the second limits, which are the ends, ascend, turning back, toward their likeness—the first limits. This is accomplished through the turning of the beginnings toward the ends and their drawing of them toward themselves, as occurs in a circle, where the initial point resembles the final point and both are likenesses

insofar as they are the two limits that gather the whole circumference, although the first of these limits possesses the nobility of beginning and the second that of ending.

If, then, the two limits of a certain existent are likenesses insofar as they are precisely its limits (as son and father are each a limit for the other and are likenesses, or as with a grain of wheat, where the [sown] seeds of wheat resemble the seeds of the ear: both are grains of wheat, and the seed of the ear is a limit for the sown seed, and they are likenesses), and the first and second limits of all existent things are Creation (that is, the First Created) and the human being, then they are alike; and if they are alike, the form of the first is the form of the second. Here by the human being I mean only one who in his true essence is a human being, like the possessors of the cycles, and especially the possessor of the seventh cycle, who comprehensively united the Speakers, the Foundations, the Completers, and their followers, those human beings who, having acquired the virtues, became actual Intellects—but not those who resemble the human being in their corporeal form while in the form of their souls they are predatory beasts, wolves, apes, pigs, scorpions, or dogs; for such as these no reward is prepared.

Moreover, every supporting cause is active, for it grants to the supported effect (its limit clothed in its form) that through which its being is ordered. Since the kingdom of Creation, that is, the principle, is the supporting cause of the being of existent things, while the supported effect to which being arrives as its limit is the human being, then that form of his in which he received being is the proper form of Creation: it is the form of the human being.

Furthermore, since the human being is the child of the macrocosm (for he exists within it) and through his entire being, which being proceeds from the whole totality of it (the world.—A.S.), is balanced with it (the world.—A.S.), corresponds to it, and resembles it, while the macrocosm received being from the world of Creation and corresponds to that world with all its contents (which contents {165} proceed from the whole totality of it, the world of Creation.—A.S., and through which it became a world), resembles it, and is balanced with it, it follows that the world of Creation and all its Intellects are the likeness of the human being. The forms of those Intellects cannot surpass the form of the human being, for the human being is the limit of that which is necessarily entailed by the first supporting cause, while the limit that is final for being is the likeness of the limit that is initial for being.

Furthermore, if their form surpassed the human form, the human being would not be the limit of all existent things, but there would exist something through which the human being was ordered and which preceded him in being. Since the existence of something through which the human being would be ordered and which would precede him in being is impossible, it is established that he is the second limit of existent things, such that beyond him there is nothing. If, then, the human being is the second limit of existent things, and the second limit resembles the first, then the form of the Intellects, which are the principles and the first limit in the kingdom of Creation, is the form of the human being, who is the second limit in the world of souls.

Confirmation of the correctness of what we have said is furnished by the traditions established in the world of religion from the words of the Speaker (may God's blessing be upon him!) that God created Adam, the father of the human race, in His image and likeness.

The kingdom of Nature is permeated by the powers of these Intellects of the kingdom of Creation and by the powers of Creation (the First Created), that is, by their lights, and within

it they flow, reaching the souls, which are the limit. With them is connected the being of existent things (as we have depicted it), and they, these lights diffused throughout the world, grant to souls the primordial capacity to distinguish good from evil, that power which inclines them toward what is good and causes them to prefer it, and turns them away from what is bad and causes them to avoid it. Primordially, this is the power of shame. This is the first thing that appears in youths, after which they begin to feel shame at bad deeds; it is precisely this, according to the divine laws, that indicates their substances, which substances are not far from becoming actual Intellects: the greater a person's modesty, the more abundant his intellection. It is precisely they, the Intellects of the kingdom of Creation, that nurture souls in the corporeal world and unite with them when the essences of those souls are purified from the stains of Nature, and {166} grant them perfection, brilliance, radiance, and exaltation. They show toward them the same compassion and mercy that a father shows toward his son; therefore Jesus, son of Mary (may God's blessing be upon him!), said: “I am the son of Him Who is in heaven.” This manner of the connection and union of existent things with that power proceeding from the kingdom of Creation we have depicted in its proper place for clarity. Praise be to God, Who ordained this and wisely brought it to fulfillment; there is no god but Him, God the Great alone bestows strength and power. To God I call, before Him I humble myself, and in Him I place my trust, and whoever trusts in God, He suffices him; God and His earthly Vicegerent are our sufficiency: trustworthy is the Protector, excellent the Guide, Comforter, and Helper. I ask Him to protect us from sin, bestow good, and ordain goodness: He is the Generous, the Magnanimous, the Gentle, and the Merciful.

[1] Qur’an, 2:285, S.

[1] *The First* and *the Last* — Epithets of God: “He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of all things” (Qur’an, 57:3).

[1] Apparently an inexact quotation. The Gospels, however, contain a number of similar sayings. Compare, for example: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of Man which is in heaven” (John 3:13); and, in the apocryphal *Gospel of the Hebrews*: “…the most worthy are those whom my Father in heaven has given me” (quoted in *Apocrypha of the Early Christians*. Moscow, 1989, p. 70).

{167}

WALL FIVE

On Nature and Its Celestial Bodies, Proceeding from the Supreme Principles, Which Are the Celestial Letters

With Seven Streets

STREET ONE

On the Quiddity of Nature, and on the Fact That Nature as Such in the Corporeal World Is One in Its Substance and Multiple in Its Effects upon Its Matters

We have said previously that, when there came into being that which is called prime matter, and when it came forth from Creation not as the primary object sought—and we have explained why this was so—this prime matter did not possess the nobility enjoyed by the other Intellects existing in actuality, which had emanated from the supreme relation that was in Creation, that is, the First Created. Thereupon the all-pervading divine providence turned toward it; and when the lights of the incorporeal Intellects and the celestial essences shone forth, from it was formed everything that could come to be, distributed according to degrees of nobility.

Now we say: this existent, prime matter, is something one, yet twofold in essence, and through these two parts its being subsists. Each of these two parts is subdivided into components that possess one common name and many particular names, one for each component. Each of the two parts has two relations.

One is the relation arising through conjunction with that [Intellect] from the world of Creation, that is, the First Created, from which this part {168} was formed. Through this relation the part is one, namely, one as a substance, and through it its quiddity is known.

The other relation is through conjunction with those existents that exist by virtue of this part. According to this conjunction, the part is multiple, namely, with respect to its effects upon those existents.

If we set out upon the path of knowing the quiddity of the first part, we shall find that, insofar as it is related to that from which its being proceeds, it is life: an actual life, emanated from the world of Holiness, not independent in its essential being and not free of that which, in relation to it, is other and upon which its being depends, for it does not itself proceed from a relation unconnected with anything else.

The entire corporeal world is permeated by it: the heavens and the earth are filled with it; it is in everything, and nothing is alien to it. It acts upon all things, bestowing upon each its first perfection, which perfection consists precisely in being an existent.

If we wish to know the action of this [first part], we shall find that, when related in general to all the existents that exist by virtue of it, it is the mover of every thing and its perfection, for that thing exists through it.

If, however, we relate it in particular, that is, according to its individual effects, we shall find that when it causes bodies to move circularly, it is orbit; when it moves fire and air upward, it is lightness; when it moves water or something heavy downward toward its center, it is heaviness; when it impels a plant toward growth, it is the vegetative soul; when it impels an animal toward the pursuit of pleasure, it is the animal soul; and when it impels man toward the knowledge of existents, it is the speaking soul.

All these, insofar as they act, possess one nature, but insofar as they act in different matters, they are multiple.

It is here exactly as with the soul of the microcosm: it is one in essence and multiple in its effects upon the manifold matters in which it acts—just as the species of animals are multiple according to their matters yet one insofar as all are animals.

And the soul, insofar as it acts differently upon man, has separate names corresponding to the different faculties. When it acts upon the brain, it is called the thinking faculty; when it notices within itself those forms of the sensible that have happened to be present in it, it is called memory; when it takes as a visible form those forms that it has previously known, it is called the faculty of representation; when it strives to avenge itself by word or deed, it {169} is called the irascible faculty; when it hungers for pleasures or wishes to restore to the body what it has lost, it is called the sensory faculty; when it seeks knowledge and justice, it is called the speaking faculty; when it refrains from what is vile and acts in accordance with the norms of the prophetic Law, it is called rational.

So too with a carpenter: although he is one, we call him differently according to which of his tools he is using—an adze, a drill, a saw, or something else.

As for the soul, God willing, we shall speak of it in its proper place, where the error of those who regard the irascible soul as essentially distinct from the rational soul will become clear.

If we wish to know the quiddity of the second part, we shall find that, insofar as it is related to that from which its being proceeds, it is potential life, emanating from the world of Holiness, not independent in its essential being and not free of need for that first part which is actual life.

From it—that is, from potential life—comes the being of the corporeal world. It undergoes and receives the action of the former, actual life, and, together with its companion, namely actual life, bestows upon each existent its first perfection from itself, which perfection consists precisely in that existent’s existing.

When related in general to all the existents that proceed from it, it is body, possessing length, breadth, and height. When related to them in particular, however, that is, in each case according to the manner in which each existent receives the action undergone by it, then, if that existent moves circularly, it is the spheres and the celestial bodies; if it moves in a straight line, it is fire, air, water, and earth; if it moves in all directions—upward, downward, to the right, to the left, forward, and backward—while remaining in its own place and not

leaving it, it is a plant; and if it moves in all directions while changing place and departing from its position, it is an animal.

All this is one nature and one body, yet potential life becomes multiple according to the manner in which it receives the action of the agent—just as wood, which serves as matter for the carpenter, is hewn when it has undergone the action of the adze, drilled when it receives the action of the drill, or {170} sawn when it has undergone the action of the saw. It is one, but multiple according to the effects wrought upon it.

To each of these two parts belongs its own effect and its own gift in the existent formed from them: body gives it the receptive essence, while life gives it the active form through which its being is completed. In its matter lies its first perfection, while through its form it acquires its second perfection.

Confirmation of the correctness of what has been said, and its proof upon the scales of religion, lies in the correspondence between the manner in which [the lights] flow forth from the world of Holiness and the condition of the existent in the world of the soul.

That is to say: the lights of the immaterial Intellects, as we have said, shine upon the lower existents in general, whereas the light of the Tenth Intellect, because it turned in the world of Nature toward the world of the soul in order to deliver it, penetrates it in particular, as we have previously explained.

These lights were directed toward the souls—for toward them, as toward their second, potentially existent limit, all existents ascend—in order to transfer them from potentiality into actuality.

Now these lights are something one, yet twofold in essence. Each of the two parts is subdivided into components having one common name and many particular names, one for each of the components of these two parts.

Each part has two relations.

One is the relation through conjunction with that in the world of Creation, that is, the First Created, from which this part was formed. According to this relation the part is one, and through it the substantial essence of that part is known.

The other relation is through its conjunction with those souls that attain perfection through it. According to this relation the part is multiple in accordance with its effects upon those souls.

If we wish to know the first part, we shall find that, insofar as it is related to the world of Holiness, it is a spirit emanated from that world and diffused throughout the world of souls, through which spirit purified souls become Intellects in actuality. This spirit bestows upon each soul, according to its merit, grace and the second perfection connected with its form, to the degree that that form is capable of receiving it.

When related in general to the souls of the world of religion, this part is a mover directing every soul toward what is best, toward that in which its perfection lies.

If, however, we relate it [to the souls] in particular, that is, according to ranks and components, we shall find that when it acts upon the souls of the highest {171} ranks, purifying those souls and instituting the outward worship through which souls are rectified, it is the Speaker, whom divine tradition calls the Messenger.

When it gives the laws of inward worship, in which souls imprint forms, it is the Source, called in divine tradition the Witness.

When it commands and guides souls that do not resist such guidance toward what benefits them, it is the Imam, called in divine tradition the Bearer of Glad Tidings.

When it pronounces the final judgment, it is the Gate, called in divine tradition the Warner.

When it judges and interprets, it is the ḥujja, called in divine tradition the Caller unto God.

When it adduces arguments and proofs, it is the preaching herald, whom divine tradition calls the Illuminating Lamp;

and so on, down to the tenth.

Since the Speaker receives the totality of the effusion and gathers together all its lights, all these names and ranks rightfully belong to him, and to him is granted the degree of "that which brings near [to God]" (*al-wāṣila*), for he is the intermediary, and through him grace flows forth upon the souls.

This whole totality is one, yet through its effects upon different souls it is multiple, just as the water by virtue of which fruits and produce grow and by which crops and trees are irrigated is one. Concerning this water the Most High said:

"Gardens of vines, fields of grain, and palm trees, growing from a single root and growing from separate roots: they are watered with one water, yet We make some of them excel others in taste."

When that water flows through a palm tree, it becomes a date; when it flows through a vine, it becomes a grape; when it flows through other trees, it becomes a pomegranate, a fig, a mulberry, a banana, an almond, or a walnut.

This entire totality is one, although it differs in taste and form according to the difference of the matters. Therefore the Most High said:

"Yet We make some of them excel others in taste."

The second part, insofar as it is related to the world of Holiness, is likewise a spirit emanating from it and diffused throughout the world of souls, requiring the first part for its being.

This second part lies within the grace-giving embrace of strengthening rites and purifying deeds; it acts upon souls, bestowing upon them virtues by which {172} their essences are rectified, and by bestowing those virtues it completes the souls' first perfection.

When related in general to the souls that attain perfection from it and through it, it is Scripture together with the Law and the ceremonies of piety.

In particular, however, that is, according to its effects upon souls, when it bestows upon souls the virtue of truthfulness, it is the ceremony of pronouncing the words of the confession of faith; when it bestows purity upon them, it is ablution; when it brings them nearness to God, it is prayer; when it makes them generous, it is *zakāt*; when it cultivates in them the virtue of abstinence, it is fasting; when it awakens in them longing and love for the angels, Imams, and prophets, it is the *ḥajj*; when it bestows upon them courage, that is, steadfastness in the works of faith, it is *jihād*; when it brings them humility, it is obedience; when it teaches them to beware destructive sinfulness, it is piety; and when it bestows upon them knowledge and wisdom, it is inward worship.

All this is one, yet multiple according to its effects, just as fire is one in essence, yet when it burns it is burning, when it gives light it is illuminating, and when it gives heat it is warming.

All this corresponds to what we have said concerning the nature and quiddity of Nature.

In the light of this correspondence, upon the scales of religion that we have erected, the quiddity of Nature has been demonstrated, and through it the quiddity of the rest as well.

And since [good] deeds rectify the essence of the soul, while the religious sciences rectify its essence and bestow perfection upon it, it has become clear to us that Nature through its corporeality bestows upon the existent formed by it an essence in the form of a body, while through its form it bestows upon that existent a form in the shape of a soul; and it also prepares that existent for the action of the actual Intellects, so that they may transfer it into actuality.

It has also been demonstrated that Nature, with its bodies and forms, corresponds to religion and to the kinds of worship, and that the one is bound to the other in precisely the manner we have visibly represented.

This equilibrium and this correspondence manifest the supreme wisdom that proclaims the power of the most skillful Creator.

Glory be to Him. There is no god but He. He alone, the Most High, grants strength and power. I call upon God and place my trust in Him in my affairs, and God is sufficient for him who trusts in Him.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

Excellent is this Protector, and excellent is this Helper!

{173}

WORLD OF NATURE	WORLD OF RELIGION
Matter that receives form, and the moving form of every thing possessing perfection	Rational form

first — the highest sphere, containing the entire corporeal world	first — the sensible form of Revelation, gathering together everything in the world of religion
second — the celestial sphere, gathering together the form of existents	second — the Law, gathering together all worship of the Most High
third — sphere of Saturn	third — the words of the confession of faith
fourth — sphere of Jupiter	fourth — ritual purity
fifth — sphere of Mars	fifth — prayer
sixth — sphere of the Sun	sixth — *zakāt*
seventh — sphere of Venus	seventh — fasting
eighth — sphere of Mercury	eighth — *ḥajj*
ninth — sphere of the Moon	ninth — *jihād*
tenth — sphere of fire	tenth — obedience
eleventh — sphere of air	eleventh — the permitted
twelfth — sphere of water	twelfth — the forbidden
thirteenth — sphere of earth	thirteenth — the ordinances

From them:

{174}

WORLD OF NATURE			**WORLD OF RELIGION**		
clouds	essence of body	mist	Heads (naqibs) of the outward	revelation and worship	Heads (naqibs) of the inward
minerals	animals	plants	people of the outward, who worship only through action	people of faith, who worship through knowledge and action	people of the inward, who worship only through knowledge

[1] An allusion to the verses: “O Prophet! We have sent thee as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, a warner, a caller unto God, and an illuminating lamp” (Qur’an 33:45–46).

[2] Qur’an 13:4.

STREET TWO

On the fact that Nature has two limits: the first limit, which encompasses everything for which it is a sustaining cause; through this limit Nature possesses its first being, that is, its first perfection; and the second limit, which is encompassed by everything of which it is a sustained effect; through it Nature possesses its second being, that is, its second perfection; that Nature is situated between these two limits; and also on what these two limits are, where they are located, and how the second limit, as such, is the center around which everything that moves is set in motion

Since every effect has a sustaining cause through which it exists, and since that cause is for it the encompassing first limit, and since Nature is such a sustained effect, it is established that Nature has a sustaining cause through which it exists, and that cause is the first limit, encompassing everything of which it is the cause.

Since it has been established that Nature has a sustaining cause through which it exists, namely the first limit encompassing everything of which it is the cause, and since its being proceeds from Creation—that is, the First Created and First Existent—then this Creation {175}, that is, the First Created and First Existent, is precisely that sustaining cause through which Nature exists and which is for Nature the first limit, encompassing everything for which it serves as sustaining cause.

If, then, Creation serves as the sustaining cause of Nature, through which Nature exists, and as the first limit encompassing everything for which it is a sustaining cause, and since Nature exists in its substrate (*mawḍūʿ*), which serves as its receptacle, then, insofar as it possesses this substrate, when moving within the general divine ordering of existents from the sustaining cause—that is, from the first, encompassing limit—toward the sustained effects, that is, toward the second, encompassed limit, Nature will be encountered in the very first existent of the corporeal world, which corporeal world constitutes the encompassing circumference. For that existent is a limit, though it is not the effect after which there is no further effect; such an ultimate effect would instead be the center and second limit.

Since, after finding the first limit that encompasses everything for which it serves as sustaining cause, Nature was found within the corporeal circle, and since the corporeal world includes diverse parts—heavens, stars, fire, air, water, and earth—Nature, being within this circle, must either be divided in accordance with the division of its parts, with each part of Nature encompassing some part of the world, or else remain undivided, encompassing one part of it while the powers proceeding from Nature penetrate all the other parts and its influence is manifested in all of them.

Nature, however, cannot be divided according to the division of the corporeal world, for two reasons.

First, the parts of the world are not equal. For, as is evident, the heavens—that is, the spheres—are not like the celestial bodies; the celestial bodies are not like fire; fire is not like air; air is not like water; water is not like earth; and earth is not like all of these taken

together. Nor are they alike in their states in such a way that they would constitute one thing of the same kind as Nature and Nature could be essentially present in the whole of them.

Second, the essence of Nature, namely life—which is called soul—has no parts by which it could be divided; division in essence is impossible for it, because it is not a body.

{176}

Since Nature cannot be divided in essence, it therefore abides essentially in one of the parts of the corporeal world, where it is situated and where its center lies, while in the other parts it is present through its powers and effects.

If it must therefore reside in one of the parts of the world, that part being its receptacle and center, and if the center of a thing is its heart and pole, that part which stands above the others, and if the heart of the celestial bodies and the uniquely exalted one among them is the Sun, then the Sun is the center of Nature and its receptacle.

Thus the Sun is the center of Nature. It proceeds from the first limit, which encompasses everything for which it serves as sustaining cause. In relation to all the other parts [of Nature], owing to its elevation, it is that center in which Nature is embodied and through which Nature is perfected, joined to the kingdom of Creation, and receives the effusion proceeding from it, because the kingdom of Creation and the Sun resemble and correspond to one another.

Indeed, the Sun is prepared to receive grace from the world of Unity in a manner unlike the other existents in the world of Nature. The lights of the celestial letters heal it differently from the other existents, and every existent is related to it in a manner unlike the way existents are related among themselves. For the Sun is seventh in order after the First Existent, and therefore constitutes that center toward which the lights of the acting principle are directed from without and upon which the effusion is poured forth.

For its essence in the corporeal kingdom may be likened to Creation—that is, the First Created—in the kingdom of Unity. Thus, in another mode, by way of resemblance, it possesses all the exaltedness that belongs to Creation and transmits the grace it receives to what lies below it, to that whose being is connected with it, so that from it arise the products that belong exclusively to this part [of the corporeal world], namely the Sun.

The lights of the Sun shine in every existent in the world; its power flows through each one, producing in each a particular effect different from its effect upon others, according to the manner in which that existent receives its influence. This is just as we observe in the behavior of a fish that avoids specifically the hands of the fisherman and not those of someone else; or in the action of a magnet, whose effect extends exclusively to iron and does not touch anything incapable of receiving its attractive power.

{177}



1. **Dār al-Ibdāʿ - The Realm of Origination**
2. **al-Mubdaʿ al-Awwal huwa al-Nihāya al-Ūlā - The First Created is the First Limit**
3. Then
    a. **al-Samāʾ al-Awwal huwa al-Manbaʿ al-Awwal - The First Heaven is the First Source**
    b. **al-Samāʾ al-Thāniya huwa al-Manbaʿ al-Thānī - The Second Heaven is the Second Source**
    c. **Zuḥal al-Thālith - Saturn, the Thirdal-Mushtarī al-Rābiʿ - Jupiter, the Fourth**
    d. **al-Mirrīkh al-Khāmis -Mars, the Fifth**
    e. **al-Shams al-Sādis -Sun, the Sixth**
    f. **al-Zuhra al-Sābiʿ -Venus, the Seventh**
    g. **ʿUṭārid al-Thāmin -Mercury, the Eighth**
    h. **al-Qamar al-Tāsiʿ -Moon, the Ninth**
4. **ʿĀlam al-Hayūlā wa-l-Ṣūra - The World of Matter and Form**
    a. **al-Nār – Fire**
    b. **al-Hawāʾ -Air**
    c. **al-Māʾ -Water**

d. **al-Arḍ -Earth**

5. al-Insān huwa al-Nihāya al-Thāniya - Man is the Second Limit

Since, therefore, Creation—that is, the First Created—is for Nature the first limit encompassing everything for which it serves as sustaining cause, and since from Creation proceeds Nature's first being, connected with its first perfection; and since man is Nature's second limit, encompassed by everything that is a sustained effect, such that beyond man there is no further sustained effect—that is, man is the second, encompassed limit—it follows that Nature has two limits.

The first encompasses everything that is a sustaining cause, while the second is encompassed by everything that is a sustained effect, and its receptacle is the middle, as we have depicted.

Thus we have established that the first limit is the First Created, because there is no thing above it, and that {178} the second limit is man, because beyond him there is no existent following after him as he himself follows that which precedes him, nor any further sustained effect. He is the encompassed center.

Man, furthermore, being the second limit, is that center by means of which every moving existent is set in motion.

That is to say: man is the limit toward which converge the rays of the incorporeal Intellects of the kingdom of Creation and Emanation and the lights of the acting bodies of the world of Nature, shining within him. Through them he becomes an Intellect existing in actuality and thereby attains that perfection which makes him one with Creation, though each possesses a rank distinct from the other.

For, having attained the same ultimate actuality replacing his potentiality, and the same perfection as the First Existent—that is, the first, encompassing limit—he has become like the First Existent and, like it, no longer requires any external support or assistance from anything else.

Therefore, when man turns toward his own essence in order to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, he thereby, as it were, turns toward those immaterial essences, because his essence is like theirs and theirs is like his. There is no difference here even in rank, although Creation—that is, the First Created—is the sustaining cause of existents, while man, the center in which the lights of all the worlds are gathered, is the likeness of Creation and occupies the same rank of perfection.

From this point of view, man is that inner limit with which all movements are connected: he is the mover. Creation, since man occupies such a rank, is the outer-inner [center], whose power passes over none of the existent sustained effects.

Thus, at its first limit Nature is endowed with its first perfection, which is connected with the being of its essence; and at its second limit, with its second perfection, which is connected with its perfection in its states. In this way Nature is self-sufficient, perfect, eternal, and abiding.

As confirmation of the correctness of what we have set forth, the scales of religion testify to that equilibrium and correspondence according to which the following is determined.

Since in the world of religion the Speaker is the first limit, encompassing the sustaining cause from which proceeds the being of the ranks that move souls toward worship and the profession of divine unity, therefore Creation—that is, the First Created—is the first limit encompassing the sustaining cause from which proceeds the being of Nature, or the soul that moves the corporeal world.

Since the ranks proceeding from the Speaker exist by virtue of Scripture and the Law together with its pillars, which are for them like a substrate in which they act, therefore Nature likewise exists by virtue of its substrate in which it acts, namely the celestial spheres and the elements.

Since the pillars of the world of religion are numerous—namely the pronouncing of the confession of faith, maintaining purity, prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, *ḥajj*, *jihād*, and obedience—and none of these, neither prayer nor *zakāt* nor anything else, belongs exclusively to the ranks, but obedience alone is entirely their own possession, and through that obedience the whole community receives [grace], and upon it the world of religion is founded; therefore the components of the world are likewise numerous—namely the celestial spheres, the celestial bodies, and the elements—and none of them, neither the celestial spheres nor the others, belongs exclusively to Nature, except the Sun alone, through which comes the life of all things and of the corporeal world itself.

Since among all the parts of the world of religion those that are alive and receive life essentially are the ranks, which are the active principles, therefore in the corporeal world those that are alive and receive life essentially among all its parts are the celestial bodies, which are the active principles.

Since the ranks that establish the pillars of religion, perform its rites, and produce spiritual offspring, although endowed essentially with the power to command and prohibit, all proceed from one, namely the Speaker and his successor, upon whom they depend and from whom they proceed into actuality; so too the celestial bodies—that is, the luminaries and other bodies—which set in motion the components of the world and produce natural offspring, although possessing life and active power essentially, nevertheless derive the life and activity of their lights from the Sun, around which they revolve and from which they proceed into action.

Since obedience to the Imam, the successor of the Speaker, is obligatory upon everyone in the world of religion, small and great alike, and since the commands of that Imam concern all, although each receives in that obedience something peculiar to himself that another does not receive, so too the action of the Sun is all-pervading in the corporeal world. Its influence touches all and each, and each {180} receives that influence in a particular manner, according to its own preparedness (*tahayyuʾ*), unlike another.

Since the Imam who governs the world of religion is as perfect as the Speaker, from whom that Imam was produced perfect, so too the Sun, which gives life to the world, is as perfect in its own world as Creation, in whose likeness the Sun was produced.

Since the ranks themselves, together with their deeds and their summons to venerate the Speaker, the Imams, and the others, ascend as toward their limit to the Resurrector—may God's blessing be upon him—who gathers together the lights of the Speakers and their cycles, and the knowledge of the first and final ranks, therefore the actions of the acting

principle—that is, the kingdom of Creation, the Sun, the celestial bodies, and the revolving bodies—ascend as toward their limit to man, that is, to the microcosm, who in the composition of his body and in his soul gathers together everything that preceded him in existence.

Since the Resurrector is the second limit, beyond which there is no further rank, therefore man is the limit of existents, and beyond him there is no further rank in being.

Since the Resurrector—that is, the second limit, for he is the last of the ranks, which ranks are the luminaries of the world of religion—is lord of all men, whom all obey, the center with which all is connected and for whose sake all moves, therefore man—that is, the second limit, for he is the final existent—is that center for whose sake all things move.

These are the conclusions drawn from what is observed in the world of religion on the basis of equilibrium.

Still further clarification, and stronger confirmation of the correctness of what has been said, is supplied by what we find in the microcosm, this child of the macrocosm, the second limit around which revolve the celestial spheres and everything else, religious and corporeal.

The world of religion has a first center and first limit, the Speaker, from whom the ranks derive their existence, calling souls to worship and to the acquisition of virtue; and the microcosm likewise has a first center, namely Nature, from which derives the existence of its soul, which moves its body toward the attainment of its aims.

Just as the ranks of the world of religion exist by virtue of the existence of Scripture and the Law together with its pillars, which are for them like a substrate, so too the soul of the microcosm exists by virtue of the existence of its {181} substrate, namely the human body belonging to it and its organs.

Just as the being of the ranks of the world of religion and of the pillars of the Law proceeds from the Speaker, so too the being of the soul of the microcosm and of its body proceeds from Nature.

Just as the pillars of the world of religion are numerous—namely the words of the confession of faith, maintaining purity, prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, *ḥajj*, *jihād*, *fiqh*, the issuing of judgments, and obedience—and none of these, neither prayer nor *zakāt* nor *ḥajj* nor anything else, belongs exclusively to the ranks among all those who perform these acts, but obedience alone belongs solely to them, and through it all the rest is received and lives; so too the bodily members of the microcosm are numerous, and none of them—neither eye, nor ear, nor hand, nor foot, nor anything else among the outward or inward organs—belongs exclusively to the soul, except the heart alone, which belongs to it wholly and entirely, gives life to all, and moves all.

Just as among all the existents of the world of religion those that are alive and receive life essentially are the ranks, which constitute its center, so too among all the bodily organs of the microcosm that which is alive and receives life essentially is the heart, which constitutes its center.

Just as the ranks in the world of religion are many but all proceed from one, namely the Imam, so too the souls in the microcosm are many according to their activities, yet all proceed from one, namely that which resides in the heart.

Just as the ranks are many, while the effusion is entrusted to only one of them and the others obtain their share of the effusion through obedience to that one, so too the parts of the heart in the microcosm are many, but life belongs exclusively to one of them, while the others live through their proximity to it.

Just as among the ranks the one is higher that is nearer to him who is endowed with effusion and grace, so too among the parts of the heart the one is higher that is nearer to the part endowed with life.

Just as obedience to the Imam is obligatory upon all, small and great alike, in the world of religion, and his command extends to all, while each individual receives from it only what pertains specifically to him and not to another, so too life, flowing out from the heart, streams into all the members of the microcosm, and to each member belongs something particular to it that does not belong to the others.

Just as the Imam, the second limit of the world of religion, included within that world, resembles the Speaker from whom he proceeds, so too the soul of the microcosm, the second limit {182} of existents, included among those existents, resembles Nature from which it proceeds.

Just as the Speaker is outside the world of religion and yet also within the world of religion insofar as the Imam within the world of religion resembles in perfection the Speaker from whom he proceeds, so too Nature is outside the microcosm and yet also within the microcosm insofar as the soul of the microcosm within it resembles Nature.

Just as the Imam, who takes the place of the Speaker in the world of religion, is the center around which the outward affairs of religion revolve, while the *ḥujja*, who takes the place of the legatee, serves that Imam by secretly spreading his preaching and his summons to obedience; so too the heart is the center of the microcosm around which its outward life revolves, while the brain serves the heart by secretly distinguishing and conveying the [data] of the senses.

Just as in the world of religion the ranks from the *ḥujja* downward are jointly occupied with drawing souls toward obedience to the Imam and thereby serving him, so too in the microcosm the senses, whose sensory activity is connected with the brain, together with the brain are occupied with apprehending things from without and conveying knowledge to the soul, thereby serving it.

Such, in brief, is the equilibrium of the microcosm and macrocosm with the world of religion.

And since there exists between these worlds an equilibrium and mutual correspondence, and the world of religion resembles the microcosm while the macrocosm resembles the world of religion, the microcosm therefore resembles the macrocosm in absolutely everything, without exception.

Thus it has become clear that Nature stands in the middle between two limits, the first of which is Creation and the second man, who gathers together all those virtues and perfections toward which, as toward their limit, flow the lights of all the active principles from all the worlds.

This man is an Intellect existing in actuality, resurrected in the second resurrection. In him is the same perfection that is contained in the First, and therefore, being the second limit, he has risen over against the first limit. He is in truth the Resurrector—may God greet him—who is the limit of the Speakers, the pillars, the Imams, and the ranks following them in the world of worship and the profession of divine unity, from the beginning of the age to its end, that is, from the beginning of the cycles.

All the worlds are connected with one another and stand within a single order, as prescribed by divine wisdom, namely such that whenever something moves or something {183} is at rest, this same meaning exists throughout the whole totality and is one by virtue of the correspondence of this expression.

Nature, at its limit, is the most discerning knower and the most skillful physician. That limit is the Angel Brought Near, to whom the administration of the corporeal world—called in divine tradition the Throne—has been entrusted.

Glorious is the Possessor of this kingdom, who has ordered it with such consummate skill. There is no god but He. To Him I call and in Him I seek refuge. Strength and power are granted only by God and by His vicegerent upon the earth—may God greet him.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

STREET THREE

On the fact that Nature possesses knowledge, and what that knowledge is; on the fact that in that part of itself which constitutes its second limit it gathers together all the virtues; and also on the fact that, by virtue of the internal interconnectedness of its parts, it possesses sufficiency (*ghunya*) and perfection

Since every sustained effect, being of the same genus as the cause that sustains it—although lower than that cause in rank—possesses an activity resembling the activities and states of that cause, except for those whose presence or absence is determined by some other sustaining cause; and since Nature, proceeding from Creation—that is, the Created—is an effect sustained by it, it follows that Nature possesses knowledge, because its sustaining cause, the Created, possesses knowledge.

Since the First Created is pure and free of matters and substrates, whereas Nature, unlike the Created, is not pure and free but instead possesses a substrate, Nature stands one degree lower in knowledge, for that substrate is the cause preventing it from ascending to the rank of the immaterial Intellects.

Since Nature, possessing a substrate, stands one degree lower in knowledge, and since knowledge is twofold—the first knowledge being that which is conjoined with us and connected with the first perfection, pertaining to the preservation and welfare of substrates, through which the forms acting within them exist; and the second knowledge pertaining to the preservation {184} of pure essences and forms and their modes [of existence]—and since Nature possesses a substrate, it follows that the knowledge Nature possesses is the first knowledge, pertaining to the preservation of the substrate.

For Nature requires the existence of that substrate for its own being: were the substrate not to exist, Nature itself could not exist. Moreover, Nature has greater need of the first knowledge, which pertains to preserving the substrate with which its being is connected, than of the second knowledge, which is connected with its perfection.

That is, if its substrate, not itself being an intellect, should lack the knowledge by which its essence is preserved—and Nature exists by virtue of the existence of its substrates—then its companion, namely Nature, must necessarily possess the knowledge that will preserve its substrate, so that by preserving its substrate Nature may preserve itself.

For if Nature did not know this, some of the members of a living being might perish during sleep, when the living being neither perceives nor knows what is happening. All its instruments and members, by means of which it obtains what benefits it and wards off what harms it, would then become useless; its constitution would be destroyed, and it would perish.

Since this is possible, and since it would lead to the destruction of the substrate through which Nature exists, divine providence from the beginning endowed Nature, as an innate quality (*jibilla*) of its essence, with the first knowledge by which it preserves its substrate, so that through the stability of the substrate its own being might remain stable, and through the preservation of the substrate Nature itself might be preserved.

This in turn makes it possible, once Nature has been preserved, for it to acquire the second knowledge, so as to sustain its essence and, having attained perfection, become independent of the substrate and be preserved from the dissolution and corruption that occur when the matter through which it exists becomes corrupted.

Thus the vegetative soul dwelling in grasses, shrubs, and trees, when it sends the roots of its substrate into the earth, chooses the direction in which they can find moisture, for that moisture will preserve for this soul its substrate, namely its body. If the roots encounter a stone or some other solid body along their path, they turn away from it toward a penetrable medium and direct themselves toward moisture.

Likewise, a moving animal seeks that which can preserve its body and life; and when one way fails, it tries other ways.

So too with the sensory soul existing in irrational beasts: these animals eat only what benefits them, while feeling aversion toward {185} everything capable of harming them and corrupting their bodies; and they flee from every creature capable of injuring them, thereby preserving the very being through which that soul exists.

So too with the mineral soul: it permits admixture and accords with those bodies that preserve its substrate, but does not mix with those from which that substrate suffers corruption.

An example is mercury, as is well known to jewelers. It is compatible with gold, for the two love one another, being mutually similar and isomorphic, and neither corrupts the other. With iron, however, mercury does not mix: it is incompatible with it, because they cause one another mutual harm. Even if a heavy piece of iron is placed upon a quantity of mercury weighing less than it, the mercury will not allow the iron to penetrate into it but will thrust it upward. Yet if even a small quantity of gold is left upon the surface of a large quantity of mercury, the mercury immediately absorbs the gold, essentially loving it because of their mutual similarity.

Both gold and mercury are endowed with the first knowledge, which renders them mutually compatible. In the same way, iron moves toward the magnet, because there is a mutual correspondence between them, and the power of iron increases in proximity to the magnet.

Were Nature not endowed with the first knowledge, the vegetative soul might direct the roots of trees toward a place devoid of moisture and would perish; the sensory soul existing in irrational beasts might cease to refrain from eating plants harmful to the individuals in which it dwells and would perish; or, approaching a well, the beast might cease to exercise caution, lose its footing, fall into it, and die. Likewise, the mineral soul existing in iron might not refrain from mixing with mercury, with the result that bodily destruction would occur.

Thus the providence of the All-Wise endowed Nature with the first knowledge in order to preserve its first being.

As for the second knowledge, it is connected with the states of the soul and with its second perfection. It brings the soul eternal happiness and imperishable bliss. Through this knowledge the soul attains eternal abiding and intellection, and with it the soul no longer requires instruments or substrates.

The soul acquires it as a second object sought, by learning and receiving it from the Possessor of perfection and eternity, from the divinely endowed guide {186} and teacher.

Because Nature—that is, the soul—does not possess this second knowledge, the Most High said:

"God brings you forth from your mothers' wombs while you know nothing." [Qur'an 16:78]

That is, you know nothing of the second perfection, namely the second knowledge connected with religions and confessions of faith, through which the soul is brought to perfection and becomes an Intellect. This knowledge is received from the guiding Imams belonging to the People of the House—may God bless them.

It follows from this that the second knowledge differs from the first. For the first knowledge is present from the beginning in the soul of every animal and other creature, apart from exceptional individuals and then only in particular circumstances caused by certain sustaining causes; these causes disappear after a time, whereupon these individuals join the rest.

It follows also that Nature—that is, the totality of souls and their powers, together with everything in the corporeal world belonging to its genus—possesses precisely this first knowledge, which is connected with the welfare of its substrates, individuals, and matters, through which it exists and in which it is constituted. To acquire this knowledge it has no need of a teacher.

This means that the Muʿtazilites and Brahmans were mistaken in maintaining that man requires no teacher in order to apprehend the truth of divine unity. They supposed that this knowledge was of the same kind as the first knowledge: innate and bestowed from the beginning upon every ensouled being, like the knowledge of the dung beetle that flees from a shoe threatening to crush it. They sinned by surrendering themselves to these opinions—may God preserve us from those who err and surrender themselves to passion!

Moreover, this first knowledge outside man is not the same as it is in man. For the first knowledge in man, before his contact with things and before he obtains benefit from them, exists as conviction and certain awareness; afterward it exists through reasoning and experience, which establish what ought and ought not to be done.

In everything else this knowledge does not exist as it does in man, but rather in that state which we call **isomorphism among existents**: each thing corresponds to that existent which corresponds and is suited to it, and each strives toward the existent that is of the same genus as itself and most closely resembles it.

It exists also in the **mode of being of an existent**: an existent, yearning for {187} that in which the perfection of its being consists, strives toward it through its matter and relies upon that matter.

Thus the active power, namely Nature, prepares for generated beings that which is isomorphic with them and which they require in order to attain the perfection proper to them. For one who is in need does not need what is non-isomorphic with him; he needs what is isomorphic, suitable, and complementary to him, by means of which he may assist himself in his being.

Nature requires matters for its existence and, in accordance with its matters, prepares the form that suits and is isomorphic with them.

When isomorphism is absent, we speak of **contrariety** (*mukhālafa*): contrariety among existents, whereby an existent is at variance with and flees from everything with which it is not isomorphic; and contrariety in the mode of an existent's being, whereby it does not yearn for the contrary thing and has no need of it.

Thus **isomorphism and contrariety in non-human existence constitute the knowledge it possesses without any reasoning whatsoever.**

Although Nature is endowed specifically with the first knowledge, it nevertheless gathers together in its second limit all the virtues—that is, the second knowledge.

For the virtues that one who continually strives to fulfill the prophetic Law, relying upon it in faith in God and observing it sacredly in soul and body, can acquire for his soul are these:

truthfulness, brought to the soul by pronouncing the formulas of the confession of faith; purity of soul and body, excluding filth and impurity, brought to the soul by ablution; nearness to the celestial and terrestrial ranks, brought to the soul through the performance of prayers and the glorification [of God]; generosity, brought to the soul through payment of *zakāt*; piety, steadfastness, and fear of God, brought to the soul through observance of the fast; longing for the Supreme Assembly and the afterlife, brought to the soul through beholding places of worship—such as the places of pilgrimage [in Mecca], the Sacred House of the Lord, that is, the Kaʿba, and the great mosques—and visiting them in order to perform the rites of Islam; courage, brought to the soul through steadfastness in the affairs of faith, which steadfastness is called *jihād*; assimilation to the ranks and the Supreme Assembly, bestowed upon the soul through obedience to the Imam and following his example in both forms of worship while observing the religious prescriptions; and wisdom—that is, the mutual equilibrium of existents—bestowed upon the soul through interpretation, that is, inward worship, through joining knowledge with action, and through comprehending corporeal and incorporeal existents.

And since the one who truly strives after these virtues and through them worships God Most High is man—namely the Speaker and those who perform the rites of worship—man, by striving in these deeds, gathers together all the virtues and acquires complete happiness.

Since man, by striving in these deeds gathered together in the Law and remaining steadfast in their performance, gathers together all the virtues and complete happiness, which constitute the second perfection, and since this man is the second limit of Nature, it follows that Nature, in its second limit—that is, in man—gathers together all the virtues: truthfulness, purity, nearness, generosity, piety, fear of God, steadfastness, longing for the Supreme Assembly and assimilation to it, courage, wisdom, and everything associated with these.

And since man gathers together these virtues, and since he is the second limit, beyond which there is no existent, just as after the Resurrector there exists no further rank or degree, this man is truly the **Resurrector**—may God bless him!

Thus the Resurrector is the center toward which converge the lights of the active principles of the outer and inner worlds. If the Resurrector is the center, then Creation is the

circumference, so that the two constitute the two limits, as is clearly shown in the following figure.

Thus it has been established that Nature is perfect and contains all the virtues through man. Man, belonging to Nature, constitutes Nature's perfection and brings it sufficiency, perfection, and independence from need.

The scales of religion confirm this, deriving necessary conclusions from knowledge of the ranks of the *ḥudūd* of the community. For, as we have shown, the ranks in the world of religion correspond to Nature, which moves bodies and acts upon them.

Since in the world of religion the ranks exist by virtue of Scripture, the Law, and their ordinances—which constitute the substrate of the ranks, so that without them the ranks would not exist—and since, requiring Scripture, the Law, and their ordinances for their own existence, they must possess an original knowledge of this substrate, namely Scripture and the Law, through which they exist, in order that it may be preserved and that through its preservation they themselves may be preserved; it follows that Nature's being is likewise connected with the being of its substrate, and Nature is endowed with the first knowledge of what is advantageous and beneficial to its substrate, through whose existence Nature itself exists.

This is necessary so that the substrate may be preserved and thereby preserve Nature.

Indeed, if the ranks did not possess knowledge of Scripture, the Law, and their ordinances—

{189}



Outer: The Primary Creation (Origination) is the Encompassing [Sphere].

Inner: "The Qāʾim: He is the Potential for the Lights."

—through which they exist as ranks in the world of religion, and if they lacked the knowledge necessary to preserve these things from corruption, some of the rites and

ceremonies established by Scripture and the Law might disappear. With their disappearance, the temple of worship would be destroyed, and consequently the ranks themselves would perish and disappear.

Therefore the ranks cannot but possess from the beginning knowledge of Scripture, the Law, and the deeds prescribed by them, through which the soul receives its first being; for they require Scripture and the Law in order to attract souls and establish the temple of worship.

If, for example, the missionaries (*duʿāt*) possessed no knowledge of the outward meaning of Scripture and the Law and did not command the arguments upon which their instruction rests, they {190} could not act at the rank they occupy in the world of religion, would never attain eternal happiness, and indeed would not be ranks of the world of religion at all.

Since this is so with the ranks, Nature likewise could not exist were it not endowed with the first knowledge connected with preserving its substrate.

Since in all the minor cycles all the ranks are perfected and made virtuous through their Imam, who serves as their center in the world of religion, and in the major cycles through the Resurrector, who is the second limit, it follows that Nature gathers together all virtues in its own limit, namely man, the second limit in relation to Creation.

Since the first knowledge of Scripture and the Law possessed by the ranks is not the same as that possessed by the Speaker and his successors—for the Speaker and his successors possess firm knowledge of Scripture and the Law received through divine support, both before and after their [revelation], together with knowledge of their outward and inward [meanings], of what ought and ought not to be done, of what is mutable and immutable, abrogated and firmly established; whereas the ranks receive their knowledge of Scripture and the Law from the Imam who serves as their center, through accidental or acquired instruction, by virtue of which knowledge their activity becomes possible—it follows that Nature's first knowledge is not the same as man's first knowledge.

Nature's first knowledge consists in **isomorphism**, which causes it to incline and strive in the manner we have described, without any preceding deliberation as to whether something ought or ought not to be done. Man's first knowledge, by contrast, consists in acting with regard to things while knowing that something ought or ought not to be done, or that danger lies in it.

Since the world of religion—with the ordinances of wisdom and worship contained within it, with Scripture and the Law, with the ranks each performing what is proper to it, standing upon one another's shoulders, all together bearing the burden of the Kingdom and jointly receiving the lights of Holiness poured forth upon them, each taking the place of another and performing the divine work, the lesser for the greater and the greater for the lesser, each connected with every other through concord and correspondence—since this world, governed by its final members through its primordial members, is in its totality {191} perfect, complete, and self-sufficient, preserving its order as it is, it follows that the world of Nature likewise, with its bodies, elements, and generated beings, in which each performs what is proper to it—the active acts, the receptive receives, that which undergoes transformation is transformed, and that which is fixed remains unchanged, while each is connected with every other in a precisely ordered arrangement—is in its totality perfect, complete, and self-sufficient, and is preserved as it is.

Thus, through the equilibrium and correspondence that exist between them and by their testimony, it has been established:

that Nature possesses knowledge;

that this knowledge is primordial;

that among existents there is either **isomorphism, attraction, and concord**, or **contrariety and repulsion**;

that in the mode of being there is a passionate yearning for that in which the perfection of Nature consists;

that Nature possesses the virtues in its second limit;

and that Nature is sufficient and perfect.

Glory be to God. There is no god but God. God alone grants strength and power. To God I call and in Him I place my trust. For the sustenance and grace sent down, I offer praise to God and to His vicegerent upon the earth—may God bless him! God alone, the Creator of all things, grants success and happiness.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

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[1] Qur'an 16:78.

[2] Al-Kirmānī is referring to the thesis concerning the possibility of "worship through analogical reasoning" (*al-ʿibāda bi-l-qiyās*), maintained by many Muʿtazilites. According to this position, even before Muḥammad brought his prophetic mission, human beings could, through rational procedures of "analogical reasoning" (*qiyās*), apprehend the truth of divine unity and begin to worship God.

STREET FOUR

On the Throne, or the Angel Brought Near, or the First Moved Mover insofar as it moves—that is, on the form that moves its receptacle, which is called the celestial sphere; on why it both moves and is moved; and on why it is within the body

When speaking of the world of Nature, we also mentioned the kingdom of Creation that stands beyond it, and the angels brought near who exist in that kingdom, for these questions are interconnected.

Since Nature has two aspects, the first of which is contained in that which moves and the second in that which is moved, and since the highest sphere is the first existent of Nature, we said concerning that which moves within it—which pertains to the discussion of the angels brought near—{192} that the motion of a moving body does not proceed from that which constitutes its corporeality, nor is motion included in the definition of body, as though "body" meant something possessing length, breadth, height, and motion. Consequently, the motion of a body does not proceed from its own essence.

Since the motion of a body does not proceed from its essence, it must proceed from something other than it. And this other, from which the motion proceeds, is not itself a body, precisely because it is other than the body.

If this other is not a body, then, in moving the body, it must be either within the body or outside it. It cannot be outside the body, because a body cannot be set in motion by an external incorporeal mover. Such a mover would have to possess within itself certain parts homogeneous with that which is moved—that is, with the body—in order through those parts to come into contact with the body's essence and thereby move it. Yet this mover has no parts at all and is incorporeal, for it is not a body.

Since, therefore, a body cannot be moved by something external, incorporeal, and without parts, while the highest sphere—that is, the limit of bodies—is a body in motion, it follows that its motion is produced by a mover located within it, and that this mover is incorporeal.

Thus the mover of the highest sphere, called in divine tradition the **Throne**, is the first mover of the body and is situated within that body. At the same time, through the movement of this body—called in divine tradition the **Footstool**—it is itself the first thing moved.

For this reason, in defining Nature, it is said that Nature is the principle of motion and rest abiding essentially within a thing. The essence of this mover is life, flowing from the World of Lordship and called **form**.

This form emanates from the world of Creation together with prime matter. The relation from which the two of them proceed determines that they should be as they are: the one active and the other passive, in accordance with the character of the First Existent, that is, Creation, and in accordance with the nature of that relation which determines that the limit of bodies, or highest sphere, should be receptive of action.

Its essence is not like the essence of the Intellects: it is not free from matters and is not pure form. Rather, it consists of prime matter and form, which constitute its being; and the world of religion has called this prime matter and form respectively the **Footstool** and the **Throne**.

Its prime matter—that is, its body—{193} is so perfectly consonant with and so thoroughly prepared for its form that it scarcely differs from it. So great is their union, illuminated by the light of Unity—for the world of Unity is so near!—and so determinative is the impress of form upon prime matter that the two constitute, as it were, a single thing, and neither can exist without the other.

For this reason it is eternally abiding and unchanging. Were its prime matter not so concordant and similar to its form, it would not be moved by it; but it is so disposed toward the form that there is complete harmony between them. Thus the two have become so similar to one another that they are almost one thing.

Nevertheless, traces of duality remain unerased within its essence. This essence is, as it were, the form of that quasi-unity which is not by nature absolutely one, and therefore motion belongs to it.

Since it is not wholly an actually existent pure form like the immaterial Intellects—as we have already shown from the nature of its sustaining cause—it cannot, on the other hand, be merely a body.

There are two reasons for this.

First, the relation from which it came to be is twofold, and this duality requires that what proceeds from it likewise be twofold and attain its perfection precisely through this twofold constitution.

Second, if it were merely a body, with nothing within it to give it perfection—such as an active cause that would move it toward actuality, an actuality accomplished only through both together, namely the body and the moving cause, so that the existence of each must be connected with that of the other—then, if such a merely bodily thing were the cause of the existence of all other things, it could not itself be set in motion by Creation, that is, the Created, the first mover standing outside it, separate from it, incorporeal, and possessing no body. In that case no corporeal existent could arise at all.

For, as we have shown, a body devoid of an internal mover is not capable of receiving motion from an external mover separated from it, unless that mover possessed a body like the body being moved.

But since Creation—that is, the First Created and First Angel—is separate from body and stands outside it, and nothing resembles it, then, precisely because nothing resembles it, Creation, that is, the Created, must itself be the proximate sustaining cause of that which {194} can and must receive being from it.

And among those things receiving being from it, there must be something lower than it in rank that serves as the sustaining cause of the being of everything else. Within this latter there must be something that gives it perfection and belongs to the same genus as that actually

existent principle which is separate from it and external to it, so that by belonging to that genus it may be active.

Then, through the existential conjunction of these two—the active and the passive—there arises within it, as it strives to obtain perfection, that motion with which the existence of things in the corporeal world is connected. Through this motion it becomes a **moved mover**.

Its goal, however, is neither to become moved nor to be a mover. Its sole goal is to glorify the Most High and the existent proceeding from Him, namely Creation; in this lie its joy, delight, and perfection.

Now that which exists in this first prime-material existent, which is excluded from the genus of prime matter and which alone renders that prime matter good, is **life**, called form. This form understands its own essence and the essence of that corporeality in which it dwells.

When it strives toward the actualization of the perfection brought by praise and glorification, which gives it unceasing bliss, then with its movement its body too is moved.

Since this is so, we say that the cause of this mover's striving toward actuality—an actuality from which motion is inseparable, so that the mover thereby becomes itself moved—is as follows.

This first moved mover consists of two constituents, yet it understands only by means of one of them, namely that which belongs to the genus of that which understands.

Its ultimate end and its second perfection, with which its abiding, glorification, and praise are connected, and in which consist its joy, delight, and perpetual continuity, are that it should understand the First Existent that precedes it in being and from which its own being proceeds.

Since this is so, by means of that part of itself which understands, it comprehends its own essence and also understands the [First] Existent preceding it in being, through which it attains perfection.

Then the greatest bliss encompasses it. The perfection it has attained through understanding the existent external to itself, together with its own essence perceived in the full measure of its splendor and perfection, gives it the greatest joy and delight.

This understanding becomes within its essence {195} the most perfect form. Through it, it becomes actual and attains perfection in glorification and praise; through it, it obtains the blissful delight of having been formed according to the pattern of eternal abiding.

This same form moves it toward that eternally enduring actuality of bliss toward which it has been given to move, for forms always act upon that of which they are the forms.

Since the form moves it, it must therefore be aroused toward the act that will bring about its perfection. And if it must be aroused toward that act, then, when it strives bodily to carry out the act, its activity, occurring within its body—through which its essence is brought to completion—must produce motion in that body.

And since motion must arise within its body, it too, being within that body, becomes moved, just as a sailor moves with the motion of his ship.

This is an accidental motion accruing to it from its body as a consequence of its striving toward that by which its perfection is secured. It is of the same kind as the motion of the soul when the soul seeks the sweetness of vengeance or the blessedness of worship and praise of God and, in doing so, employs the members of its body.

Since it is the highest of the existents possessing prime matter and form, its motion is the highest of motions. And since its perfection-producing activity—namely glorification, praise, exaltation, bliss, delight, and joy—never ceases, its motion is likewise the most continuous of all motions.

Thus the cause of the motion of the first moved mover is that intelligible form of the First Created which moves that of which it is the perfection toward the glorification and praise in which its bliss consists.

Through this form, extending also into the other, passive constituent, the first mover—that is, the First Created and First Existent—became the first mover; and through this same form, understood by the moved first mover, the latter became the first thing moved.

Because this first moved mover possesses matter, its condition differs from that of the immaterial Intellects, whether Created or Emanational. Their essences are entirely Intellects, whereas the essence of this first moved mover is not {196} wholly intellect: as we have said, one thing within it is intellect and another is non-intellect.

Confirmation of what has been said is provided by the condition, in the kingdom of Nature, of that mover which is the **second moved mover**, namely the **Speaker**.

The Speaker's ultimate end and perfection—through which he becomes actually existent, glorifying and praising—and his bliss, joy, delight, eternal abiding, and continuity consist in his comprehending and understanding, one after another, the ranks that precede him in being, all the way up to the First Created, and in becoming wholly united with the world of Creation.

His comprehension and understanding of all this constitute a form within his essence that rectifies that essence. Through this form he becomes actual in his glorification and praise and in his attainment of complete happiness, delight, and bliss.

If this is a form within his essence, then such a form moves and acts upon him whose perfection it is, compelling him actually to perform those deeds that bring perfection: glorification, praise, and the governance by which others are perfected, this governance itself being a fruit of perfection.

Since this activity is necessary, and since the Speaker cannot perform it without his body, by means of which his essence is brought to completion, motion must arise in that body. And if motion arises in his body, then he too, being within that body, must be moved.

Thus through his activity he is moved.

His bliss lies in the activity of worship, glorification, rectification, improvement, and deification. His zeal in this never cools, for he strives toward unceasing bliss; therefore he moves others toward worship and deification and through this is himself moved toward the same.

Thus the sustaining cause of the motion of this second moved mover is that intelligible form of the celestial ranks in which his perfection consists and by virtue of which the first moved mover is the first mover and the second moved mover is the second mover.

The celestial ranks are not like the Speaker and the ranks within the kingdom of Nature.

Those celestial ranks are Intellects possessing the first and second perfection together. There is nothing within their essences that is not intellect. They are intellects understanding their own essences, which are intelligible to them.

The Speaker and the other terrestrial ranks in the kingdom {197} of Nature, by contrast, are intellects passing from potentiality into actuality, and within their essences there is something that is not intellect, such as their individual bodies (*ashkhāṣ*).

They understand things through their form, namely the soul, which rises from the degree at which it was Nature to the degree of the Intellects, and not through their bodies.

Their primordial being—that is, their perfection—is a being conjoint with their bodies, just as the first moved mover exists conjointly with its body.

Since this is so, there is an equilibrium between the condition of the first moved mover and that of the second moved mover, insofar as the latter is the second thing moved. For the motion of both proceeds from a form that rectifies their essence and moves them toward the actuality of perfection, while the activity of both consists in glorification and praise:

“There is nothing that does not glorify Him with praise, though you do not understand their glorification. Truly He is Forbearing, Forgiving.”

If the condition of the two moved beings is alike, then concerning the first moved mover, whose essence is inaccessible to sense, we may reason from what we know of the second moved mover, whose essence is present to us and accessible to sense.

Thus we say: since the second moved mover—that is, the Speaker—is the highest moving being among all the ranks in the world of religion, the first moved mover likewise is the highest of moving beings in the corporeal world.

Since the motion of the Speaker in summoning others to worship is the highest of all the motions of the terrestrial ranks, the motion of the first moved mover likewise is the most exalted of all motions.

Since the Speaker summons not to what is finite and interrupted but to what is eternally abiding and uninterrupted—

“There is no alteration in the words of God”—

the motion of the first moved being likewise is not finite, but eternal and unchanging.

Since among all the terrestrial ranks it is specifically the Speaker who summons to that outward worship which embraces all people, both those who know and those who are ignorant, although every religious community has its own particular form of it, the motion of the first moved being likewise is one motion embracing the movers of all bodies, although the mover of each body also possesses its own particular motion.

Since the Speaker summons and teaches, while his face is turned toward his **Foundation** (*asās*), which receives all the lights of knowledge flowing forth from him, therefore the orientation of that {198} motion—the motion of the first moved being—is from **East to West**, where corporeal lights disappear.

Since religion rests upon two summonses: the **outward summons**, upon which the Speaker is established, and which is the East of the lights; and the **inward summons**, upon which the Foundation is established, and which is the West of the lights and their resting place; therefore the motions accomplished above us are two motions:

the motion **from East to West**, which is the highest and noblest of all motions and with which the highest sphere is endowed; and the motion **from West to East**, characteristic of the sphere of the celestial bodies lying below the highest sphere.

Thus, through this mutual correspondence, the correctness of what has been said concerning the two moved movers becomes clear.

Whoever does not behold in God a light has no light at all.

Praise be to God, who has guided us thus far and illuminated our intellects through the grace of our lords—may God bless them and may they look favorably upon us!

There is no god but God; God the Great alone grants strength and power. To God I call and in Him I place my trust in all things. He watches over His servants with discerning care, and God will not forget the one who trusts in Him.

May God decree good for us and for our brethren in the East and West of the earth; may He make us righteous and remove destruction from us through Muḥammad and his family, the pure Imams.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

Notes. The first Qurʾānic quotation is Qurʾān **17:44** ("There is nothing that does not glorify Him…"); the Russian note gives 14:44, which appears to be a citation error. The second quotation is Qurʾān **10:64**. The editor's astronomical note explains *motion from East to West* (also called "direct motion") as the natural motion of the planets following the rotation of the celestial vault, and *motion from West to East* (or "retrograde motion") as the apparent reverse motion of a planet seen from Earth when the Earth "overtakes" that planet in its revolution around the Sun.

STREET FIVE

On the Footstool, or the First Moved Mover insofar as it is moved—that is, on the highest sphere; on the fact that it is a body and how, as a body, it is moved; on the celestial bodies that follow it and their number; and on the fact that the celestial spheres are at rest as wholes while moving in their individual parts

The first moved mover is twofold and exists precisely as twofold. In the preceding section we spoke of it insofar as it moves, which pertains to form, one of the two aspects through which its essence exists. Here, therefore, we shall speak of it insofar as it is moved, through which its essence is completed; and this discussion pertains to its corporeality.

{199}

Since color, figure, possession of directions, and motion are properties belonging only to bodies, and since the celestial bodies possess all of these, it follows that the celestial bodies are bodies.

Since the celestial bodies are bodies and possess two motions—a motion proper to themselves from West to East, proceeding from the principles of motion essentially present within them, and a motion from East to West, these two motions occurring simultaneously by day and by night—and since it is impossible for the same mover that moves them internally toward the East simultaneously to move them toward the West, for two contrary motions cannot arise simultaneously in one and the same moved thing from one and the same mover, it follows—given the necessary existence of their motion contrary to their essential motion—that there exists some external mover which moves them toward the West.

Since there exists such an external mover, and since, as we have already said, a body cannot be moved by an external mover unless that mover possesses a moving body, it follows that this external mover, from which there accrues to them their westward motion, possesses a moving body.

Since it possesses a moving body, while the kingdom of Creation is incorporeal and therefore possesses no moving body, it follows that this external mover is likewise a celestial sphere, similar to the sphere of the luminaries, but simpler.

This is the **highest celestial sphere**, the limit of the kingdom of Nature.

Thus the highest celestial sphere is a moving body insofar as it is a body, and this body is, as it were, prime matter and substrate for the mover contained within it.

This body emanated from the world of Creation, or of the Created, through that relation within it which is lower than the active relation belonging to it.

The essence of that which is moved by the mover contained within itself is not the same as the essence of that which is joined to it—that is, of its mover, which gives it perfection, illuminates it, and renders it immaterial (*tajarrud*). Rather, the former stands below the latter

according to the two relations—one to the essence of the First Created and the other to its form—from which they were produced.

I mean that the moved thing, namely the [highest celestial] sphere, is like a circular form encompassing all that exists in the kingdom of Nature.

After it comes the second celestial sphere, which contains the bodies of all the {200} luminaries, from which we inferred the existence of this highest sphere; after these come the seven natural spheres.

All these spheres are in one respect one thing: moving bodies and moving forms.

These celestial spheres are penetrated by other, smaller spheres, through which the order and regularity of the universal circular motion are attained.

All of them, both great and small, are reckoned among things at rest, because as wholes they do not leave their places or shift from them. But since the parts of each of them, in their motion, do shift and move from their places, they are reckoned among things in motion.

It is just as with a millstone rotating in one place: as a whole it does not change place, while its parts move from one side to another.

The correctness of what has been said is confirmed by that which serves us in deriving judgments concerning existents, namely the scales of religion—that is, the divine laws of the world of religion, its ordinances, customs, and inhabitants.

Since the inward summons, namely the striving of the Foundation toward the interpretation of the outward summons, that is, of the Speaker's striving toward the deification and perfection of others, is connected with this outward summons, without which it would not exist, it follows that the westward motion of the second celestial sphere, namely the sphere of the luminaries, is connected with the motion of another, higher celestial sphere, namely the highest sphere.

Since the Foundation performs the rites of the outward summons established by the Speaker and proceeding from his instruction, as well as the rites of the inward summons, which are its own peculiar portion and its learning from the Speaker, it follows that the second sphere possesses two motions: a westward motion, analogous to instruction, accomplished through the motion of the highest celestial sphere; and an essential eastward motion, analogous to learning.

Since in the world of religion the ranks are encompassed by the teaching of the guiding Imams, while those below them are faithful to both summonses, outward and inward, to instruction and learning alike, it follows that all the spheres situated below the second possess two motions: an essential motion toward the East and a motion from East to West through the motion of the highest sphere.

Since the Scripture brought by the Speaker is used by the purest family connected with that Scripture and acting upon it, it follows that the [highest] sphere as a body is moved through the form joined to that body and acting upon it.

{201}

Since Scripture and this family together constitute the two parts of the world of religion, forming its essence and proceeding from the Speaker, it follows that mover and moved together constitute the essence of the [highest] sphere and proceed from Creation, that is, from the Created.

Since Scripture gathers together the Law, which unites eleven things—the words of the confession of faith, maintenance of purity, prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, *ḥajj*, *jihād*, obedience, the permitted, the forbidden, and the ordinances—it follows that the highest sphere gathers together the second sphere, which in turn gathers together seven spheres and four natures.

Since each of the pillars of the Law gathers together many things, and is therefore a pillar—for example, maintenance of purity combines washing after relieving oneself, rinsing the mouth, complete ablution, and wiping, and for this reason is maintenance of purity—it follows that the great spheres possess smaller spheres through which the revolutions of the great ones are accomplished.

Since each pillar [of the Law] is inseparably connected with the interpretive meanings contained within it, which are preserved by the ranks appointed over that pillar, it follows that each of these moving spheres has an inseparably connected mover through which its essence is completed.

Since these pillars are established and the divine sciences contained within them, by which souls live, are spread by the seven Perfect Ones, who gather together forty-two Imams, it follows that each of the great spheres must possess a corresponding number of smaller spheres.

Since the world of religion is full, perfect, and self-sufficient through Scripture and the Law, and through the Imams who administer them, the Perfect Ones and the ranks standing below them, and needs nothing else, it follows that the world of Nature must be full through its spheres, stars, and natures, which are the active principles and, taken together, at rest, requiring nothing else.

Since the individual constituents of the world of religion require for their own being the existence of something other, it follows that the individual parts of the world of Nature, with its spheres and stars, move because some of them in their activity require others.

Thus the correctness of what has been said is confirmed by the correspondence and equilibrium between the states of these two worlds: creation, the greatest testimony, confirms the truth of the prophetic work, and the prophetic work confirms the correctness of the ordering of creation.

Glory {202} be to God, who has decreed and guided, bestowed and granted, illuminated the intellect and enlightened it, expounded the truth and illumined it with light.

There is no god but He. To God I call and in Him I trust. God the Great alone grants strength and power.

What God wills cannot fail to be, and what He does not will cannot come to be.

O God, decree good for us for the sake of Muḥammad and his pure family.

STREET SIX

On the bodies of the celestial spheres, especially the highest sphere; on the fact that these bodies are the simplest in the kingdom of Nature, are free from defect, do not perish or change in any of their states, and receive no form other than their own

Since every existent, insofar as it is an existent, is endowed with the states of which it is worthy and through them is perfected in being—for this is required by the divine ordering, which gives every thing that which is most fitting for it—and since the celestial bodies are endowed with circular motion, that is, the highest of motions, we conclude from this that these bodies were deemed worthy of this best motion because they themselves are the highest and best of bodies.

Otherwise this would not accord with the divine ordering, and no fitting correspondence would result.

Since these bodies are the best of bodies and their motion is the best of motions, and since the principles state that the fewer motions a body has, the simpler it is, while the highest body, or first celestial sphere, possesses only one motion whereas the spheres below it possess several motions, it follows that the highest sphere possesses the simplest body of all the spheres and is the best among them.

Thus all the spheres are noble bodies, but the best of them is the highest sphere, and it is also the simplest in its corporeality.

They are such that they cannot undergo any transformation, for their constitution excludes every possibility of corruption.

For they are the first instruments, the primary causes of the existence of later things, the proximate sustaining causes of their being. The existence of what lies below them is connected with them and exists through them.

In considering how to make these instruments, with which are connected the activities inseparable from the existence of things, free from defect, the All-Wise Craftsman necessarily had to create them so perfect that they would be guaranteed against every transformation and corruption, so that He would not need to return to the work again.

It is impossible that the All-Wise Craftsman should neglect a task required by wisdom. And if this is impossible, then He created them without defect; and what is created without defect is not subject to transformation or corruption.

Moreover, if it were admitted that these instruments undergo transformations and cease thereby to be causes of the existence of natural beings, this would mean that that from which they were produced as such, susceptible to transformation, was defective, because it was incapable of giving them a perfection that would preserve them unchanged without any intermediary between itself and them.

But since these bodies—that is, these instruments—exist from the kingdom of Creation, and there is no intermediary between them and the Created, that is, the First Existent, while the world of Creation is the world of perfection, it is impossible that something which receives being from this world should be overtaken by changes arising from its own essence, because it is perfect.

If, then, no change or transformation is possible in them because they are perfect in their essence, it follows that they remain in that state of their essence in which they were created, namely as causes of the existence of things.

Moreover, if they belonged to the class of things subject to transformation, transformation would not occur in all of them at once but in time, first in one and then in another.

If transformation occurred first in one and then in another, their effects upon generated things would accordingly lose their power, and they would cease to bring existents into being to the degree that they had undergone transformation and lost their power.

And if any one of their effects ceased, something among existents would pass into non-being, namely that whose sustaining cause, making its existence necessary, had disappeared.

But since existents remain as they are, neither increasing nor diminishing, their causes, through which they exist, likewise cannot undergo transformation.

{203}

Moreover, if they were subject to transformation and corruption, then such transformations—that is, corruption—would overtake them either from within, from the side of their matter, or from without, through proximity to an opposite.

But transformation cannot accrue to them from the side of their matter, because their matter does not belong to things compounded of opposites, as do the matters of existents in the sublunary world; and also because it is something pure and one, resembling its form.

Nor can corruption overtake it through motion, because its motion is circular and homogeneous, containing neither differences nor oppositions.

Transformation likewise cannot accrue to them from without through proximity to an opposite, because their horizon is homogeneous and compatible with them, and the bodies adjoining them do not act upon them but are acted upon by them.

If neither of these is possible, while transformation can enter only by these two ways, it follows that they undergo no transformation.

Moreover, transformations overtake potentially existent things when they move toward the perfection they seek because they lack it, striving toward their final end, namely actuality, toward reaching such a limit in receiving forms and passing from state to state that they come to rest and undergo transformation no further.

But the motion of these bodies is not a motion toward a perfection absent from them and sought by them. Rather, it is precisely a motion of perfection, connected with acting upon

another and communicating to it that which they have to communicate and transmit through themselves.

If, then, the motion of these bodies is the motion of perfected things and not a motion toward perfection, their essences undergo no transformation.

Thus the celestial bodies are the highest and simplest, incapable of undergoing either corruption or transformation.

Furthermore, they cannot receive any form other than the one they already possess, because they are so perfect that they have no need of any increase in perfection.

For only matter receives form, and that which in these existents serves as matter is already occupied by a form that has spread through it and brought it to the limit beyond which it receives nothing except that form—for such is the property of bodies: they reach in their reception [of forms] a limit beyond which they receive nothing else.

If, then, these bodies are encompassed by form to the fullest extent to which form can encompass them, they receive no other form after it.

{205}

Moreover, forms enter into matter only from an active principle, when it acts upon such matter and gives it form.

But these bodies are above being matter for an active principle, because from the beginning they received perfection in creation and emanation, and they themselves are active principles.

If they themselves are active principles, they cannot later become objects of action; and since they cannot be acted upon by receiving another form, it follows that they do not receive forms at all.

All this is confirmed by the states of existents weighed upon the scales of religion.

Since Scripture is the highest among the existents that serve activity in the world of religion, it follows that the celestial spheres, and above all the highest sphere insofar as it is corporeal, are the highest and simplest among moving bodies.

Since Scripture presents a model of perfection free from every defect, it follows that the celestial spheres, and especially the highest sphere insofar as it is corporeal, are flawless and exclude every corruption and transformation.

Since the Speaker and his successors are above the terrestrial ranks situated below them, it follows that the celestial spheres as forms and bodies are above the bodies situated below them.

Since the Speaker and his successors perform glorification and their activity is the activity of perfected beings, neither weakening nor ceasing, it follows that the motion of the celestial spheres is uninterrupted, and their activity in bringing forth natural generated beings is the activity of perfected beings.

Since the Speaker and his successors in their perfection receive no form other than the one they possess and do not depart from the religion and worship formed by them, it follows that the celestial bodies receive no form other than the one they possess.

Since Scripture and the Law are composed in perfect form, requiring neither increase nor decrease, it follows that the celestial bodies in their perfection need neither a form that would add something to them nor a form that would diminish them.

Such are these highest celestial bodies:

“The creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most people do not know.”

Glory be to their Creator. There is no god but He. To Him I call and in Him I trust. He watches over His servants with discerning care. He alone, the All-Wise, the All-Powerful, the Greatest, the Most High, grants strength and power.

Qurʾān 40:57. The Russian note gives 40:58, but the quoted verse is 40:57.

STREET SEVEN

On the celestial bodies, what they are composed of, what their motions are, and what effects they exercise, which are the causes of the existence of natural beings

Since the celestial bodies possess states and exercise effects with which the existence of natural beings is connected, and since through knowledge of those states and effects the soul rises to the imprinting of the forms of created essences, while this cannot be grasped by the senses because they are too remote from it, nor can it be comprehended by the essences of natural intellects because these are deficient, and since God in His great mercy has indicated from whom we should obtain knowledge of what is unknown, saying:

"Ask the people of remembrance (*ahl al-dhikr*) if you do not know,"

we therefore turned, in the matter of learning the science of the celestial spheres—their motions, their number, classes, degrees, and positions—to the holy friends of God, namely the family of Muḥammad—may God bless and greet him—who are themselves the Remembrance (*dhikr*), and also to the prophetic laws and religious ordinances, which serve the people of religion as scales for knowing what is sought, so that by following the indications of these laws we might obtain certainty unmixed with even the shadow of doubt.

We therefore say: since among all summonses the Speaker is endowed with the outward summons, it follows that the highest celestial sphere possesses one motion that encompasses and dominates (*mustawliya*) all the motions below it.

Since the Speaker is moved by an internal mover, it follows that the highest celestial sphere likewise has a mover, and that this mover is contained within it.

Since the abiding of the Speaker's internal mover is maintained through its conjunction with what lies outside him, namely the air he receives through breathing, it follows that the abiding of the internal mover of the [highest] sphere is maintained through its conjunction with what lies outside it, namely the kingdom of Creation, from which it receives effusion.

Since, when teaching, the Speaker turns his face toward his Legatee, that is, toward the West (*maghrib*) of his knowledge, it follows that the highest sphere has a motion toward the West.

Since the outward summons does not specify the ranks of the celestial and terrestrial *ḥudūd*, it follows that the highest sphere {207} has no luminaries.

Since the Foundation, standing below the Speaker, in receiving instruction turns toward that Speaker, the East (*mashriq*) of his knowledge, and since the summons of the Foundation includes the explanation of the established (*thābita*) ranks of all the *ḥudūd*, it follows that the second sphere contains all the fixed (*thābita*) stars.

Since the Speaker gathers together all the forms of the intelligible existents that precede him in being, it follows that the [highest] sphere gathers together all the natural forms whose existence is connected with it.

Since what the Speaker contains in himself as a totality is divided among twelve, namely his Companions, it follows that the [highest] sphere, together with the forms gathered within it, is divided into twelve parts.

Since each Companion gathers together something of the religious sciences and forms possessed by the Speaker, some gathering more and others less, it follows that each of the twelve parts gathers together certain forms, some more and some fewer.

Since some of the Companions were barren in religion and left nothing after themselves, while others were fruitful, it follows that some of the divisions of the celestial sphere—that is, the zodiacal constellations—are barren, and those born beneath them leave no offspring, while others confer fertility upon those born beneath them.

Since some of those *ḥudūd* who are the Companions are truthful and others false, it follows that some of the zodiacal constellations into which the celestial sphere is divided are truthful and others false.

Since some of the *ḥudūd*—the Companions, I mean—follow a straight path in the worship of God and others a crooked one, it follows that some signs of the Zodiac are oblique and others upright.

Since some of the *ḥudūd*—again, I mean the Companions—are firm in covenants and ordinances, while others do not possess such firmness, it follows that some signs of the Zodiac, that is, divisions of the celestial sphere, are fixed and others mutable.

Since some of the *ḥudūd* are jackals of the devil, casting into error and destruction those who receive religious knowledge from them, while others are angels who guide their pupils upon the true path and save them from error through instruction, it follows that some degrees of the celestial sphere bear disastrous darkness and those born under them are unfortunate, while others are fortunate degrees, radiant and luminous, and those born beneath them are fortunate.

{208}

Since the terrestrial *ḥudūd* in every major cycle are seven, it follows that beneath the first and second spheres there are seven spheres.

Since in every minor cycle there are six Imams, it follows that in each of those seven spheres there are six other, smaller spheres by means of which the larger [spheres] revolve.

Since the summons rests eternally upon the Speaker, the Foundation, the Imam, and the *ḥujja*, and religious progeny come into existence through nearness to them and by following them in the religion of God, it follows that on the celestial sphere there are four indispensable positions through which progeny come into being in the kingdom of Nature.

Since the Speaker and the Foundation are higher than the Imam and the *ḥujja*, it follows that two of these four positions are higher.

Since the all-encompassing Speaker, and likewise the Foundation with whom the life of the people of the summons is connected, are higher than the Imam and the *ḥujja*, it follows that

the Midheaven is higher than all that lies below it, and the Ascendant higher than the Descendant and the Nadir.

Since all the terrestrial *ḥudūd*, the Speaker and the others alike, guide and teach on the basis of the two forms of worship—worship through knowledge and worship through action—it follows that the revolution of all the spheres as a whole rests upon two poles, northern and southern.

Since the number of those who preserve the rites of instruction throughout a cycle is seven, it follows that there are seven planets exercising influence upon the world of Nature.

Since the Speaker is radiant (*mushriq*) and illuminates the world of religion through his knowledge and guidance, and through him and his summons souls move toward attainment of their first and second perfection, it follows that through the Sun, which illuminates the world of Nature, and through its influence, natural progeny move toward being, that is, toward first perfection.

Since the lights and knowledge of the Speaker do not come from any corporeal likeness of his, but from the fact that divine providence endowed him with them by means of emanation, and since among all the ranks of religion the Speaker is concerned only with establishing the rites of outward worship, it follows that the Sun has only one domicile.

Since among all the ranks of religion the Foundation is concerned only with establishing the rites of inward worship, it follows that the Moon has only one domicile.

Since outward and inward worship are connected with one another, it follows that the domiciles of the Sun and Moon in the celestial sphere are adjacent.

Since the Speaker always and in every respect adheres firmly only to the outward aspect of affairs, as {209} his *maqām* requires, it follows that the domicile of the Sun is fixed.

Since the Foundation, in teaching and interpreting, passes from one interpretation to another, from one proof to another, it follows that the domicile of the Moon is mutable.

Since the Foundation is occupied with the affairs of the world of religion and with bringing spiritual progeny into being, it follows that the Moon in particular is occupied with the affairs of the world of generation and corruption, and that the existence of natural progeny is connected with it.

Since the Foundation receives instruction from the Speaker and draws from his source, and everything it knows it received through his teaching, it follows that the Moon draws from the source of the Sun and that its light comes from the Sun, not from its own essence.

Since each of the *ḥudūd* below the Speaker and Foundation teaches the two forms of worship, calls to them, and carries them out—the outward in one way and the inward in another—it follows that each of the planets has two domiciles, one fixed and unchanging, the other manifold and mutable.

Since in the world of religion the *maqām* of the Speaker is preserved by the Imam, so that his summons does not cease to act and does not turn backward, it follows that the course of the Sun is irreversible and does not turn back.

Since in the world of religion the *maqām* of the Foundation is preserved by the *ḥujja*, so that its summons does not cease to act and does not turn backward, it follows that the course of the Moon is irreversible and does not cease by turning backward.

Since in the world of religion the *ḥudūd* who possess the fullness of authority ceaselessly carry out what was ordained by the Speaker and always turn toward the same direction toward which he turns, it follows that the planets influencing the world of Nature revolve around the Sun and are connected with it.

Since the *ḥudūd* who teach those who have responded and explain to them the matter of religion, when they reach with them the rank of the Created and Emanational Intellects—which are the ultimate goal of existents and are encompassed by the ranks of the twelve numbers, from one to twelve—and find themselves incapable of imprinting the forms of these things in the souls of the learners, turn, in order to make these things understood and present a likeness of them, to the rank of the Speaker and to his firmly established *maqām* in the world of religion and in souls, and explain to them the ranks of those causal and sustaining things on the basis of these known and sensible things, so that it may be easier for them to understand and their instruction may be correct, it follows that the planets have aspects {210} relative to the Sun, the greatest of which is one hundred and twenty degrees, that is, twelve tens, and the smallest twenty degrees, or two tens, such that when they reach them and through their distance become unable to carry out their effects, they turn toward the Sun in order to draw [strength] from it and exercise their influence.

Since the Speaker, the Foundation, the Imam, and the lower *ḥudūd* are psychic spheres and stars through which spiritual progeny come into existence in the world of religion, it follows that the celestial bodies are corporeal spheres and stars through which natural progeny come into existence in the corporeal world.

Since the administration of religious affairs (*wilāya*) in the world of religion is such that it brings happiness to virtuous missionaries who perform both forms of worship and gives them a higher rank in the hereafter, because they attain happiness by teaching souls and guiding them along the path of truth, while it brings great suffering in the next world to ignorant missionaries of evil who violate either both forms of worship or one of them and lowers their rank there, because they incur punishment by teaching souls what is not religion and leading them away from the path of truth, it follows that in the celestial sphere there is a position that makes benefic planets still more benefic and malefic planets still more malefic; astronomers call it the **Head**.

Since the Intellects in the world of religion are such that they lower the standing of knowledgeable and virtuous missionaries and *ḥudūd* who perform both forms of worship and administer the affairs of the world of religion, and diminish their eternal happiness when they cease to teach and stop guiding and explaining, because in these activities lies the path of acquisition; while at the same time they diminish the suffering of hypocritical and ignorant missionaries who undertake guidance and teaching without authorization, because by ceasing to teach what they were not commanded to teach and laying down authority in religious affairs with which they were not invested, those persons cease to acquire additional

suffering—it follows that opposite the position which increases happiness and intensifies misfortune there is in the celestial sphere a position that diminishes the happiness of benefic planets and lessens the maleficence of malefic planets, namely the **Tail**.

Since the Scripture, Law, and rites of worship through action brought by the Prophet—may God bless and greet him and his family—are like the body of the world of religion, while the *ḥudūd* existing {211} within it are like its soul, and since the action upon learning souls both of the Law and of the *ḥudūd* who implement it gives them perfection—the religious laws and rites bringing moral virtues with which the rectification of souls is connected, while the *ḥudūd* implementing them bring to souls the forms of knowledge, with which the formation of souls is connected and through which the work of the world of religion is completed—it follows that the celestial bodies, through their active forms, bestow upon each generated thing that through which its corporeal existence is completed, namely an essence with which its first perfection is connected, and also forms acting upon those bodies, namely soul, with which their second perfection in first being is connected. Through the totality of this the world of Nature is completed.

Since in the psychic world souls receive and learn everything that is implanted in them, it follows that terrestrial bodies beneath the celestial spheres, in receiving forms, undergo transformations.

Since for the teaching *ḥudūd* of the world of religion the souls of [their pupils] are like prime matter in which they act, implanting in that prime matter the forms of knowledge from which, according to the way those souls receive them, there arise both angels of faith and hideous devils, it follows that subcelestial bodies are for the celestial spheres and planets like matter and prime matter upon which they act, implanting in it the forms suited to it, from which arise generated beings both praiseworthy and blameworthy according to the manner in which that matter receives them.

Since in the world of religion, among the Speakers, three are primordial beginnings (*awāʾil*): Adam, the first institutor of the Law; Noah, the first of the possessors of resolve (*ʿazm*); and Abraham, the first to bring religion to completion; while three are helpers and supporters, each placed opposite one of those three in order to renew his Law, manifest the power of that corresponding Speaker, and spread his authority over souls, it follows that three of the planets are superior and three inferior, each of the inferior ones being placed opposite one of the superior in order to receive its power and effect and spread it through the world of Nature.

Since those three [Speakers] who are helpers bring to completion the work of the three who are primordial, and if they did not exist then the activity of those primordial ones would not have been completed and would not have produced spiritual progeny in the world of religion, it follows that if those three [inferior] planets placed opposite the three superior ones did not exist, the latter would not produce progeny in the world of Nature.

Since the *maqāms* of the *ḥudūd* of the world of religion are preserved and do not disappear, it follows that all the celestial spheres and planets are preserved from change.

Such, in brief, are the states of the corporeal spheres, concerning which the states of the psychic spheres have informed us on the basis of the scales of religion.

Were there no danger that this book might fall into the hands of one unworthy of having its contents disclosed to him, we would have shown in the same manner the courses of the religious planets, the risings of the spheres of knowledge, and the determination of the *hylegs* and lords of the houses—matters belonging to the most astonishing mysteries and sciences, through which imperishable things are known concerning the world of Holiness, the afterlife of the soul, its degrees and ranks, and what it experiences there—just as astronomers act when they investigate natural things. Then the immeasurable extent of the seas of knowledge of the holy friends of God—peace be upon them—would become clear.

But since it belongs to prophets and messengers to proceed along this path and teach these sciences, while people such as ourselves have no claim to them, we have not carried the discussion to its conclusion and have confined ourselves to an allusion.

This book of mine is related to the rising of the morning star, which disperses darkness and illuminates the station of the Imam.

To my reader, when he reaches this point and wishes to acquire this exalted knowledge prepared for pure souls—peace and grace be upon them—I say: if he is truly our brother, or a pure elect (*ṣafī*) among our brethren, he will be able to acquaint himself with this knowledge by reading the books of religion and studying our epistles, as indicated in the **Catalogue**.

To those writings we refer him, our true brother firmly resolved to attain happiness through the two forms of worship, outward and inward, so that through them he may obtain understanding and religion, and also so that this knowledge may not fall into the hands of a hypocrite who does not worship God Most High and who turns away from the worship through knowledge and action that is his due.

May God gather us and all our devoted brethren in the kingdom of Holiness; may He graciously grant us there the favor of His vicegerent upon the earth.

Glory be to God. There is no god but God. He alone, the Great, grants strength and power. To God I call and in Him I trust. What He wills cannot fail to be.

God is sufficient for me; He is an excellent Guardian. Excellent is this Protector, and excellent this Helper.

Notes

The Qurʾānic citation is Qurʾān 16:43 and 21:7.

The "truthful" and "false" zodiacal signs are a medieval astrological classification. Taurus, Capricorn, and Aquarius were regarded as "false"; apparently the remaining signs were "truthful."

The "upright" and "oblique" signs are classified by their apparent disposition in the sky. According to al-Bīrūnī, Aries, Libra, and Sagittarius were said to "stand upright."

The "fixed" and "mutable" signs correspond to the familiar astrological qualities: Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius are fixed; Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces mutable; Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn were called movable.

The four indispensable positions are the four principal angles of the horoscope: the **Ascendant**, **Descendant**, **Midheaven**, and **Nadir**. The Arabic technical term for these angles is *awtād*, literally "stakes" or "pegs."

A planet's **domicile** or "house" is a zodiacal sign in which it is considered especially strong. The Sun and Moon each have one domicile, whereas the other planets have two.

The text's statement that the Sun and Moon do not turn backward means that, unlike the other planets, they do not undergo apparent retrograde motion.

The planetary **aspects** here are angular relations of planets to the Sun.

The **Head** and **Tail** are the ascending and descending nodes of a planetary orbit, especially familiar in the expression "Head and Tail of the Dragon" for the lunar nodes.

The three **superior planets** are Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; the three **inferior planets** are the Moon, Mercury, and Venus.

The **hyleg** is an astrologically selected point of the ecliptic used in prognostication. The **lord of the house** is the strongest planet, according to astrological criteria, standing in aspect to the hyleg.

WALL SIX

On terrestrial bodies that received being from the celestial bodies, and what they are

With seven streets

STREET ONE

On prime matter (*mādda ūlā*), from which bodies are

We say: since, as has already been explained, the incorporeal essences, turning toward prime matter, sought to make from it that which would most fully accord with the wisdom of the cosmic ordering; and since from it there could not initially be formed something resembling the Principle in its state and perfection, something equally independent of matters for its being, although such a thing could arise as the final term, divine providence therefore made from prime matter, as a second object sought, that whose being would lead to the being of that which wisdom had ordained as the final term.

Thus it raised from it the celestial bodies—the spheres and luminaries—bestowed upon them fitting perfections, and ordered them with consummate wisdom and without the slightest defect. For when a craftsman begins a work, he attends first to the quality of his instruments before the quality of the work to be performed, so that the excellence of those instruments may secure the most exact and regular transmission of his action to the receptive matter.

If the tools and instruments of a craftsman are not excellent and do not allow the material to receive the action fully, the perfection of his work is greatly diminished. If, for example, the pen of a scribe skilled in writing and possessing excellent handwriting, or his paper, or anything else necessary for writing, is defective through some flaw, then his writing and handwriting will likewise be defective because of it—something that would not occur if those instruments met the requirements of excellence.

Wisdom therefore requires that the instruments be excellent and flawless, so that through their perfection the action accomplished by means of them may likewise be complete.

Since, when divine providence raised the celestial bodies from prime matter and bestowed perfection upon them, it was not intended that all of prime matter should be made into celestial spheres and luminaries, but rather that there should also be formed the final existent whose possibility of being was present—an existent that would be self-subsistent and would not require matter for its continued existence—it was necessary, once that which had been formed from prime matter had come to be, and since the actions issuing from every actually existent emanational being could exist only in a matter capable of receiving them, that something of prime matter should remain as receptive matter.

In this matter the effects and influences of the moving [celestial] bodies, themselves raised from something homogeneous with it, would alternate, so that by receiving their effects it might allow the being of everything ordained by wisdom to be realized.

Thus, in the craft of the blacksmith, iron is the object that undergoes the blacksmith's action, while at the same time it is homogeneous with the tools and instruments—hammer, anvil, tongs, and the rest—which are likewise made from iron and by which the blacksmith acts upon iron, so that through the iron's reception of their action everything destined to be made from iron may come into being.

Since something of prime matter and form necessarily had to remain as matter and object for the activity of active agents, and had to stand to them as woman stands to man with respect to the being of his offspring, we say that this remainder is prime matter, existent and emanated from the First Existent, possessing form, which form bestows being upon it just as form itself possesses being through it.

Neither can exist if the other does not exist, and their being is only conjoint, for they proceed from that relation which is in itself a pair and which is designated as the created, requiring creation—for that which exists through creation is the created.

Thus there is no prime matter prior to form and no form prior to prime matter. Rather, they are one essence, twofold within itself; and through these two parts the essence of body is body.

Form is higher than matter because activity is connected with it; yet neither prime matter nor form is in itself a body. Prime matter as such is not body, nor is form as such body. But through their mutual support and dependence they come to exist in a condition contrary to their individual essences.

For, strictly speaking, in their first state they are not what they are in their second: initially they are free from the length, breadth, and depth that later arise in them, just as the quality of ink arises from the conjunction of gallnut and vitriol, neither of which is itself ink by essence.

Together they constitute an essence receptive of opposite forms, potential with respect to that which it becomes actually when it receives its form, as wood is potential with respect to a bed.

Since this is so, that which must remain of the totality of prime matter and form after the celestial bodies have been raised as instruments in their centers—although there is here neither "before" nor "after," nor any precedence except in the order of discourse when we say "prime matter and form"—is of the same nature as the celestial bodies in being composed of prime matter and form.

But since it is lower than those bodies, it has been raised so as to receive their action, like matter undergoing the action of craftsmen, or rather like a woman raised to receive the power of a man.

Toward these terrestrial bodies are directed the rays of the celestial bodies, and it is those rays that give them the qualities by which they differ from the celestial bodies, although all are of one nature and possess dimensions.

The former are celestial bodies, exerting influence through their motions, established in their individual embodiments, not subject to change in their essences, preserving their forms and matters—their matters being, through their perfection, as though identical with their forms.

The latter are terrestrial bodies, which in their very essence undergo the influences of the moving [celestial] bodies, possess a perishable nature (*ṭabīʿa*), vary in qualities, are prepared to undergo action, act upon one another and upon the existents generated from them, and are directed toward receiving those accidents they must receive in which lies the perfection ordained for them by this perfect and beautiful ordering.

In the same way, iron that stands below the instruments of action receives forms in addition to that form through which it exists essentially and by virtue of which it is body—although both kinds of iron, insofar as they are iron, are one thing and neither precedes the other. Under the action of the tools, exercised by the craftsman, who himself is also one of the instruments, it acquires many forms through which it attains what it has been given to attain.

The anvil, hammer, and other tools, like the celestial bodies, act upon that which undergoes action without themselves undergoing action—for when they were made, the purpose was to make them active and not subject to alien action. The iron being worked, by contrast, like the matter of which we are speaking, undergoes the action of the active agent—just as a whetstone, while sharpening a knife, is itself acted upon by the knife.

The correctness of what has been said concerning these bodies, how they are constituted, and how some are active while others undergo action, is demonstrated by the criterion of created nature (*khilqa*) and by the scales of religion, for in establishing the foundations of religion the prophetic work proceeded along the same paths as the divine work.

The souls that received being in the world of Nature from causes preceding them in existence were more prepared than any other existent preceding them in being from prime matter and form to receive [action], ascend to the level of the Principle, and attain the rank of Intellects existing in actuality and requiring no matter for their being.

Therefore, wishing to bring them to this rank—which, as we have said in the chapter on prime matter and form, is the ultimate object sought for everything that wisdom has ordained to exist—divine providence determined to raise causes through which these souls might attain that rank, become actual existents, and become free from matter, just as it had previously raised causes that brought the souls into being.

Thus it made from among them the Speakers, Legatees, and Imams—peace be upon them—and bestowed upon them primordial perfection, just as it had initially bestowed their perfections upon the celestial bodies, as was explained in the chapter on the celestial letters, so that there might emanate from them those like themselves.

It supported them with effusion and grace so that these souls might become causes for the ascent of others to the rank of the Intellects and for their preservation from corruption, teaching them that which would grant them this exalted station and explaining how to order themselves in accordance with the rites of the two forms of worship, through which they would become capable of acquiring virtue and perfection.

Since all souls in the world of Nature, existing through those causes that were raised in order to bring them to their first being, are divided in the world of religion into the sent Speakers, the guiding Legatees and Foundations, the teaching *ḥujjas* and missionaries, on the one hand, and those who receive from them and are taught by them, on the other, it follows that of all prime matter and form that received primordial being in the world of Nature by emanating

from the world of Creation, one part consists of the perfected, active celestial bodies and planets, while another consists of terrestrial bodies that both act and undergo action; and together these give rise to receptive generated beings.

Since it is known that some souls were chosen and endowed with perfection so that they might become the cause of the perfection of others, while other souls remained without perfection and in need of instruction, it must likewise be known that only a certain part (*baʿḍ*) of prime matter and form was chosen, endowed with perfection, and made the cause of the being of existents, while the remainder was left without that form which gives perfection—and this is what is called **matter**.

Since the soul produced from the motion of the celestial bodies and the transformations of terrestrial bodies, so long as it is not ordered within the religious community, does not profess anything of the Law, and has acquired no rank in the world of religion, remains without religious characteristics and devoid (*ʿāṭila*) of them, it follows that matter existing beneath the celestial bodies likewise remains without rectifying forms and deprived of them until it acquires the forms of the elements and a rank in sensible being in the world of Nature.

Since souls below the Speaker and his successors, remaining without rank in the East unlike the former, possess two sustaining causes—a proximate one, namely the exclusive endowment of the Speakers and their successors with high ranks, perfection, and completeness, by which they differ from those souls; and a remote one, namely the relation of being-created present in Creation, which stands below the relation of creating—it follows that matter devoid of forms, to which terrestrial bodies below the celestial spheres belong, likewise possesses two sustaining causes: a proximate one, namely the exclusive endowment of the celestial bodies with perfection by which they differ from that matter, and a remote one, namely the relation of createdness.

Since among all souls the Speaker and the ranks who succeed him in instruction are endowed with perfection and completeness so that they may effectively guide and teach the other souls and thereby multiply spiritual progeny, it follows that among all bodies it is specifically the celestial bodies that are endowed with perfection so that through it they may influence terrestrial bodies and thereby multiply natural progeny.

Since it cannot be the case that all souls are as perfect and self-sufficient as the Speaker and equally supported—for then they would have no need of anything ordained by wisdom for bringing them to perfection—it likewise cannot be the case that all bodies should be luminaries and celestial spheres, for then wisdom in its ordination would be confined to these alone.

And since, if all souls were of one rank, namely that of the Speaker, there would be more ranks absent from being than present in it, because all souls would occupy one rank while the other ranks of the world of religion through which wisdom is fulfilled would have no being—which would mean that the wisdom of the All-Wise was defective—so too, if all prime matter were celestial bodies, namely luminaries and spheres, there would be more existents absent from being than present.

For then there would exist only one or two classes of beings, while the elements and their generated beings in all their manifold diversity, ordered with consummate wisdom and

through which wisdom is fulfilled in the being of souls, would be absent. And were this so, it would imply a defect in the wisdom of the All-Wise.

Since the essence of the existent soul is life and power—two parts through which the essence of the soul exists, neither being present without the other, while neither in itself is the soul—it follows that body in its essence consists of prime matter and form, two parts through which its essence exists and which exist conjointly, while neither of these two parts, which together constitute body, is itself body.

Since souls standing below the Speakers and the Imams who succeed them leave their rank and, under the action of knowledge and instruction, rise to a higher one, it follows that matter existing below the celestial bodies and possessing form receives their action and leaves its own nature so that, receiving form, it may rise to something higher.

Since souls standing below the *ḥudūd* in the world of religion are endowed with primordial knowledge, it follows that matter possessing form—that is, absolute body—possesses primordial knowledge in the manner we have explained previously.

Such, briefly and concisely stated, are some of the questions concerning the equilibrium of the world of religion with the other worlds, as this is expressed and shown in revealed Scripture and the Law.

If anyone's substance is in harmony with ours, he may, with his sharp intellect, continue our deduction, fixing upon this subject his discerning gaze. He will see what we have left untouched so that he too may touch it with his thought and thereby strengthen his soul.

Let him bless us and remember us in his prayer in the hour of solitary secret converse with himself, and let him glorify the Most High, who graciously sent us His holy friends, lamps dispersing the darkness and illuminating for us the path of guidance.

Thereupon we say: there is no god but God; God the Great alone grants strength and power. Glorious and praised is He.

To God I call and in Him I trust. May the greeting [of God] be upon Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and upon his pure family, the Commander of the Faithful, and his forefathers, the guiding Imams.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

[1] Al-Kirmānī means the **"true man," one who has become assimilated to the Intellects**.

STREET TWO

On the four elements; what they are; on their active natural forms; on how they are connected with one another; and on the difference between them and the celestial bodies

We have already spoken about prime matter and form, and about how wisdom was intended to be manifested by fashioning from them the celestial bodies and raising from the same source a counterpart for those bodies, receptive of their action, so that corporeal progeny might arise from them.

A proof already stated of the correctness of this, and a truthful testimony that the matter is indeed so, is the report of the Speaker concerning the Most High, who created for Adam a mate, Eve, from his rib, together with the sayings of the Most High:

“O mankind! We created you from a male and a female,”

and:

“O mankind! Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the two of them spread abroad many men and women.”

We now say: since body is finite and possesses parts whose limit is that which separates that body from another; and since the celestial body possesses a form through which it is one and which is the perfection distinguishing it from other bodies, and since it receives no forms beyond this form, which is the limit of its receptivity, while circular motion belongs to its nature, as was explained earlier; and since the other bodies do not possess this motion, it follows that because the celestial body adjoins the other, lower bodies, the power of its motion acts upon them and produces in them motion and heat.

It is by the degree of this heat that the **four elements of the world** are distinguished.

The first, if we compare them to a bathhouse, resembles in the motion and heat present within it the first chamber, in which the furnace burns.

In the second there is less motion and heat, as in the second chamber of the bathhouse.

In the third, comparable to its third chamber, motion and heat are still less, so that cold becomes more manifest.

In the fourth, motion and heat are weak and hidden, not apparent to sense, like the first chamber one enters in a bathhouse, which scarcely differs from what lies outside.

The First Element: Fire

Concerning the first element we say the following.

There is no need to prove separately that which the first principles of reason already establish as necessary. The motion of the celestial body is evident to the intellect; it is also known that

a moving body sets in motion the parts of an unmoving body that are in contact with it, while the nonexistence (*laysiyya*) of a void in the world of Nature, as is known, requires no demonstration.

If, then, the celestial body moves and the body situated below it is in contact with it, the celestial body by the power of its motion acts upon that body and produces motion within it.

If the force of its motion arouses motion in that body, all the parts of that body in contact with the celestial body move because of the constancy of the celestial motion.

And if all the contacting parts move, while motion is the sustaining cause of heat, it follows that the heat produced spreads through those parts subjected to continual motion until it overwhelms them; and, through their conjunction with continual motion and the extreme increase of heat, it transforms them into **fire**.

The same can be seen in the example of iron: when a hammer continually strikes it—and the hammer belongs to the same genus as the iron being worked—the iron, becoming joined with the heat generated in it by the force of the blows, begins to glow with manifest fire.

Since this is so, the first body adjacent to the moving celestial body is, through the extreme motion and heat produced in it, **fire**.

That it is of this nature is explained by two causes, one preceding it and distinct from it, the other inherent in it and corresponding to it.

The first, preceding fire in rank, consists in the sustaining cause through which fire became what it is, namely the unceasing motion of the moving celestial body.

The second, inherent in fire, is represented by several conditions, including the wave-like or turbulent motion (*ḥarakat tamawwuj*) of all the particles of fire, produced by the ceaseless motion of the celestial body in contact with it; the fullness of the heat arising in it from that continuous motion; and the dryness and radiance inseparable from that complete heat.

All these are qualities that have become natural to the particles in which they are present.

If this is so, motion and heat, together with everything following from them, are natural properties of fire. Through its essential motion fire sets in motion the bodies below it, and through its heat it communicates to them a heat corresponding to its own state, insofar as the above-described qualities of fire extend into them.

For ceaseless motion produces complete heat, and completeness of heat entails expansion (*inbisāṭ*) of the particles; and that which is of this kind belongs to the natural.

Thus fire, by the motion of its particles, moves bodies; and by its heat it expands their particles and prevents their contraction (*taqabbud*).

The active form within fire is **heat**, which it acquired from the motion of the celestial body adjoining it.

Through its dryness, fire has the property of drawing toward its own nature that which lies below it. For this reason fire is employed when one wishes to raise water from the bottom of a well to ground level, and in other cases.

Fire also draws outward from the depths the moisture concealed within mineral bodies, making them damp and fluid, and extracts from tree trunks overcome by dryness the moisture contained within them, making them flexible and tender.

When fire is outside its proper place (*ḥayyiz*), it moves in a straight line toward its center (*markaz*).

The Second Element: Air

Concerning the second element we say this.

Since in receiving forms a body reaches a limit beyond which it can receive nothing further, and since the body situated beneath the revolving celestial body has already received, on its upper side, from that moving body touching it, the motion which through its ceaselessness communicated to it a complete heat diffused throughout it, it follows that this heat penetrates the rest of the body as well.

For heat naturally penetrates the body acted upon by it until, through distance from the particles that have received the heat to its fullest degree—that is, from the side of the body touching the moving celestial body—this complete heat changes and weakens, until the form of motion and heat is lost from those particles and, with the loss of the form of heat, the particles cease to burn.

We observe something similar in iron struck uniformly by a hammer. The place struck gradually, through the heat arising from the force of the blows, becomes like glowing charcoal—which is the limit of fiery bodies—while heat gradually penetrates from these fiery particles throughout the rest of the iron, and its form gradually diminishes until it reaches moderation and ceases to burn.

Thus the body in which heat is present to such a degree that it does not burn and contact with it causes no pain is such that the greater part of its particles undergo turbulent motion within its essence, while the smaller part rests motionless.

When outside its proper place, it moves rectilinearly: downward toward its center if it is above it, as with the fire of lightning and meteors; or upward toward its center if it is below it, as occurs in earthquakes.

This body is called **air**.

Its upper side is isomorphic with fire through complete heat, and its lower side is isomorphic with that which lies below it.

It is of this nature because, through the power of complete heat existing within it—the feature through which it is isomorphic with fire—it draws into its own place that which lies below it, so that the form of heat penetrating into it from continual motion may be diminished.

That which is drawn upward, which we call **moisture**, being consonant and compatible with air, becomes the cause moderating this all-dominating heat.

The vegetative power in trees acts in the same way: when the heat of the Sun becomes too intense, it draws moisture through the nutritive organs called roots into the crown of the tree and all its branches in order to oppose that heat and thereby preserve the essence of the tree. Thus moisture becomes matter protecting its leaves and fruits from the heat.

The Third Element: Water

Concerning the third element we say the following.

The heat penetrating into a body from the body that is fire reaches a point at which it becomes moderate, and this body is called air.

When, however, as it penetrates still farther into the body, the heat weakens even more because of its distance from its source and falls below moderation, then the greater part of the particles of the moderately warm body which had been in motion because of their proximity to the excessive limit of heat now, in this body in which heat has weakened through distance, become motionless; while the smaller part which had been at rest there because of its distance from the excessive limit of heat now, in this body where heat has weakened through distance, becomes moving.

Such is the order of connection between mutually opposed things.

This body, in whose essence the greater part of the particles is at rest and the smaller part is in motion, is **water**.

Its upper side is isomorphic with air through that which in it is moving and moist, and its lower side is isomorphic with that which lies below it through that which in it is resting and cold.

It moves rectilinearly downward to the place where it separates air from earth.

Taken as a whole, water constitutes the goal of the flawless ordering of the heat radiated by the two bodies above it, and because of the heat surrounding it, it continually rises toward the place of air, thereby moderating the heat of the latter.

The Fourth Element: Earth

As for the fourth element, heat in it is hidden and motion is not manifest. In these respects it is remote from the body that is fire.

Everything that in fire is light is in this darkness; what in fire is manifest motion is here manifest rest; what there is transparency is here density—although all of their essences alike are body.

This body is **earth**.

By its upper side it is isomorphic with water through cold, and by its lower side with fire through dryness.

Its particles gather toward its center so as to preserve their essences and forms in being.

The influence of heat and the lights of the stars are directed toward it, while it itself lies in the middle.

Heat acts within it, and from this middle issue the vapors concealed in the depths of the earth, generated there from the moisture surrounding the earth. From these vapors originates that which serves the welfare of the products of the earth.

The motion of the particles of earth is toward that part of it which is its center and also the center of all the bodies revolving around and encompassing it.

All this is confirmed by the scales of religion, the tested criterion for the knowledge of existents.

Since in the world of religion the souls below the Speaker and his deputies fall into four ranks—some occupying the first rank and teaching outward worship through action and the degrees of the terrestrial *ḥudūd*, by which the soul is educated and rises toward the eternal empyrean realms; others occupying the second rank and teaching inward worship through knowledge and the degrees of the celestial *ḥudūd*, by which knowledge eternal happiness is acquired; a third group occupying the third rank and being upon the path of instruction, awakening, and acquisition of virtue, receiving knowledge, performing deeds, and following what is right; while a fourth wanders the paths of hostility, lacking obedience and wavering between doubt and inward unbelief—and since all these souls, namely the *ḥujjas*, missionaries, and those below them, act upon one another and pass from one rank to another, producing spiritual progeny, it follows that the bodies existing beneath the celestial spheres in the world of generation and corruption likewise fall into four ranks.

One is subtle (*laṭīf*), its influence penetrating that which lies below it and its nature being to move upward: **fire**.

Another moves toward the middle: **air**.

A third is dense (*kathīf*) and naturally moves downward: **water**.

The fourth is that around which the moving active bodies revolve and into which their powers penetrate: **earth**.

All four together, through their mutual action and attraction, produce natural progeny.

Since those souls that in the world of religion stand below the Imams—peace be upon them—and receive the lights of knowledge and the Kingdom are of four kinds, three both teaching and being taught, namely the Gate, the *ḥujja*, and the missionary, while the fourth kind, namely the souls of ordinary people, are only taught, it follows that the bodies lying beneath the active bodies, namely the celestial spheres, and undergoing their influence are likewise of four kinds.

Three undergo influence and themselves exert influence, namely fire, air, and water; while the fourth receives the influences of them all, namely earth.

From there the text develops the detailed correspondences:

Gate ↔ Fire
Ḥujja ↔ Air
Missionary ↔ Water
Believing/common souls ↔ Earth

and likewise:

Fire = hot + dry
Air = hot + moist
Water = cold + moist
Earth = cold + dry

The passage then explains how these four elements interconnect, and compares the same structure to political government:

Ruler ↔ Fire
Vizier ↔ Air
Official/administrator ↔ Water
Subject ↔ Earth

(*Thus, the four elemental bodies are linked to one another through the qualities they share. Fire combines heat and dryness; air combines heat and moisture; water combines cold and moisture; and earth combines cold and dryness. Fire is therefore joined to air through heat, air to water through moisture, water to earth through cold, and earth to fire through dryness. In this way the four elements form a continuous ordered chain, each sharing one quality with the element adjacent to it.*

The same structure appears in the hierarchy of religion. The Gate corresponds to fire, the ḥujja to air, the dāʿī to water, and the believing souls to earth. The believing souls are joined to the Gate through the outward summons, the observances of the Law, and walāya; the Gate is joined to the ḥujja through governance; the ḥujja is joined to the dāʿī through teaching and the inward summons; and the dāʿī is joined to the believing souls through teaching and walāya. Thus, just as the four elemental bodies are linked through qualities shared between adjacent members, the ranks of the religious hierarchy are linked through functions in which neighboring ranks participate together.

The same fourfold arrangement is also visible in political government. The ruler corresponds to fire, the vizier to air, the official to water, and the subjects to earth. The subjects are linked to the ruler through obedience to the Imam and acceptance of his commands; the official is linked to the vizier through obedience and the transmission of revenues; the vizier is linked to the ruler through delegated authority and governance; and the ruler is linked to the Imam, God's vicegerent, through receiving the command to guard and protect those beneath him.

Accordingly, the same ordered relation is manifested in three domains: ***fire–air–water–earth****,* ***Gate–ḥujja–dāʿī–believer****, and* ***ruler–vizier–official–subjects****. In each case the members are*

distinct yet interconnected, and the lower receives from the higher while also transmitting what it receives further downward. This correspondence is what the author means by the equilibrium between the world of Nature, the world of religion, and the order of government.)

The fundamental distinction from the celestial bodies is then stated: the celestial bodies do not undergo transformation, whereas these terrestrial bodies do; the celestial bodies act upon them, while they do not act upon the celestial bodies; celestial motion is circular, noble, and endless, while terrestrial motion is rectilinear and finite; the celestial bodies bestow form, whereas terrestrial bodies receive and imprint form.

The section ends by saying that this distinction too is confirmed by the "scales of religion": the souls of the Speakers, Legatees, and Imams are sinless, firm, all-knowing, and influential, whereas lower souls learn, undergo influence, and may become good or bad; yet all souls remain one insofar as they belong to the kingdom of Nature.

[1] Qurʾān 40:13.

[1] Qurʾān 4:1.

[1] Classical schemes of government in the Islamic state, such as that proposed by al-Māwardī, assume that the supreme ruler—the **Imam**—delegates his authority directly to the **vizier**, either in full, in which case the vizier receives almost all the prerogatives of the Imam, or partially, for the performance of particular tasks.

What al-Kirmānī proposes, by introducing the "intermediate" figure of the **ruler (*malik*)**, may be regarded as a distinctive modification of this ideal scheme. That ideal scheme presupposes the absolute unity of the Islamic caliphate, whereas al-Kirmānī's arrangement takes account both of historical reality—the existence of several effectively independent Islamic states—and of the theoretical need to coordinate the structure of political authority with the analogous structures of the world of Nature and of the Ismaili community.

Al-Māwardī himself, however, when describing the actual situation of his own time, writes:

"If the caliph entrusts the government of individual regions to local rulers and charges them with supervising affairs, as happens in our own day, the ruler (*malik*) of each region has the right to appoint viziers…"

(al-Māwardī, Abū al-Ḥasan, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya wa-l-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya*, Beirut, 1990, p. 71).

The word ʿ**āmil**—literally, "worker" or "agent"—which I translate here as **"official,"** referred in the medieval period to those persons subordinate to the vizier whom he recruited at his own discretion in order to carry out the functions entrusted to him.

The lowest level in al-Kirmānī's political hierarchy is occupied by the ordinary **subjects**.

[1] Just as the **ruler** is the successor and deputy of the **Imam**, so too the **vizier** acts as deputy for the **ruler** in one or another matter of state administration.

STREET THREE

On the motion of the four elements; on the fact that in their own centers they possess neither heaviness nor weight; and on the fact that they are intermediaries through which the soul apprehends sensible existents

Since, as we have previously shown, there flows through the corporeal world that which moves it and which is called Nature, and since that which lies beneath the celestial spheres is body, it follows that within that body there is a mover imparting motion to it.

Since there is within it a mover that imparts motion to it, motion therefore belongs to it. And if motion belongs to it, we say that this motion is twofold.

First, there is the turbulent or wave-like motion (*tamawwuj*) of its particles within its own essence. This motion may be greater or lesser, more manifest or more hidden, differing among the several elements according to the sustaining causes that determine it. Through this motion transformations occur.

This motion itself is of two kinds: one by which the elements, changing their states, reach their ultimate end and attain actuality; and another by which they return to potentiality. These two motions bear many different names.

Second, each element possesses a particular rectilinear motion toward its own place. This motion too is twofold: ascending or descending, according to whether the centers of the elements lie above or below.

The turbulent motion of particles within an essence can be observed in air: in a ray of sunlight illuminating a dark room, its particles spread in waves through length, breadth, and depth. Through this motion the particles of neighboring elements penetrate one another, mingle, and produce the three [classes] of generated beings.

Rectilinear motion toward one's own place—whose direction varies according to the location of the centers of the elements—may be seen, for example, in the upward movement of air when it is released under water from a vessel in which it had been confined: the air begins to rise toward its own place above the surface of the water.

Or one may observe the downward motion of a stone that has been raised into the region of water or air and then released: it begins to descend toward the surface of the earth, which is its center.

Likewise there is the upward movement toward its center of fire in burning dung or wood.

This second motion belongs almost always to the elements—especially to fire—when they are outside their proper place, except in rare cases where some restraining force prevents that place from acting upon them, absorbing them, or expelling them.

Each of the elements—that is, the bodies situated beneath the revolving celestial bodies—has its own particular center. It became its center by virtue of the nature inseparable from it,

which determined that this place should be the center of that element. Were there no such center, that element would not differ from the others.

It follows that no element leaves its own center because the natures of the centers differ. And if it does not leave its center because of this difference in nature, it can be outside its proper place only through causes that prevent it from being in its proper place, restrain it, and preserve the sustaining cause of an otherness incompatible with it.

Fire, for example, can exist in the place of air only through some special arrangement binding it to a candle, fuel, oil, or something else with which it is connected. Air can exist in the place of earth or water only when confined in a vessel such as a skin or jar. A stone can remain in the place of air or water only when somehow secured.

If an element can remain outside its proper place only through causes that hold and bind it, then it can remain in the place of another element only so long as that confinement is preserved, because that place does not possess a nature consonant with the element. Otherwise the element would have no need to flee from it toward the place whose nature accords with its own.

Whatever exists in this manner hastens toward its own center as soon as the causes preserving it in the alien place and preventing it from being in its own place disappear; and such movement is always rectilinear.

This occurs provided that the element possesses sufficient power to rejoin its proper place and has not meanwhile been absorbed by the alien place and returned from actuality to potentiality.

Thus fire, which oil, a candle, or fuel holds within the region of air, when released from those bonds, may—if it lacks sufficient power to reunite with its own center—be absorbed by air and returned from the actual state in which it was fire to a potential state, becoming air.

For although every element is potential in relation to the element above it, each is actual in the place where it exists—as may be seen in the action of water upon what is immersed in it, of air upon what it surrounds, or of fire upon what enters it.

Likewise, air accumulating from vapors generated in the womb of the earth through considerable heat and moisture may rise from it toward its own center if it possesses sufficient force. But if it is weak and cannot forcibly pierce the earth and pass through its particles, it remains where it is: the earth absorbs it, and it becomes matter for minerals and living beings.

Air confined within the earth, being absorbed by it and reduced to potentiality, becomes matter for minerals and creatures. By contrast, a fiery body absorbed by air and reduced to potentiality produces nothing, because air is a fluid body incapable, like earth, of receiving a form and preserving it as such.

In this lies a great wisdom: if air were not fluid, enduring sounds would occupy it, making it impossible to acquire knowledge by listening to the words of teachers. The sound of a trumpet, for example, would remain in the air and occupy it, so that no other sound could thereafter be heard.

Generated beings arise only from the interaction of the elements, the mingling of their powers, and their common reception of the influence of the celestial luminaries. What is confined in the womb of the earth is reached by the powers of the elements and by everything that transforms it into a unified thing receptive to the influence of the celestial bodies, so that it becomes a generated being. What is confined in the air, by contrast, cannot be reached by those mingled powers because of the fluidity of the substance of air.

Thus these are the motions possessed by the elements.

Furthermore, in their own centers they possess neither heaviness (*thiql*) nor weight (*wazn*). On closer examination this becomes clear.

Heaviness arises in an element when it is displaced into a place alien to it. The preserving force within it resists this displacement, and the person moving it encounters difficulty if his own force is less than the force contained in that portion of the element which he attempts to move.

This is well known to those experienced in engineering.

If one takes a skin, fills it with water, lowers it into a body of water, and then weighs it with weights and a balance, one finds that water surrounded by water possesses neither weight nor heaviness. Only the skin itself weighs, because it belongs to the genus of earth, which draws it toward its own place.

If the same skin is then moved from the place of water into the place of air, the water is found to possess heaviness, by which it resists the force attempting to separate it from the whole body of water. Hence the person removing it from its place encounters resistance.

Or if one takes a skin, inflates it, ties it at its mouth so as to imprison the air within, and then weighs it, one finds that the enclosed air has no weight because it is in its own proper place—just as water weighed in its own place had no weight.

But if one tries to submerge the inflated skin in water, force must be exerted to overcome the tendency drawing the air back toward its own place.

Accordingly, if air finds itself in the region of fire, it moves downward toward its own place just as a stone situated in the region of air moves downward toward its own place. Likewise, water forcibly raised into the region of air moves downward, returning to its own place.

The heaviness and lightness of natural bodies displaced from their centers are natural powers that prevent a body from leaving its own place. In their own centers, however, the elements possess neither heaviness nor weight.

At the same time, fire, air, and earth are causes and primary intermediaries in the apprehension of knowledge.

For man first apprehends through his senses the existents nearest to him, and his senses can operate only by making use of the elements.

The ear, for example, hears sounds, whether intelligible or indistinct, only through the mediation of air; without air it would hear nothing. It is known that even a healthy ear does not hear if there is no layer of air between it and the sound.

The eye sees colors and figures only through the mediation, first, of air and, second, of the light supplied by fire. Without these the eye cannot apprehend. It is known that the eye becomes blind when daylight or firelight is absent; moreover, even a healthy eye sees nothing if there is no air between it and the visible object.

Likewise smell apprehends pleasant and other odors only through air, without which it is powerless.

And touch distinguishes softness, roughness, heat, cold, and everything else apprehended through touch only with the aid of earth and through its rootedness (*istiqrār*) in earth, without which neither touch nor the other senses could operate.

Thus three of the four elements are the primary intermediaries in the acquisition of knowledge, through whose assistance sensible pleasures become attainable.

Furthermore, among all the elements, air and water are distinguished by possessing no color essentially.

Through this they assist the soul in apprehending that which is apprehended by their mediation; for if they possessed their own color, that color would confuse the soul and prevent it from acquiring knowledge.

The sustaining cause of the apprehension of the true colors of things lies in the fact that air is itself colorless and also odorless. Therefore the colors and odors of everything present within it are impressed upon it, and it then conveys them to the powers of sight and smell.

If air and water themselves possessed color, taste, or smell, they would convey these qualities to the senses rather than the color, taste, and smell of what is present within or adjacent to them—just as a bottle made of red, green, or other colored glass conveys only its own color rather than the true color of what is placed inside it.

Air and water are devoid of these qualities because of the motion of the particles of their substance and the fluidity of their element (*ʿunṣur*).

What we have said is supported and confirmed by the equilibrium established through the scales of the divine laws and the criterion of the prophetic work.

Since the terrestrial *ḥudūd* below the Imams—peace be upon them—turn their thoughts toward the affairs of the Law and the symbols of the religious ordinance, seeking virtue and the acquisition of divine sciences, it follows that the elements of the world situated beneath the celestial bodies possess essential motion.

Since, in acquiring the divine sciences and religious knowledge—that is, inward worship—the *ḥudūd* occupy different ranks, some being stronger and receiving more knowledge and others less, it follows that the motion of the particles in the elements likewise differs in rank: stronger and more perceptible to the senses in some, weaker and more hidden in others.

Since the *ḥudūd* turn toward thought in two ways in acquiring divine knowledge and seeking virtue—first, through their own reflection, extracting the divine sciences from the prophetic ordinances, that is, from within their own knowledge; and second, by ascending from their own rank to the rank they deserve through knowledge and action—it follows that the motion of the elements is twofold: first, the turbulent motion of their particles within their own essences; and second, the motion of particles that have found themselves outside their proper place and seek to reunite with the essence of the element natural to them.

Since a missionary (*dāʿī*) occupying his rank in the guiding summons almost never rises to the rank of *ḥujja*—this occurs only very rarely, when he possesses exceptional strength in acquiring knowledge and performing actions, although potentially he knows as much as the *ḥujja*—it follows that vapors generated in the earth through intense heat and moisture almost never reunite with the center of air; this happens only very rarely, when their force and striving to join their own center are exceptionally great.

Since a missionary occupying his rank in the summons attains the rank of *ḥujja* only if he possesses the power and aspiration to acquire it, but otherwise remains in his own rank and becomes the proximate cause of spiritual progeny, it follows that vapors generated in the earth move and reunite with the center of air only if they possess sufficient force; otherwise they remain where they are and become the proximate matter for the formation of corporeal progeny.

Since a learner who has responded to the summons and rises to a rank he does not deserve will necessarily fall and occupy the place natural to him unless special care preserves him in that higher rank, it follows that any particle of earth raised into the unnatural region of air or water will necessarily fall back to the place corresponding to its nature unless specially supported there.

Since the ranks of the summons are ordered so that only the *ḥudūd* suited to them remain in them, while others invariably fall away, it follows that the centers of the elements have such a nature that only those bodies consonant with that nature remain within them, while all others invariably depart.

Since each terrestrial *ḥadd* below the Imams—peace be upon them—is actual in his own rank but potential in relation to the one standing above him—for example, the *ḥujja* is actually a *ḥujja* insofar as he occupies that rank of the summons, but in relation to the Gate above him he is potentially a Gate; and the missionary is actually a missionary in his own rank but potentially a *ḥujja* in relation to the *ḥujja* above him—it follows that each element situated beneath the celestial spheres is actual in its own center but potential in relation to the element above it that encompasses it.

Air, for example, is actual in its own center but, in relation to the element above it, namely fire, is potential fire; water is actual in its own center but, in relation to the element above it, namely air, is potential air.

Since all the *ḥudūd* occupying their ranks accord with what is expected of them and do not resist it, and none is refused what he seeks provided that it does not exceed the limits of his center and rank and provided that he does not obstruct the path to acquiring virtue or diminish his own share by neglecting the duties of the summons proper to him and shifting them onto others, it follows that the elements, while remaining in their own centers, accord with what is

expected of them and therefore possess no heaviness—unless they are removed from those centers in which they are actual and displaced into alien ones, either upward, as with earth and water, or downward, as with air.

Since the *ḥudūd* do not adhere to the doctrines of their opponents and rivals that they know, nor to what those opponents have said in their error, but convey such teachings to the people of the summons and then dispel them through proofs obtained by lengthy inquiry and study, it follows that an element such as air does not retain the different sounds and diverse odors that pass through it and does not occupy its own essence with them, but conveys them to human senses and then disperses them through the motion of its particles and the fluidity of its element.

Since the rank of the *ḥujja* and missionary in the world of religion is interpretive, free from the use of symbols and allusions—which are a veil concealing and preserving the knowledge hidden beneath them and are characteristic of the rank of the Speakers, Imams—peace be upon them—and Gates—and since this rank is not affected by passions, nor stained by any association with the doctrines of opponents and rivals immersed in error, it follows that the center of air and water is free from all colors, smells, and tastes sought by lovers of worldly pleasures.

Since the missionary has a rank assigned to him within the summons and, through covenant (*muʿāhada*) and training (*tarbiya*), becomes the proximate cause of the being of spiritual progeny, it follows that hot, moist vapor—belonging to the genus of air—generated in the womb of the earth and transforming into itself that which adjoins and mingles with it is the proximate cause of the being of corporeal progeny.

And since, if the *ḥudūd* professed every doctrine of their opponents known to them and adhered to their errors, the people of the summons would be unable to attain true divine knowledge and would possess only those errors, it follows that if the elements possessed color or retained sounds and odors, beings endowed with senses could not truly apprehend sensible things: man would hear nothing because of sounds preserved in the air and would apprehend only the color inherent in the elements themselves and no other.

Since in the world of religion the *ḥudūd* are intermediaries through whom the people of the summons come to know the hidden realities (*ḥaqāʾiq al-umūr*), apprehend intelligibles, and learn the degrees of God's signs and His *ḥudūd*, it follows that in the natural world the elements are intermediaries through whom its inhabitants come to know the outward appearance (*ẓāhir al-umūr*) and apprehend sensible things by means of the five senses.

Such is what the divine laws, through their correspondence with the prophetic ordinances, bear witness concerning the elements.

Glory be to God, who has granted us a portion of His wisdom, shed upon us the light of His Word, and through His generous beneficence brought us to the springs of His mercy.

There is no god but God. God the Most Great alone grants strength and power. To God I call and in Him I trust; what He wills cannot fail to be.

May God's blessing and greeting abide forever upon Muḥammad and his pure family, and upon our brethren who accept our confession.

O God, decree good for us in this life and the next for the sake of Muḥammad and his family—peace be upon them!

[1] "Turbulent motion" — literally, **"wave-like motion,"** that is, motion occurring in all directions without any predominantly expressed direction.

STREET FOUR

On the fact that the four elements abide as essences, that their quantity remains constant, neither increasing nor diminishing, and that they transform into one another at their boundary regions (*aṭrāf*)

We say: every thing whose continued existence is connected with something else continues so long as that other thing continues.

Since the being of bodies, as has already been stated, is connected with the being of that which abides, and since the elements—although differing in their forms—are bodies, it follows that they abide through the abiding of that with which their being is connected.

If they abide, and if through their own essences and qualities they act upon their own essences so that one of the two principles—namely heat and cold—alternately increases according to the causes determining and sustaining it, with the result that each becomes dominant in some parts of the elements and displaced in others, then transformation must occur in the boundary regions of the elements.

If transformation occurs in the boundary regions and parts of the elements, we say that it is divided into two kinds.

First, there is a transformation of the two principles, and of that which follows from them, that is more or less balanced. It occurs in different degrees, and according to its proximity to equilibrium there arise from it the three [genera] of generated beings in all the diversity of their species and individuals.

Second, there is transformation that is not balanced and in which excess occurs according to whichever power predominates: excessive heat, transforming some particles of air so that they ignite as fire and generated beings perish; excessive cold, transforming some particles of air so that generated beings likewise perish; excessive moisture arising in some portions of air and producing a flood that destroys generated beings; or excessive dryness taking possession of some portions of air so that all moisture dries up and generated beings perish.

Transformation—whether balanced or excessive—cannot take place throughout an entire element. An element cannot as a whole undergo transformation. Rather, transformation occurs in those parts of the elements situated at their boundaries, each being acted upon by the others on those sides that adjoin them.

If anything within the elements undergoes transformation, it scarcely remains in that transformed state but passes into another transformation, because the sustaining causes responsible for the first transformation are the same causes that bring about the transformation of what has already been transformed.

Thus transformation occurs here and there and serves as the cause of the generation of beings; for without such transformations no other generated beings would arise.

Furthermore, the quantity of an element cannot decrease as a result of its transformation, just as it cannot increase when something else is transformed into it, because the transformation of an element is always compensated.

This can be clearly seen in the examples of beings undergoing transformation.

Earth that becomes generated beings is compensated either by the death of animals, if it has entered into their composition; or, if plants arise from it, by their decay or by their becoming food for animals and eventually returning to that from which they came; or, if it has entered into metals, by the rusting of those metals and the dissolution of their particles through fire and soil.

It is as though a wheel, turning, takes something from an element in one place and returns it in another.

Or consider water: through continual heating vapors rise from it and become air and clouds; whatever quantity rises upward is compensated by the rain that falls.

The same applies to air and fire. Whatever quantity of air, through sustaining and other causes previously discussed, undergoes transformation and becomes fire—for example, meteors—is compensated by what is transformed back into air.

As much air as becomes moist in one place—that is, becomes water—is balanced by an equal amount drying elsewhere.

As much earth as departs from its nature and becomes water is compensated by condensed water returning to earth.

The same can be observed in the microcosm: when it takes something from outside into itself as food, something correspondingly separates from its body so that what has been taken in is compensated by what is cast off.

Thus a thing is preserved, does not disappear, and in this sense does not change.

In this lies a great wisdom manifesting the countenance of consummate power. Glory be to God, infinitely exalted above what the children of darkness invent!

The correctness of what has been said is confirmed by the clear proofs God has established in the world of religion as a truthful measure and reliable criterion, guiding along the road of true knowledge.

We therefore say: the movement of the *ḥudūd* of the world of religion—that is, of the pillars of that world—from one rank to another signifies that the elements transform into one another at their boundary regions.

Since some of the *ḥudūd* at times go astray and devise corrupt doctrines that lead peoples to destruction, it follows that air can change when heat increases so that one of the worlds of natural generated beings perishes.

Since some of the *ḥudūd* fail to perform what is required within the summons and are deficient in knowledge, piety, religion, and faithfulness, thereby leading their followers to destruction, it follows that cold can become predominant in certain parts of air, resulting in the destruction of one of the worlds of generated beings.

Since some *ḥudūd* may at times ascend to the rank of Gate so that their own station increases—as occurs when an authorized agent is summoned to discuss his confession and doctrine, and, through conversation, the deficiency of what he possesses is shown to him, so that he is influenced by the speaker's words and the light of knowledge shines in his soul, drawing him to the degree of conjunction (*darajat al-ittiṣāl*)—it follows that water, when mingled with earth, becomes as dense as earth so that, undergoing transformation and becoming isomorphic with it, it may cause the earth to receive its influence and draw it toward that from which generated beings arise.

This is transformation.

Since in the world of religion the number of the major and minor cycles is complete and fixed, neither increasing nor diminishing, it follows that the celestial and terrestrial bodies, together with the four elements—fire, air, water, and earth—are eternally preserved in the world of Nature in an unchanging quantity, neither increasing nor decreasing.

Such is what follows from the world of the prophetic ordinance, as the scales of religion have informed us, balancing without exception the creation of the Most High.

Glory be to God, who enabled us to follow the pure souls, taste the fruits of the celestial tree, and attain salvation through obedience to the Imams, the sources of eternal grace.

There is no god but God, who has no partner. God alone grants strength and power. To God I call and in Him I trust; I ask Him for protection and success.

May Muḥammad and his family, the worthy Imams, be blessed.

O God, Most Merciful of the merciful, bestow upon us through Your merciful gift a good life both worldly and religious.

[1] "Boundary layers" — in the original, *aṭrāf*. According to al-Kirmānī, the sublunary body is a sphere whose core is the earth—the concept of the primary element "earth" and the planet Earth coincide in al-Kirmānī—surrounded by three envelopes: water, air, and fire.

STREET FIVE

On the reason why bodies possess density and why their particles are multiple

We say: since every thing in existence has some sustaining cause that precedes it and determines it, and since a body exists essentially through the particles from which its essence arises, then, insofar as it possesses particles and exists in a manner different from the world of Creation—which is not body—it must have some cause determining it.

If, then, body has a sustaining cause that determines it, and if its being proceeds from the Created—that is, the First Existent—then the Created, namely the First Existent, is its sustaining cause.

Yet, insofar as the Created, that is, the First Existent, is its sustaining cause, there is nothing in its essence that could account for the existence from it of an existent possessing particles in its own essence, except the relation of **createdness** that belongs to it.

For the First Existent possesses together two exalted relations. One, as we said previously, consists in its being **Creation** insofar as it is conjoined with Him from whom its being proceeds. The second consists in its being **the Created** insofar as it is conjoined with its own essence.

In relation to Him from whom the necessary being of existents proceeds, the First Existent is a single term (*fard*); but insofar as it is the Created, it is a pair and possesses something analogous to a substrate. In this respect it is twofold, possessing a first and a second perfection upon which its essence is founded.

In this respect—that is, insofar as it is the Created—it possesses a nobility inferior to that primordial nobility which belongs to it insofar as it is Creation. For it is the Created through conjunction with its own essence, and that essence possesses being only because it depends upon Creation, not upon the Created.

Thus the relation of createdness belonging to it is not as exalted as its relation of creating.

{251}

Since this is so, and since Creation—that is, the First Created—is the cause sustaining the being of existents, it follows that what proceeds from it must, because Creation is its sustaining cause, be twofold: that which proceeds from the higher relation is a lofty, pure, unitary (*fard*) Intellect, while that which proceeds from the lower relation is a pair possessing parts, corresponding to those two relations. Yet the two emanate as one, just as the First Existent is one in its relation of creating.

Since the First Created, which is the first limit within createdness, possesses in some respect, as we have shown, parts—even though those parts are the least of the little—this is the sustaining cause of the multiplicity of parts in the existent situated at the second limit.

For the being of existents, as we said in the section on the manner of emanation, proceeds from their sustaining causes' apprehension of their own essences, while the multiplicity and

numerical increase of existents proceeds from their apprehending their own essences and contemplating them.

It is just as numbers multiply by being multiplied by themselves: if two is multiplied by itself, it becomes four; if three is multiplied by itself, it becomes nine; if four is multiplied by itself, it becomes sixteen.

Just as these numbers multiply themselves, so those causes produce multiplicity through encompassing their own essences. What is multiplied by itself is the first limit, while the product is the second limit; and the multiplicity of the second limit exceeds that of the first.

And so it is. It is known that even the slightest multiplicity present at the first limit is multiplied in this same manner at the second limit.

For the first limits are the sustaining causes of being. Hence the existence of many effects sustained by them at the second limits is just as inevitable and necessary as many motions at the second limit—which is the commanded (*maʾmūr*)—necessarily arise, through the multiplicity of intermediaries, from a slight (*yasīr*) motion at the first limit—which is the commanding principle (*amr*).

Or again, just as from a single grain—the first limit—many grains arise in an ear of corn—the second limit.

Otherwise they would not be sustaining causes.

{252}

Since, furthermore, body is an effect sustained by the first sustaining cause, and this effect possesses density, we say concerning the sustaining cause of this density that density does not belong to those things that arise in an existent from sustaining causes distinct from that existent itself. Rather, it arises from something proper and characteristic of the existent itself.

For the states of sustained effects arise either through sustaining causes distinct from them—for example, man becomes truly human through what he acquires by worship through knowledge and action, these two forms of worship being a sustaining cause of humanity distinct from man himself—or through something belonging to them independently of their sustaining causes.

An example of the latter is the blackening of skin subjected to the intense action of the Sun: it does not arise because blackness exists in the Sun, but belongs to the body because of its proximity to heat and the consequent alteration of its mixture (*mizāj*).

Density cannot be present in an existent by proceeding from a sustaining cause distinct from and prior to that existent, because the sustaining cause from which the existent receives being is free of everything that could determine such density in the effects it sustains.

If, then, it is false that the density of bodies proceeds from a sustaining cause distinct from and prior to them, it follows that density proceeds from the essences of their particles themselves.

Since it has been established that the density of bodies proceeds from the essences of their particles, it can arise only through the gathering together of particles within an existent as a result of its remoteness from the First Created—that is, Creation; through the inability of those particles, because of the multiplicity of intermediaries and the presence of obstacles, to resemble that which precedes them in being; and through the inability of this existent, whose particles {253} are numerous, to preserve its essence in a state close to that of the existent above it.

For this reason all its particles draw together and accumulate, helping one another to preserve their being and escape corruption. Thus its substance condenses and becomes dense.

For example, air is ordinarily dispersed because of the heat diffused through it, which is its perfection and form. But when, because of distance from the Sun, heat disappears from some region and is displaced by cold, and the air can no longer preserve the particles of its essence in that condition in which they resemble fire—which is higher than air in rank through its greater dispersion—we observe its particles drawing together and accumulating because the air is unable to remain in its former state of dispersion. Thus air, which had previously been dispersed, becomes condensed.

Or again, water, in relation to earth, is dispersed and is not so dense as earth. But if the air becomes cold because of distance from the Sun, or if clouds cover the sky, and as a result the heat in the water disappears and its many particles are unable to preserve its essence in that state in which it resembles air—which is higher in rank than water through its dispersion—then, through divine providence flowing within the water, its particles gather and accumulate so as jointly to preserve its essence and avoid corruption.

The substance of the water then thickens through the aggregation and mutual interpenetration of its particles, and all these particles become gathered together, bound one to another, clinging (*ḥann*) to one another and yearning (*shāʾiq*) for one another.

Thus water passes from dispersion into becoming a dense mineral.

As for earth, it exists at the greatest distance, at that limit beyond which there are no further limits. Therefore all its particles are gathered together, compressed, mutually interpenetrating, accumulated, and passionately drawn (*tāʾiq*) toward one another.

Here too, if a particle of earth is separated from the whole, it strives back toward that whole in order to escape corruption and dissolution.

Every group behaves in exactly the same way when it finds itself far from its head and governor and realizes that, separated from its head, dispersion means destruction. It gathers together, preserving its totality so as not to disintegrate and perish. By assembling together, holding fast to one another, showing mutual compassion, seeking community, and avoiding separation, its members preserve themselves from destruction.

{254}

Thus the sustaining cause of the existence of density in corporeal beings and of the aggregation of their particles is their remoteness from the sustaining cause of their being.

From this it follows, with respect to what exists from the Created's relation of createdness, that what first receives being from it resembles it more closely than what is remote from it.

For example, the celestial bodies, and especially the highest celestial sphere, through their proximity to it resemble it more closely than terrestrial bodies remote from it: in their everlasting duration, eternal abiding, and freedom from transformation and change; in the small number of their parts; and in their being so completely mastered by their own form that matter and form are as though one thing.

Because of their proximity to that from which their being proceeds, the celestial bodies are not so confined and concentrated (*inḥiṣār*) and not so dense as the terrestrial bodies are through their remoteness. The former are more rarefied and exalted; the latter more compressed and dense.

"Truly, the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most people do not know."

Thus we have established that the cause of the multiplicity of the particles of body lies in its remoteness from the created sustaining cause, and that the aggregation, compression, and condensation of those particles occur because of their remoteness from their first limit. We have also shown how this occurs.

This is confirmed by the scales of the world of religion, which open the road to knowledge.

Since the Speaker unites two relations—first, in relation to the world of Creation, from which his second perfection proceeds, he is [an Intellect]; and second, in relation to the world of Nature, from which his first perfection proceeds, he is a soul—it follows that the First Intellect, namely the First Existent and First Cause, likewise possesses two relations: first, in relation to Him from whom its being proceeds, it is Creation; and second, in relation to its own essence, it is the Created, as has already been explained.

Since the Speaker is pure and unitary insofar as he is an Intellect, but insofar as he is a soul is burdened with his substrate, is multiple, and possesses powers, it follows that the First Intellect, insofar as it is Creation, is unitary and pure, while insofar as it is the Created it is not devoid of multiplicity.

Since the Speaker, with his two {255} relations involving paucity and multiplicity, is the first limit, it follows that the First Intellect—that is, the First Created and First Existent—with its two relations, which, as we have shown, gather together paucity and multiplicity, is likewise the first limit.

Since the Speaker—that is, the first limit gathering multiplicity—is in the world of religion the sustaining cause of the being of an even greater multiplicity of divine laws, prophetic ordinances, teaching *ḥudūd*, and the multitude of souls receiving instruction, which through their remoteness from him constitute the second limit, it follows that the First Intellect—the First Created and First Existent—that is, the first limit gathering multiplicity, is the sustaining cause of the being of an even greater multiplicity within the divine work: the revolving celestial spheres and luminaries that influence the corporeal world, together with the multitude of particles of earth that undergo their influence and, through their remoteness from the First Intellect, constitute the second limit.

For sustained effects necessarily proceed from their sustaining causes and inevitably multiply in the process. Otherwise the sustaining cause would not be a sustaining cause and existence itself would not exist.

Since this occurs in the world of religion, it follows correspondingly—likeness answering to likeness—that the sustaining cause of the multiplicity of the particles of bodies is, as we have shown, the relation belonging to the Created, which Created is the sustaining cause of this multiplicity.

As for density, which proceeds from the essences of bodies themselves and not from sustaining causes distinct from them, the scales of religion correlate it with the appearance, in the world of religion after the [death] of the Prophet—may God bless him—of dissensions and deviations among the souls connected with his ordinances and prescriptions, phenomena that had not existed during his lifetime.

For dissension and deviation in the world of religion are like **density** in the corporeal world; harmony and right guidance are like **rarefaction** (*basāṭa*); and souls are like **earth**.

When souls become remote from the Speaker—the sustaining cause of their being in the world of religion—covering him with the veil of forgetfulness; when, transgressing the limits established by his deputies, they depart from obedience and break with them; when they lose the path of religion that preserves them beneath the shade of prophetic grace—may God bless him—and leads toward salvation and the springs of happiness; and when religious perfection, which binds them with the bonds of eternity, becomes unattainable for them, then they necessarily experience the need to preserve their beliefs.

They therefore place complete reliance upon their own opinions and their own understanding, which, being deficient, cast them into even greater remoteness and error. As a result, they deviate [from the truth] and wander.

The appearance among people—and especially within the religious community—after the [death] of the Speaker of deviations and errors caused by forgetfulness of his prescriptions and disobedience toward his deputies signifies that density in the corporeal world—and especially the density of earth—which corresponds to error and deviation in the world of religion, proceeds from the multiplicity of the particles of these bodies because of their remoteness from the first limit, namely the First Existent, which is the sustaining cause of all existents, so that in preserving their being the particles accumulate and gather entirely together.

Since harmony prevailed within the religious community during the lifetime of the Prophet—may God bless him—and there was no dissension, it follows that density is absent from the world of Creation.

Since the followers of the Speaker and his deputies who observe the limits he established follow a truer path, possess a higher station, and stand nearer to the angels than those who have deviated and become remote from him, it follows that bodies nearer to the Principle, namely the First Created, are higher and simpler than those remote from it and dense.

Thus one corresponds to the other and bears witness to their mutual agreement. It is therefore clear that the sustaining cause of the multiplicity and density of existents at the second limit is as we have described.

Glory be to God, who has guided us; without Him we would never have found the path.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian. Excellent is this Protector, and excellent this Helper!

God the Great alone grants strength and power.

STREET SIX

On the fact that the earth is not spherical, and why; on what within it deserves to be the center of the encompassing body; on the form (*shakl*) of the earth; on the fact that those parts of it exposed to the air are in motion, through which the waters of the seas are displaced, and what kind of motion this is; and on the formation of mountain masses from it, and why they arise

Earlier, when speaking of fire, air, water, and earth—the bodies existing beneath the celestial spheres—and of what they are, we exhausted that subject and gave a sufficient explanation. But because what we now wish to discuss belongs to the same class of things already treated, we return to it and say:

The side of the lower body that adjoins the revolving body called the celestial sphere, and is nearest to it, receives its influence, becomes filled with heat, and its particles, as we have shown, are set in motion. The opposite side, which does not adjoin the celestial sphere—that is, the body revolving relative to it—and is farthest from it, becomes filled with cold, and its particles remain fixed and motionless. For everything that is present on the nearer side because of proximity and causes its particles to move is absent on this farther side because of remoteness.

Thus one quality, namely complete cold, which causes density and immobility of particles, belongs to the side farthest from the moving body, just as the other quality, namely complete heat, which causes rarefaction and motion of particles, belongs to the side nearest to the moving body.

We then say the following. If some body is situated at the greatest possible distance from a sphere, then all the lines joining the surface of that body to the sphere will be equal, because that body will lie at the very midpoint of the sphere. If it were even slightly displaced from that point, those lines could not all be equal.

If all the lines extending from the sphere to the surface of such a body are equal, then that body has a spherical form, because its relation to the encompassing sphere remains everywhere the same.

Therefore, since a body is spherical when all the lines drawn from its surface to the sphere encompassing it are equal, while the lines connecting the surface of the earth with the highest celestial sphere—from which the earth is at the greatest distance—are not equal, it follows that the earth is not spherical.

The reason is that some parts of the earth rise above others, so that these elevated parts project beyond what is truly the center of the celestial sphere and are therefore excluded from that center. For only the center satisfies the condition that all lines connecting it with the circumference are equal.

Whatever satisfies this condition has a spherical form, and no part of its surface projects above another; rather, all parts are level, like the surfaces of mirrors.

The earth, however, is not like this. Some of its parts are higher and others lower, as we plainly observe.

The same result follows if we imagine lines extending from the surfaces of these elevated and depressed regions: the line connecting the highest celestial sphere with an elevated surface of the earth is shorter than the line connecting it with a depressed surface, while the line connecting the highest celestial sphere with a depressed surface is longer than that connecting it with an elevated surface.

This does not conform to the definition of a center; and what does not conform to the definition of a center is not spherical. The surface of what is not spherical therefore has elevated and depressed parts.

Moreover, if the earth were spherical, water would surround it on every side, just as the fiery body surrounds air and the celestial sphere encompasses fire, because the center of water lies above the earth.

Yet we find that water does not surround the earth on every side. It follows that the earth is not spherical and that those parts of it deserving to be the center of the encompassing body are not the parts exposed to the air.

Since this is so, we say that those parts of the earth which serve as the center for the higher body and which are the receptacle of complete cold and complete immobility are surrounded on every side by water, so that they lie enclosed within the encompassing sphere.

Water does not penetrate their particles in the way that it penetrates those parts of the earth projecting above it, because the center of water lies above those particles. If we suppose that water were nevertheless present within them, it would seek its own center just as the other elements of the world do when they find themselves in an alien place.

Furthermore, the earth lacks something possessed by the other three elements—water, air, and fire—which makes their surfaces spherical and smooth. For because the force of the body moving relative to them penetrates them, fire, air, and water are rarefied; consequently their surfaces receive the form imposed upon them by the celestial bodies revolving above them.

Their particles also move and penetrate one another, and therefore, when they touch the surface of a spherical body, they assume a corresponding form.

The same may be seen, for example, in wet clay. Because the particles of its surface penetrate one another, its surface takes the form of whatever surface it touches: if that surface is even, the clay becomes even; if not, it assumes the corresponding shape, as when it receives the impression of a ring or seal.

The earth does not possess this property, because cold dominates its particles owing to their remoteness from the moving body, and as they become dense they conform to that cold.

Since there is no rarefaction in earth, its particles do not conform to the particles of the body touching its surface. And if its particles do not conform to the particles of the body touching its surface, it follows that the earth as a whole is not spherical.

It is so because divine providence, which penetrated bodies in order to adapt them to wisdom and which, as we previously showed, raised active celestial bodies and passive terrestrial bodies in order to produce the three [classes] of generated beings—with man as their ultimate goal, the **second resurrection**, resembling the First Emanation—through the elements assisting one another by mutual mixture, attainment of proportion (*taʿādul*), and reciprocal action, knew that if the surface of the earth were spherical like the surfaces of fire and air, while the center of water must lie above the surface of the earth, then water would completely encompass that surface, just as water itself is completely encompassed by the bodies above it.

In that case neither the power of fire nor the power of air would reach the earth, which would be accessible only to the power of water.

This would prevent the intended purpose from being realized, for wisdom has ordained that generated beings exist only through the combined powers of the four elements—fire, air, water, and earth. If water completely encompassed the surface of the earth, generated beings could not exist because the powers of fire and air would not reach the earth.

Divine providence therefore gave the earth, although it is the center, a non-spherical form in some of its parts, so that in places it would rise above the center of water and could not be completely encompassed by it. In this way all the powers could unite together and manifest the three [classes] of generated beings, whose ultimate goal is the sought-for existence of man.

An expert craftsman acts similarly when, taking God's creation as his model, he constructs a clock with the utmost precision, in such a way that one part engages another and all lead back to the first mover. He assembles a mechanism that produces motion and, by dropping balls, forms different figures. Some parts he makes moving; others both movers and moved. Whatever he knows would fail to produce the desired result if flat, he makes concave in the moving mechanism; whatever he knows would spoil the result if concave, he makes flat. Whatever he knows would be unable to move rapidly if heavy, he makes light; and whatever he knows would obstruct the intended purpose if quadrangular, he makes spherical.

Thus, since wisdom prevents the earth from assuming a spherical form—for otherwise the purpose for which the heavens and elements were raised would not be realized—we say that those parts of the earth which do not fall under the definition of the center of the highest celestial sphere, namely those exposed to the air and disrupting its sphericity, are precisely the parts in which the causes of the hidden latency (*kumūn*) of animals, plants, and minerals are completed.

For by projecting above the center of the earth and extending into the region of air, they receive the action of the powers above, and in them all influences intertwine and merge.

We also say that these parts possess an accidental motion. Through this motion, elevated parts of the earth exposed to the air, the heat of the Sun, and the powers of the heavens sink and become depressed, and through it the waters of the seas continually and daily change their position, so that one region is destroyed while another is built up.

The motion of these parts of the earth that meet the air is not essential to them. It arises from the motion of the winds that blow upon and erode them, and also from waters flowing in channels after rainfall, which wash them away and carry them in streams into the seas, filling

the seas day and night. One may see the particles of earth carried into the sea at the mouths of streams entering it.

In this way the level of the waters rises as those particles are transported by streams from their places in the depths of waters and at the sides of the earth into the sea, pushing the water upward. Water therefore reaches depressions and hollows that had previously been dry, and withdraws from other regions. Thus one place is destroyed and another built up.

This occurs because accidental motion reaches those parts projecting above the center of the earth—the very parts because of which the earth, unlike fire, air, and water, is not spherical—just as accidents successively take their allotted share in the matters into which they enter, as has already been explained.

Thus when something on the surface of the earth has received its allotted share of the action of fire, air, and water, flowing waters and blowing winds carry it away so that something else may take its place and receive its own share.

Upon this rests equitable balance: none of these parts of the earth is more deserving than the others to be exposed to the air and solar heat so that generated beings may arise from it, and none is more deserving than another to be deprived of this by remaining beneath water. So has the All-Powerful ordained with consummate wisdom.

With the cooperation and assistance of the elements, particles—now becoming moist, now drying, now heating, now cooling—bind together and form mountains and minerals according to whichever quality predominates under the influence of the celestial sphere that determines their mixtures.

Rains wash away whatever has not become bound together, while the mountains remain, raising their summits toward the sky, until their dryness—the quality by which they became bound—reaches its limit. Then they disintegrate and turn into sand, and afterwards into soil.

Thus the particles of the earth possess two motions: one that brings them into actuality and another that returns them to potentiality. These are the motions of generation and corruption.

We add that some of these mountains, preserving water within their solid particles, form as it were reservoirs of water, and therefore trees and plants grow upon them. Other mountains destroy or fail to retain water, and in them there is neither water, vegetation, nor trees.

The scales of religion, by which locked doors are opened and doubts troubling the intellect are removed, bear witness to the correctness of what we have said.

Since human souls collectively constitute, in the world of religion, the center toward which the action of its *ḥudūd* is directed through their teaching, it follows that the earth as a whole constitutes, in the corporeal world, the center toward which the lights of all influencing bodies are directed in order to produce generated beings.

Since human souls are divided into those of high rank, near their teachers because they receive knowledge and wisdom, and those of low rank, remote from their teachers because they neither receive nor learn, the earth too is divided into elevated parts near the influencing

bodies, which receive their influences, and low parts remote from the influencing bodies, which do not receive those influences at all.

Since there are souls which, being by nature most remote from the *ḥudūd* of the world of religion, possess so dense a substance that they receive no knowledge at all, being immersed in corruption—as, according to the author, certain peoples are said to be by nature averse to rational sciences and unwilling to examine religious questions—and since such souls truly constitute the center in relation to the highest *ḥadd*, namely the Speaker, it follows that there are parts of the earth that receive no influences and undergo no action because their particles have become interwoven through the cold that completely dominates them owing to their truly greatest remoteness from everything exercising influence in the corporeal world, which world constitutes the center of the highest celestial sphere.

Since in the world of religion there are human souls who, being among the people of the outward, receive instruction from the *ḥudūd* because of their proximity to them and are therefore higher in rank than others below them, and since the prescriptions and prohibitions established by the world of the religious ordinance apply to them, and since for the sake of that one among them whose existence is ordained in the new creation messengers were sent and Laws and Imams were given, it follows that in the corporeal world those parts of the earth that receive the influences of the celestial bodies because of their proximity to them stand higher than the other parts below them that are encompassed by cold.

It is in these parts that night and day alternate, and for the sake of that complete generated being, prepared for complete reception and whose existence from them is ordained, the heavens and luminaries revolving around them were raised.

Since common people, fools, and the ignorant have always related in the same way to every messenger in every cycle—with neither increase nor decrease—it follows that the center of the encompassing sphere is equally distant from every side of it, with neither increase nor decrease.

This is the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of the sages' statement that all lines extending from the center to the circumference are equal, and likewise of the Prophet's saying—may God bless him:

"What is among my community was likewise among the Children of Israel: like two impressions of the same sandal, like two drops of water."

Since in the world of religion common people and the dull-witted—who truly constitute the center to which the teaching of the Speaker and the *ḥudūd* is directed—profess the highest doctrine, namely that they have a Creator, without doubting it in the least, and in this resemble the *ḥudūd* standing above them, it follows that those particles of the earth which truly constitute the center of the highest celestial sphere resemble the bodies above them in possessing the highest of forms, namely the spherical form.

Since all human souls share something in common, but differ insofar as among them are learned men and seekers of knowledge, because their views and beliefs differ and they are not in agreement concerning religions, it follows that the figure of the earth is not spherical but possesses differing sides because of those parts that project above the center and are exposed to the air.

Since in the world of religion its *ḥudūd*, having received the forms of the highest sciences concerning divine unity and the created and emanated substances, resemble in this those above them, it follows that in the corporeal world fire, air, and water, possessing the highest of forms—namely the spherical—resemble the celestial bodies situated above them.

Since in the world of religion that person among the people of the outward who receives from its *ḥudūd* the guiding influences and the laws of the two forms of worship is higher in rank than the others who do not receive them, and since spiritual progeny arise from such people, it follows that in the corporeal world, among all the particles of earth situated above the center, those that receive the influences of the luminaries possess a more exalted, balanced mixture than the others that do not receive them, and from this balanced mixture natural generated beings arise.

Since in the world of religion the people of faith who perform both forms of worship and stand above others in knowledge of the realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) and in fulfilling what is required are nearer to the Prophet—may God bless and greet him—than the people of the outward and those below them, it follows that in the corporeal world those parts of the earth situated above the center and receiving influences are nearer to the highest body than those that do not receive them and those below them.

Since the causes of the formation of spiritual progeny are completed when the people of the outward seek connection with the *ḥudūd*, unite with them, and draw from their source, it follows that the causes of the formation of natural progeny are completed when the earth, through those of its parts that rise above the center, reaches upward seeking contact with the air and the heat of fire and receives their influences.

Since in the world of religion the number of *ḥujjas* who gather the sciences of the guiding summons through inspired revelation and contain the divine sciences is twelve, and each *ḥujja* gathers beneath him missionaries, authorized agents, and "wings" (*ajniḥa*), it follows that the number of inhabited lands (*ʿāmir*) is twelve, each having its own regions, cities, and villages.

Since in the world of religion the lords of the cycles have seven Gates—namely Seth, Shem, Ishmael, Joshua, Simon, ʿAlī, and the *ḥujja* of the Qāʾim—it follows that the earth has seven divisions (*aqsām*) and seven climes (*aqālīm*).

Since the people of the summons are of two kinds—some true believers, others hypocritical apostates—it follows that the earth is twofold: inhabited and populated, and desert and uninhabited.

Since the hypocrites are more numerous than the sincere believers, the desert lands are more extensive than the inhabited lands.

Since in the final cycle the hypocrites and wicked will perish while the believers and good will multiply, the desert lands will become inhabited by good people.

Since the people of the guiding summons, through the instruction and influence of the *ḥujjas* and missionaries, are gathered not to the Speaker but to the lord of the seventh cycle, as the Most High says:

“Say: indeed, the former and the latter will surely be gathered for the appointed time of a known day,”

it follows that the parts of the earth exposed to the air and receiving the influences of the luminaries move toward the sea not essentially, but through that sustaining cause which imparts to the air the motion of the winds and causes the water descending from the clouds as rain to flow through channels.

Since in the summons a believer, after being nourished with knowledge and receiving both outwardly and inwardly the influence of the missionaries, may rise and attain the firmly established station (*maqām*) of a *ḥujja*, it follows that some parts of the earth, receiving the influence of planets as they alternately rise above and set beneath them, becoming alternately saturated with moisture and dried out, may become firmly established mountains.

Just as some *ḥujjas* gather only the sciences of the outward summons and know nothing of the sciences of the inward summons, so that no spiritual progeny arise from such *ḥujjas*, some mountains contain no water and therefore possess neither plants nor animals.

And just as other *ḥujjas* gather the sciences of both the outward and inward summons and have numerous spiritual children, some mountains can contain water and therefore possess trees and fruits.

Since there are souls that resist the reception of knowledge and wisdom, and the missionaries turn away from such souls because they know their words will not benefit them, it follows that there are parts of the earth—namely those constituting the center of the highest body—that have been overcome by extreme cold because of their remoteness from the moving bodies. Water does not penetrate such parts as it penetrates the other parts rising above them, because the center of water lies above them.

Since the prophetic summons, together with lofty moral qualities and customs, passes from people to people and from lineage to lineage—as the prophetic summons passed from the line of Isaac son of Abraham to the line of Ishmael son of Abraham, and as courage and valor passed from Greece to the Arabs, while kingship and wisdom passed from the Persians—it follows that over time some lands become lifeless while others become inhabited.

Since the *ḥudūd* possess the forms of the highest sciences because the possibility of acquiring them has been prepared for them, and through the proximity of that which is unavailable to recalcitrant souls because of their remoteness, it follows that the elements possess the highest of forms, namely the spherical form, because the possibility of acquiring it has been prepared for them and through the proximity of that which is unavailable to the particles of earth because of their remoteness.

Since the Legatee and the *ḥujjas* who succeed him examine the *ḥudūd* occupying their ranks in order to ascertain whether they are worthy of them, excluding the hypocrite from the grace of divine knowledge and casting him down from his station while raising the believer to the ranks of the pure, it follows that the earth in certain of its parts is in motion, through which one region becomes a deserted wasteland while another is developed and inhabited.

Since those among the people of the outward who receive what the *ḥudūd* pour forth and truly perform both forms of worship become spiritual progeny and taste the happiness of

eternal delights, while those who do not receive what the *ḥudūd* give and stubbornly persist in only one form of worship wander in darkness that casts them into severe torment, it follows that those parts of the earth which, receiving the effusion, accept the influences of the active bodies become natural animals, whereas those that do not receive are carried by waters into the darkness of the seas.

Since human souls are lowly and insignificant in relation to the Prophet, the Legatee, and the Imams—peace be upon them—who are perfect and exalted, it follows that in relation to the vastness and boundless expanse of the celestial bodies the earth is insignificant and its station is in no way exalted.

Since in the world of religion, among all human souls, only the soul of the Prophet—may God bless him—is capable, through the mediation of the Second Intellect, of fully receiving the effusion of the First Intellect flowing from the world of Creation, in which no other soul can equal him, and from him knowledge therefore overflows and pours forth, it follows that among all the particles of the earth some are capable, through the mediation of the Moon, of fully receiving the influence of the Sun flowing from the celestial bodies, in which no other particles can equal them, and through this the waters of the seas increase and overflow.

Such is the testimony of the scales of religion concerning what exists upon the earth; we employ them here on the basis of mutual correspondence and equilibrium.

Glory be to God, who has brought us to this; without His guidance we would never have found the path. In Him we trust and to Him we call. There is no god but He. God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian. Excellent is this Protector, and excellent this Helper!

Footnotes

[1] By the **"center" of the celestial sphere**, al-Kirmānī means not a point but a smaller sphere concentric with it—that is, the earth.

[1] "…water would surround it…" — that is, the sphere of the earth would be completely covered by a shell of water. Al-Kirmānī's manner of conceiving spatial relations is illustrated by the diagram on p. 133, which shows both the **terrestrial bodies** (*ajsām sufliyya*, literally "lower bodies")—earth, water, air, and fire—and the **celestial bodies** (*ajsām ʿalawiyya*, literally "upper bodies")—the celestial spheres situated above them. In this context, **"higher"** means situated closer to the outer boundary of the sphere of the cosmos, while **"lower"** means situated closer to its center.

[1] The reference is to **water clocks** equipped with various mechanical devices, in which balls or pellets were often used. By way of example, the following descriptions may be cited:

"In the sixth century the Arabs came into contact with the Persians and Byzantines and adopted from them the art of constructing water clocks. Before long the Arabs themselves began producing water clocks fitted with various kinds of mechanical devices. Already at the beginning of the ninth century Hārūn al-Rashīd was able to send Charlemagne, as a gift, an artistically crafted water clock made by Arab craftsmen. … Einhard, Charlemagne's biographer, wrote of this clock: '…a gilded clock, constructed with astonishing skill. A special hydraulic mechanism indicated the hours, which were also marked by the striking produced when a certain number of balls fell into a bronze basin…'

"Arab water clocks already possessed highly complex automatic mechanisms. Besides the time, they indicated feast days according to the calendar, the position of the Sun in the Zodiac, and the positions of other celestial bodies.

"…Let us consider two characteristic types of water clock. One was installed during the reign of Sultan Saladin (1146–1163) at the Great Mosque in Damascus. Its inventor was Riḍwān, known for his treatises on clocks. The Damascus clock consisted of a large arch containing twelve shuttered windows or arches, corresponding to the twelve hours then reckoned in the day. Its picturesque appearance was completed by two falcons made of cast brass, placed beside the first and last windows. Each hour, as they moved successively from one arch to another, they dropped into a basin as many balls as the number of hours that had elapsed. The hours of the night could also be distinguished, because during the night a light source moved from the first arch to the last.

"The mechanism contained no toothed gearing. Motion from the floats was transmitted by cords and ropes passed around various rollers and pulleys. Counterweights and weights were attached to their ends.

"Also highly characteristic were the water clocks constructed by al-Jazarī. Their façade was about four meters high and terminated above in an arch; near the vault of the arch a moving band carried the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Beneath them were representations of the Sun and Moon; their rising and setting corresponded to the season of the year and occurred in accordance with the signs of the Zodiac… At the end of each hour birds placed in niches bent their heads and dropped balls into bronze vessels.

"…The descriptions of the water clocks of al-Jazarī and Riḍwān vividly recall the descriptions given above of the clocks of Gaza [that is, Byzantine water clocks with elaborate striking mechanisms] and of the clock presented to Charlemagne by Hārūn al-Rashīd. In all these water clocks the elapsed time was marked by the falling of a corresponding number of bronze balls."

(V. N. Pipunyrov, *Istoriya chasov s drevneishikh vremyon do nashikh dnei* [*History of Clocks from Ancient Times to the Present Day*], Moscow, 1982, pp. 87, 88, 90, 96.)

[1] The idea that dry land was formed through the deposition of earth carried by flowing water was widespread in medieval Arabic geographical literature. Al-Bīrūnī, for example, writes:

"As for those lands and deserts of the whole of al-Sūdān, they were formed by deposits carried by streams descending from the Mountains of the Moon and the Southern Mountains [that is, the mountains from which the Nile flows]; they gradually rose, just as the land of Egypt did after it had once been sea."

(al-Bīrūnī, *Collection of Information for the Knowledge of Precious Stones [Mineralogy]*, Leningrad, 1963, p. 225.)

[1] Compare the explanation given by the **Brethren of Purity** in one of their Epistles, according to which the periodic transformation of seas into dry land and dry land into seas results from shifts in the planetary orbits and the consequent alteration in the degree to which particular regions of the earth are heated (*Selected Works of the Countries of the Near and Middle East*, Moscow, 1961, p. 153).

[1] Seth — according to the canonical text of the Bible, the third son of Adam (Genesis 5:3); the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John* calls him Adam's first son, whereas Cain and Abel were begotten upon Eve by the proto-archon (see *Apocrypha of the Early Christians*, Moscow, 1989, pp. 212–213). Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī likewise regards Seth as Adam's first son (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Beirut, 1980, p. 66).

Shem — the first son of Noah (Genesis 5:32 and elsewhere).

Ishmael — the elder son of Abraham (Genesis 16:1–15; 17:5); born of the bondwoman Hagar, he was deprived of the right of primogeniture.

Joshua [son of Nun] — the "servant of Moses" (Exodus 24:13), who performed military and other exploits (Exodus 17:9; Numbers 13:17–18, etc.) and was appointed by Moses as leader of the people.

Simon — evidently Simon Peter, one of the apostles.

ʿ**Alī** — ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

The ḥujja of the Qāʾim — the associate of the future supreme Ismaili hierarch who will appear at the end of history.

[1] Al-Kirmānī is evidently referring to **climatic zones**. “The division of the inhabited land into seven zones (*kishvars*) goes back to ancient Iranian tradition; the concept of the ‘climate’ as a latitudinal climatic zone was apparently introduced into science by Eratosthenes. The first to synthesize both traditions and propose the division of the inhabited earth into seven climates according to latitude was al-Khwārizmī.” (I. Yu. Krachkovsky, *Selected Works*, vol. 4, *Arabic Geographical Literature*, Moscow–Leningrad, 1957, p. 95.)

[1] Qurʾān 56:49–50. Al-Kirmānī returns to this subject in greater detail in VII, 14.

[1] “…from the line of Isaac, son of Abraham, to the line of Ishmael, son of Abraham…” — in other words, from the Jews to the Arabs. The Arabs regarded Ishmael, Abraham’s first son by the bondwoman Hagar, as their ancestor; because of this they were often called “Ishmaelites” in the Middle Ages. The Jews, by contrast, traced their descent from Isaac, Abraham’s son by his wife Sarah, whom God granted to Abraham in his old age.

Al-Kirmānī means the end of the age of prophecy among the Jews—around the beginning of the Common Era, after the second destruction of the Jerusalem Temple—and the transfer of this gift to the Arabs, manifested in the prophetic mission of Muḥammad. At the same time, he plays on the coincidence between the name **Ishmael**, son of Abraham, and **Ismāʿīl**, the eponym of the Ismaili movement.

STREET SEVEN

On the fact that water does not encompass the surface of the earth, and why; on the increase and decrease of the sea, and why; and on the fact that the water exposed to the air has the form of a human being

From what has already been said, it has been explained that the earth as a whole does not possess a spherical form because of those parts of it that reach the air, through which the causes necessary for the being of generated things are completed. Such is the ordinance of divine providence, which took care to bring into being everything that wisdom determined should exist. Were it not for those parts exposed to the air, which project above the center of the water and because of which the earth does not possess a spherical form, generated beings would not have come into existence.

We now say: since the earth does not have a spherical form because of those parts that project upward in order to receive the influence of the higher bodies, and since the center of water lies between air and earth, and since it is natural for every element not to depart from its own center either downward or upward, it follows that water does not rise above those elevated parts [of the earth], for in doing so it would leave its own center.

If it does not rise above them, then water does not encompass the surface of the earth.

That is, the parts of the earth projecting above the center have occupied the place of water, for they are situated in that place and rise above it, preventing the water from engulfing them. And since those elevated parts of the earth prevent the water from surrounding and flooding them, while water is incapable of encompassing the entire surface of the earth, and since these parts, by virtue of their proximity to the moving bodies—whose powers reach them because they adjoin them—and through their reception of those bodies' influences are loose or porous (*mutakhalkhila*), whereas when compacted they are otherwise, the water penetrates these parts and thereby surrounds those parts that constitute the center of the highest body, seeking to occupy its proper place.

Thus in this manner water encompasses the earth without, for the reason just stated, encompassing its entire surface.

Moreover, water scarcely penetrates those parts of the earth lying below it, because these parts, which constitute the center of the highest body, lie below the center of water—just as air lies below fire and water below air—and it belongs to the nature of the elements not to exist anywhere except in their own proper place.

Even if we suppose that water were to penetrate these parts just as it penetrates the parts elevated above the centrally situated ones, as we actually observe, the truth would show us that the water would move from there toward its own place, just as air, when beneath water, moves toward its own place.

Through this, water has a spherical form.

Since, concerning many matters connected with water, the opinions of those who seek knowledge while relying only on their own reason and passing by those whom God has

raised up for admonition and instruction are divided, we shall, in order to confirm the correctness of what has already been said and clarify what remains to be said, turn to the scales of the divine laws and the criterion of the prophetic ordinances.

These scales and this criterion were established by him whom God chose as leader and first among those seeking nearness to Him—Muḥammad, peace be upon him—when He sent him as the *ḥadd* of the guiding summons for finding the religion of God and worshipping Him through knowledge and action.

Since the Law and its *ḥudūd* have not placed their seal upon every soul without exception, it follows that water does not completely surround the whole surface of the earth.

Since the human soul is never entirely separated from religious rites belonging to the genus of Law that preserves life and honor, even when those rites are not identical with the ordinances of the community of true faith, it follows that water entirely encompasses that which constitutes the center of the highest body, although some regions—namely those lying beneath the projecting parts of the earth—it encompasses differently from others.

Since the missionaries and the *ḥudūd* profess divine unity and worship of the Most High just as do the higher *ḥudūd* standing above them, it follows that water has a spherical form just like the higher bodies situated above it.

Since the ordinances of the Law—with its pillars, prescriptions, and *ḥudūd*—which encompass all who stand beneath its protection, resemble the macrocosm, which in turn resembles the microcosm, namely man, it follows that the surface of the water encompassing the earth and exposed to the air has a form resembling the form of the human body; and the sea separating the lands of the Persians from those of the Arabs and reaching Basra is, as it were, its foot.

Since the outward summons—that is, the rites of worship through action—consists of similitudes (*amthāl*) and symbols (*rumūz*), the water of the sea is salty.

Since the ordinances of the outward summons—that is, the rites of worship through action—are similitudes and symbols that do not in themselves bestow perfection upon the soul, it follows that seawater, because of its saltiness, does not cause the earth to become covered with vegetation.

Since governance dominates the ordinances of the outward summons, together with its rites, institutions, and *ḥudūd*, and governance exists only insofar as that summons exists, it follows that complete saltiness predominates in seawater and depends upon complete cold.

Since the *ḥudūd* of the outward summons know its rites and ordinances so thoroughly that, if questioned as to how one should answer in order to dispel all the questioner's doubts, they can explain and demonstrate it, it follows that seawater is so dry that if it is stirred at night it gives off light as though igniting, thereby dispersing the darkness.

Since the legal rites and ways of practicing religion in the outward summons, being symbols and similitudes, derive from the Speaker, who made them such so that they would accord with the institutions of humankind when people accepted them and governance would therefore not be interrupted, it follows that saltiness exists in seawater through the action of

the Sun heating that water, causing the lightest waters to rise upward and become fresh water while the dense parts remain, so as to correspond to those regions that are the receptacle of complete cold, the two becoming firmly bound together.

Since the soul does not receive the symbols and similitudes of the outward summons in their external form, and these by themselves do not confer perfection, but when they are handed over to the *ḥujja* and placed by him in their proper position what he pours forth becomes acceptable and perfection-giving, it follows that if seawater—which as such does not cause plants to grow—is raised by heating into the region of air, where it is transformed, and then returns as rain, the earth receives it and vegetation grows from it.

Since the knowledge and summons of the Legatee proceed from the knowledge and summons of the Prophet—may God bless him—it follows that fresh water proceeds from seawater.

Since the *ḥujjas* and missionaries place the Prophet's sayings and parables belonging to the outward summons in their proper place by interpreting them in accordance with the ordinances of the two forms of worship, and those sayings thereby become a sustaining cause for the being of spiritual progeny, it follows that seawater, evaporating and rising into the region of air, becomes fresh and consonant with the nature of life, then descends, and through it natural progeny are born.

Since the sciences flowing from the *ḥujjas* become established either in a soul prepared to become a *ḥujja*, in which case they are preserved for the instruction of others, or in the soul of a believer, who preserves them within himself through the sincerity of his faith so that he may discuss them with his brethren—and in this way they issue from his soul and sustain the life of the people of the summons—it follows that rainwater entering the earth falls either upon a rocky place where it is preserved or upon good, fertile soil whose particles penetrate one another and which therefore preserves the water; and as this water continually accumulates, it gives rise to springs that sustain the life of natural generated beings.

Since in the world of religion knowledge of worship through action is more widespread than knowledge of worship through knowledge, it follows that salt water is more abundant than fresh.

Since knowledge in the world of religion is twofold—knowledge of worship through action, which differs because of the multiplicity of opinions and beliefs, since these are symbols and similitudes that do not by themselves bestow perfection or produce spiritual progeny; and knowledge of worship through knowledge, which exists in concentrated form and must without exception be referred back to its first meaning, and which alone bestows perfection and produces spiritual progeny—it follows that water too is twofold: expelled salty water, from which vegetation does not grow, and unexpelled fresh water, through which plants and animals live.

Since the outward—that is, worship through action—bestows upon the soul moral virtues that serve soul and body in this world, while the inward—that is, worship through knowledge—bestows upon the soul the virtue of perfection useful to the soul itself, it follows that seawater gives the earth the power to bind minerals together, in which there lies an immediate utility, while fresh water gives it the power to grow plants and produce animals.

Since those who seek knowledge only in the outward summons, passing by the inward summons, fall into contradiction, bewilderment, and error, it follows that one who seeks benefit from the sea and decides to cross its waters without boarding a ship meets destruction.

Since Revelation—that is, the Qurʾān—and the Law contain all the highest sciences—the science of divine unity, knowledge of the world of Intellect, the world of Nature, the world of soul, the *ḥudūd* of God's religion, the afterlife, and all other existing things—it follows that seawater contains precious substances: rubies, pearls, chrysolites, coral, and other existing things, as well as gold, silver, and others.

Since in the world of religion the *ḥudūd*, through interpretation, extract from revealed and legally prescribed knowledge every beneficial knowledge hidden within it, it follows that divers, by descending into the sea, extract from it every precious substance.

Since the summons and its *ḥudūd* safeguard the security of one who enters the summons and assumes its covenants, protecting him from the strange diversity of opinions concerning the outward aspect of the Law, it follows that the ship and its helmsman safeguard the security of one who boards it, protecting him from destruction caused by the changing winds of the sea.

Since the outward summons—that is, worship through action—has a period of strength, when its sciences and institutions spread, and a period of weakness, when its rites and signs disappear, it follows that the sea has a tide, when its waters increase and spread, followed by an ebb, when its waters decrease and recede.

Since in each of the seven cycles of the outward summons, in everything outward and inward, strength alternates with weakness, it follows that during every day and every night of the week the sea's tide alternates with ebb.

Since at the end of each minor cycle the *ḥujjas* manifest more knowledge concerning the outward and the inward than at the beginning of the cycle, it follows that the monthly increase and decrease of seawater is greater than its daily and nightly increase and decrease.

Since at the completion of cycles, both minor and major, more sciences become manifest than at their beginnings, it follows that the yearly increase and decrease of the sea exceeds the monthly.

Since in the world of religion all knowledge flows to people from the Speaker, it follows that the water of the sea increases from a particular region from which it has been given to flow forth.

Since the knowledge of the Speaker—from whom the sciences issue—proceeds from his receiving more than others of what is conveyed by the First [Intellect] through the mediation of the Second, it follows that the waters of the sea increase from that particular region because it receives more than others the influence of the Sun through the mediation of the Moon.

Since the Prophet—peace be upon him—when the lights of the First [Intellect] become conjoined with him through the mediation of the Second, becomes like the First acting within its own essence, directing thought toward the object sought, so that his knowledge of it multiplies to such an extent that he must share it with others, it follows that this particular

region lies in the course of the Moon in such a way that, when the Moon meets it, its rays—shining with light kindled by the Sun—become conjoined with it.

The Moon then becomes the cause of the boiling and increase of the waters in that region, so that a receptacle larger than the one they presently occupy becomes necessary for them.

This action resembles the action of a concave burning mirror: when set opposite the Sun, it receives its light and effusion in full and, transferring them to whatever lies in their path, burns it.

Such, in brief, is the correspondence established by the scales of religion with regard to water.

Let us render praise to God in obedience and humility, reverence and awe.

May God's blessing abide upon the lord of humankind, the Seal of the heralds, His Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his pure family.

QUARTER SEVEN

On the three generated kingdoms—minerals, plants, and animals—which arise from the celestial bodies and the terrestrial bodies: fire, air, water, and earth

With fourteen streets

STREET ONE

On the second matter from which generated beings arise, considered as a mixture (*mizāj*)

In the section dealing with the mode of being of the elements, we spoke of first matter and showed, on the basis of the prophetic ordinances, what it is and what transformations it undergoes.

We now say: there is no opposition within the essences of the elements themselves. The opposition found in the total body of each arises from alteration and transformation in their essences. Yet transformation comes to them from without, when each of two elements, according to its strength, acts upon the other through the quality proper to it—the hot upon the cold, the dry upon the moist, and conversely—and when each undergoes the action of the others.

Thus all of them, undergoing transformation, interact with one another. From this interaction comes their mingling (*imtizāj*), and from it generated beings arise whose form does not proceed from the individual embodiment of any one of the elements.

Thus, through a **second acquisition** (*iktisāb thānin*), the elements constitute **second matter** for the being of existents.

From the standpoint of the formation of existents from them, the elements occupy two states.

First, some act upon others through their qualities and also through their reception of celestial powers.

Second, some undergo the action of others because of the deficiency of that which predominates in the other.

What arises from these two states properly receives two corresponding names. First, insofar as it results from some acting upon others through penetration and transmission, it is called **mixture** (*mizāj*). Second, insofar as it results from undergoing action, transformation, and passage into a second state in which it can no longer be either of the two things that entered into the mingling, it is called **the mixed** (*mumtazij*).

Thus from one aspect it is mixture, and from another it is the mixed. As mixture it is a sustaining cause; as the mixed it is a sustained effect.

Since the four elements, the seven influencing planets, and the revolving celestial spheres together constitute the sustaining cause of the existents beneath the lunar sphere, whose being is connected with them, and since sustaining causes produce in their effects a multiplicity greater than that present within their own essences, then the multiplicity present:

first, in each of the celestial spheres, stars, and elements, each of which is itself a sustaining cause;

second, in the multiplicity of their states;

and third, in the fact that all their essences become as though one essence and one sustaining cause—

this multiplicity is the sustaining cause that produces the innumerable multiplicity of mixtures from which existents arise.

For in the world of transformation there is nothing except what arises from the four elements and their powers. The elements transform into one another, act upon one another, and predominate over one another according to the conditions that determine them.

Through their interaction there therefore arise many mixtures, which increase still further in number as bodies undergo formal motion toward acquiring everything they are capable of receiving and in which their perfection as such consists, while also undergoing the formal action of the celestial bodies in every one of their states.

These states are multiplied according to the motions arising from the moving celestial bodies and the influences transmitted by their radiation: when they rise or set; when they stand at the zenith; when they recede in apogee or approach in perigee; when their states change through retrograde and direct motion and through their first and second stations; when they are northern or southern; when one becomes vizier; when they are in their houses, terms, faces, exaltations, falls, or debilities; in their triplicities, *nīmbahrs* or decans; in eastern or western elongation; when at every moment they occupy a particular relation to the cusps of the angular houses; when they rule the Ascendant, rise above it, or descend below it; when they form aspects—sextile, trine, square, opposition, or conjunction—or when most of them gather in one or another zodiacal sign.

And such are their states always and everywhere.

As these mixtures become more remote from the natures of the elements, their number increases, multiplying upon itself, so that their multiplicity grows until it becomes incalculable.

Accordingly, the order of the existents arising from them is such that the mixture belonging to what proceeds immediately from the elements is nearer to them and less complex than the mixture of what arises secondarily. Likewise, the mixture of what arises secondarily is nearer to them and less complex than that of what arises thirdly, and so on, until the multiplicity of mixtures through which composite existents are constituted reaches such a degree that nothing which wisdom has ordained to exist remains unrealized, and it arrives at the limit which is the final goal sought by all and beyond which there is no further goal.

Thus the mixture of clouds and other meteorological phenomena arising from the elements resembles them more closely, stands nearer to them in the order of being, and is less complex than the mixture of minerals.

The mixture of minerals is farther from the elements, more complex, and more numerous in species.

The mixture of minerals is in turn nearer to the elements, less complex, and less diverse in species than that of plants.

The mixture of plants is nearer and less complex, and its species less numerous, than the mixture of animals.

And the mixture of animals is nearer and less complex than the mixture of man, who is farther from the elements and more complex than everything preceding him in being.

All these numerous mixtures fall into two classes: **first mixture** and **second mixture**.

The first mixture is that from which meteorological phenomena arise—clouds, mist, meteors, and the like. Although these arise from it, they merely assist Nature in her actions and function as instruments.

The second mixture is that from which the essence of the three generated kingdoms arises, and these exist only through the first mixture.

This second mixture is divided into **twenty-four principles** (*yanbūʿ*), from which are composed the numerous mixtures through which the members of the species falling under the generic divisions of generated beings exist, as will be explained in detail in the section on the mixed.

The truth and correctness of what has been said are confirmed by the divine ordering of the world of religion, the balanced scale of knowledge.

Since the *ḥudūd* of the world of religion interact with one another by teaching and learning, discussing and disputing, it follows that among the elements there is interaction through mutual admixture (*mumāzaja*).

Since in the world of religion the performance by souls of the rites of the two forms of worship, their learning from the *ḥudūd*, and their attachment to them through obedience constitute religion, it follows that the reception by the particles of earth of the powers of fire, air, water, and the higher bodies constitutes mixture—that is, admixture.

Since the higher and lower *ḥudūd*, in giving and receiving, are the sustaining cause of the souls' reception of what issues from them, it follows that the celestial spheres, stars, and elements, acting and undergoing action, are the sustaining cause of the being of mixture.

Since the sustaining cause of the multiplicity of confessions lies in the fact that the ordinances brought by the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—being symbols and similitudes, can be interpreted in many different ways, it follows that the multiplicity of the

elements and of what stands above them, which together constitute the sustaining cause, is the sustaining cause of the multiplicity of mixtures.

Since the existence of spiritual progeny is connected with the performance of worship through knowledge and action, by which virtue is acquired, it follows that the existence of natural progeny is connected with the existence of mixture.

And since in the world of religion the correct, praiseworthy religion pleasing to God and His vicegerents is that conjunction of the two forms of worship in which there is no inclination toward one at the expense of the other, it follows that the balanced, praiseworthy, and correct mixture is that conjunction of powers in the interaction of the elements in which none predominates.

Since in the world of religion souls are divided into Shiʿites and Murjiʾites, it follows that mixtures in all their multiplicity are divided into balanced and unbalanced.

Since in the world of religion the worship of one who combines both forms of worship—knowledge and action—is higher than that of one who neglects one of them, it follows that in the world of Nature the mixture of a generated being whose elemental particles are balanced is higher than the mixture of one deficient in any of the elements.

Since the multiplicity of views, confessions, acts of worship, and sciences in the world of religion, as well as the multiplicity within every act of worship and every science, is incalculable, it follows that the multiplicity of mixtures among generated beings in the world of Nature, and the multiplicity of the mixture within each generated individual, is likewise incalculable.

Since through his faith the believer possesses two things—first, conjunction (*muwāṣala*) with those above him in God and reception of what the *ḥudūd* pour forth; and second, his own action, following those above him, submitting, and ascending through the ranks—it follows that the elements act by joining one another and receiving the powers of the higher bodies, and undergo action by being transformed into generated beings.

Since the *ḥudūd* of the world of religion are both givers insofar as they give and receivers insofar as they receive, it follows that the elements are **mixture** insofar as they act and **the mixed** insofar as they undergo action.

And since some generated beings in the world of religion assist in teaching while others are those who are taught and receive, it follows that mixture is twofold: first, that which serves as matter for what assists Nature in her action; and second, that which serves as matter for generated beings.

Since the existents of the world of religion are distributed into ranks with respect to teaching and knowledge, so that each is endowed with knowledge of more existents than those preceding it, while possessing greater proximity than those following it, and the occupant of the final rank knows so much that no greater multiplicity remains—knowing all the *ḥudūd* and everything connected with religion, more than those preceding him in being—it follows that the elements of the world of Nature and their generated beings are similarly ordered in existence according to the action of some upon others.

The mixture of each generated being is nearer to that preceding it in existence than is the mixture of the one following it; and the latter is more prepared for complexity of structure and more capable of possessing numerous organs and powers than the existent preceding it.

Since in the world of religion the **twenty-four Gates** are nearest to the totality of the sciences of the Prophets and Imams—peace be upon them—and from those sources arise all the ranks of outward and inward worship, while from the teaching and instruction of those Gates proceeds the being of spiritual progeny, it follows that the first thing arising from the celestial and terrestrial bodies through their acting and undergoing action, namely mixture, is divided into **twenty-four mixtures**, from which proceeds the being of natural generated beings.

Such is what the scales of the world of religion reveal concerning mixture through equilibrium and mutual correspondence.

Let us therefore praise God and give thanks to Him. May His blessing rest upon His Messenger, our master Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and upon his pure family.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian. Pasted te

Footnotes

[1] Direct and retrograde motion of a planet — see note 3 to V, 4.

A planet's **first station** occurs when it reaches the point of its eastern position—or, in modern terminology, its eastern elongation—and precedes its retrograde motion; before beginning direct motion, the planet occupies its **second station**.

"At the time of its eastern position the planet possesses its full strength; the Persians call this the position in which [the planet] is **vizier**, and anyone wishing to accomplish something good should do so at this time."

(al-Bīrūnī, *Selected Works*, vol. 6, p. 235.)

A **house** is a portion of the Zodiac passing through a fixed point of the sky in two hours. Each house has its own lord or ruler—that is, a particular planet.

Terms (*ḥudūd*, literally "boundaries") — "these are subdivisions within the various signs of the Zodiac, to each of which a planet is assigned. People disagree concerning them…" (ibid., p. 203). In European astrology these subdivisions are called **terms**, from Latin *terminus*, "boundary."

A **face** — "one third of a zodiacal sign, equal to [ten degrees], together with its ruler. According to the Persians and Greeks, the ruler of the first third of Aries is Mars, of the second the Sun, of the third Venus, and so on through the remaining signs of the Zodiac according to the sequence of the celestial spheres from below" (ibid., p. 202). In European astrology this is called a **decanate**.

A planet's **exaltation** is its position in the zodiacal sign in which it displays its best qualities and, in al-Bīrūnī's expression, is "like a king upon his throne" (ibid., p. 199).

A planet's **fall** occurs in the zodiacal sign opposite its sign of exaltation; in its sign of fall the planet is in its worst condition (ibid., p. 199).

Detriment is the zodiacal sign opposite the planet's **house** (ibid., p. 198).

A **triplicity** is a group of three zodiacal signs equally spaced from one another and represented as an equilateral triangle inscribed in the ecliptic. There are four triplicities corresponding to the four primary elements: Aries–Leo–Sagittarius corresponds to fire, Taurus–Virgo–Capricorn to air, Gemini–Libra–Aquarius to water, and Cancer–Scorpio–Pisces to earth (see ibid., p. 311, commentary). According to al-Bīrūnī, each triplicity has its own nocturnal, diurnal, and common ruler, the latter applying to both day and night (ibid., pp. 199–200).

Nuhbahr — the term derives from the Persian words *nuh*, "nine," and *bahr*, "share" (ibid., p. 312, commentary). According to al-Bīrūnī, *nuhbahrs* are ninth-parts of zodiacal signs, obtained by dividing each sign into equal parts; the Indians call them **navāṃśas** and attach great importance to them (ibid., p. 207).

In al-Kirmānī's text the form is *nubahr*, apparently a corruption of *nuhbahr*. It is also possible, however, that what is intended is **nīmbahr**, from Persian *nīm*, "half," and *bahr*, "share":

"What is the *nīmbahr*? It is half of a zodiacal sign. The Indians call it *chāsim*. The first half of every masculine zodiacal sign is masculine and belongs to the Sun, while the second is feminine and belongs to the Moon; in every feminine sign the first half, conversely, belongs to the Moon, and the second to the Sun."

(ibid., p. 202; p. 312, commentary.)

A **drekkana** is the modern reading of the word *dridjan*; al-Kirmānī gives the altered transcription *zarij*. It is an Arabized form of the Indian word *dṛgāṇa*, itself regarded here as a corruption of a Greek word denoting a triangle. The drekkanas are:

"the thirds of the zodiacal signs among the Indians, who called them *dṛgāṇas*. Their rulers, however, differ from the rulers of the faces, because the first *dridjan* has as its ruler the ruler of the whole zodiacal sign, the ruler of the second is the ruler of the fifth zodiacal sign, and the ruler of the third is the ruler of the ninth zodiacal sign."

(ibid., p. 202; p. 312, commentary.)

Eastern and western position (elongation) — the maximum angular distance of a planet from the Sun, generally calculated for Mercury and Venus and measured in degrees; it differs from planet to planet.

Cusps of the angular houses — see note 3 to V, 7.

"…when they take possession of the Ascendant, rise above it, or fall below it…" — that is, when they stand directly in the **ascending degree** (see note 3 to V, 7), move ahead of it, or lag behind it. A planet connected with the Ascendant in this way was often assigned decisive importance for a person's entire destiny.

Planetary aspects are the mutual positions of planets at points on the ecliptic. Several configurations were regarded as especially significant: when planets occupy points of a hexagon inscribed in the circle of the ecliptic (**sextile**), a triangle (**trine**), or a square (**square**); the first two aspects are favorable and the third unfavorable. Planets may also occupy opposite points (**opposition**) or points close to one another (**conjunction**).

"…when most of them gather in one or another sign of the Zodiac…" — the gathering of three or more planets in a single sign, the so-called **stellium**, was regarded as an unfavorable sign.

STREET TWO

On the existent formed in the region of air through influences, considered as the mixed, and what it is

Since the existent beneath the lunar sphere arises only from matter, and matter is first the matter of a received form and then, together with this received form, becomes matter for another, second form; and since the elements through their reciprocal action and influence already possess a first form, namely mixture, it follows that mixture together with its form is matter for another, second form, namely **the mixed**.

For the matter called mixture, through the interaction of the four elements with their four qualities and through the influence of the bodies above them, acquires a state in which it can no longer be the individual embodiment of any one of those elements from which it arose, because it was formed through their mutual conjunction by admixture and transformation, in which they depart from their individual embodiments.

Nor can it yet be numbered among the existents that arise from it, because in order to become one of those it must undergo something further and receive a second form.

Thus, for example, bread, meat, vegetables, dates, and water, once chewed and present together in the stomach, resemble none of the things that formed the stomach's contents through their mutual conjunction, nor are those contents yet to be numbered among the things they will become and whose forms they will receive—blood, flesh, bones, hair, nails, skin, nerves, and the like.

Accordingly, in this state mixture possesses another rank that it did not originally possess, even though in terms of embodiment it is that from which the future thing will arise.

It is nearer to generated beings (*mutakawwin*) than are the elements, and it is **second matter** for generated beings, prepared to receive their forms according to its predisposition and according to the predominance within it of one of the four elements from which it arose.

Since mixture is second matter for generated beings, and since we speak of it as mixture insofar as it pertains to the active, and as the mixed insofar as it pertains to the passive, and since we have already spoken of it as mixture, we now say concerning it as the mixed:

Since mixture is divided into first and second, the existent arising from it is likewise twofold: primary and secondary.

The primary is what we shall discuss here: namely, the clouds found in the region of air. These are neither fire, nor water, nor earth, nor any one of the four qualities, but something akin to all of them.

They arise through continual heating reaching the two lower bodies with the cooperation of the two upper ones. They are divided into different kinds and constitute the cause of the being of generated things and of most, or perhaps all, of what occurs in the air. For this reason we call them primary existents.

Since proof of the being of everything we seek to know is obtained through the scales of religion, which for the adherents of religion constitute the criterion of truth, we say:

Since in the world of religion the cause of the being of the instructing missionary, and of his ascent from among the people of the summons to the rank of demonstrating proofs, is the effusion of the sciences of the Imams conveyed through the *ḥujja* by instruction—through receiving which he ascends to the highest summits—it follows that in the world of Nature the cause of the being of clouds is the penetration of the heating power from the higher bodies into the lower ones, whose particles, having received it, rise upward.

Since in the world of religion the being of the *ḥudūd* precedes the being of the others, because the *ḥudūd* are the cause of their existence in that world, it follows that in the world of Nature the being of clouds precedes the being of other things, because clouds are the cause of the generated beings existing in that world.

Since the instructing missionary, the repository of religious sciences, knows how to find proofs "in the horizons and in the souls" so as to present them as an example (*mithāl*) and paradigm (*wazn*) to the one asking about religion, and since this instructing missionary possesses effusion and the capacity to explain and demonstrate, through which the life of believers is sustained as they learn of divine things and receive hidden knowledge, and since through him spiritual progeny multiply and the ignorant become knowing, it follows that water is separated from clouds—for they are moist—and falls as rain, through which natural progeny multiply and the dead earth comes to life.

Since not all instructing missionaries are equal in teaching and demonstration, but some have attained the utmost goal in acquiring knowledge and teaching, others possess knowledge but do not speak or teach, others are below even these, and so on down to those who are merely called missionaries but neither know nor teach, it follows that among clouds some possess the utmost moisture and effusion, others less, down to clouds like smoke that contain no moisture and produce no rain.

Since the inability of an instructing missionary to furnish proofs as required by his rank, and the absence of an effusion of knowledge from him, becomes a cause of unbelief among the people of the summons and of the destruction of spiritual progeny, it follows that if a cloud lacks sufficient moisture and brings no rain, this becomes a cause of the drying up of plants and animals and the destruction of natural progeny.

If the instructing missionaries gather before a *ḥujja* and he begins to examine them, putting to each, according to the measure of his knowledge, the questions with which *ḥujjas* are concerned, their speech and proofs multiply and divine truths become manifest therein. This becomes an effusion for the people of the summons, which they receive and by which they live.

Likewise, when clouds gather in the region of air, wind passes among them and penetrates them, producing the crash of thunder and flash of lightning; then, through the great motion of the wind within them, rain falls, which the particles of earth receive and by which they live.

Thus air is interpreted as the *ḥujja*; the presence of clouds in the air as the gathering of instructing missionaries before the *ḥujja*; wind as moving air; and the passage of wind among the clouds as the examination of the instructing missionaries by the questions of the *ḥujja*.

All the explanations and demonstrations they provide are glorification and praise of God, the affirmation of divine unity and worship of Him, as the Most High says:

“The thunder glorifies Him with praise, and the angels out of fear of Him.”

Since in the world of religion the *ḥujja*, when he sees the error of an instructing missionary and wishes to turn it to the benefit of the people of the summons, refers it back to the outward meaning of the words of the Prophet and the Imams—peace be upon them—it follows that air, by carrying a rain cloud toward the cold north, transforms its rain into hail and snow.

Since the Gate, pouring forth knowledge as required by his perfection, and the *ḥujjas* beneath him who receive it, are the cause of the spread of the divine sciences among the people of the summons, and this is therefore a general matter serving the welfare of rational progeny, it follows that the celestial bodies, through their motion, cause the bodies below them to move in such a way that this motion descends through their particles into the air and becomes a wind blowing for the benefit of natural progeny—namely the north wind arising from the motion of the moving bodies.

Since teaching and knowledge of interpretation reach the people of the summons from the higher missionaries and *ḥujjas*, which is a particular matter serving the welfare of spiritual progeny, it follows that vapors rising from the earth into the region of air produce within it an additional motion that becomes a wind blowing for the benefit of natural progeny—namely the south wind arising from the ascent of vapors from the borders of the earth.

Since the teaching of those below by the *ḥudūd* and the instruction of the lower by the higher meet together and become the cause of bringing forth the many outward and inward aspects of the answer, it follows that the motion of particles rising from the earth toward the region of air and the motion of air descending into it through the motion of the celestial bodies meet and, according to their strength, produce different winds.

Since in the world of religion the instructing missionaries, through the diffusion of the powers of the Imams and the arrival of those powers to them from the ranks of the *ḥudūd* of the world of Creation—of which He Himself says, “He was at a distance of two bow-lengths or nearer”—manifest something wondrous to the intellect, senses, and religious zeal of those who hear them, it follows that clouds, receiving the spreading rays of the Sun, become colored with the rainbow in red, yellow, and green hues, appearing before astonished observers.

Since at the beginning and end of the minor cycles knowledge concerning some particular matter is manifested by the instructing missionaries from the Imams—peace be upon them—while at the end of the sixth cycle, when it passes away, and the beginning of the seventh, knowledge concerning everything is manifested by the Qāʾim and his successors, it follows that these rainbow colors appear at the end of the year when the cold days cease and at the beginning of the new year when spring blossoms.

Since at the beginnings of cycles some among the people of the summons, through their sincerity and reception of the light of faith, rise in the world of religion to the rank of Gate, distinguishing themselves in this ascent from those like them, so that they are listened to, remembered, and followed, and they foretell what will occur in the world of religion—John son of Zechariah, for example—it follows that some vapors rising into the region of air may

possess a mixture prepared to receive influences and receive them in such a way as to become distinguished from all others, becoming like a tailed planet, that is, a comet, foretelling events in the world of Nature.

Some among the people of the summons rise to the rank of *ḥujja* and then occupy the rank of Gate but do not remain firm in that rank, because they doubt what they profess. They therefore fall and return to their original rank, and those who received instruction from them perish.

It follows that a certain mixture may arise in the region of air, then rise to the uppermost edge of air near fire, where it ignites, but fails to remain because of the abundance of earthy particles within it. It therefore breaks apart and returns, falling to earth from which it arose, becoming a lightning bolt destructive to whatever it strikes.

Since one who rises to the rank of *ḥujja* bordering upon the rank of Gate may, without remaining firmly established in that degree of the summons, nevertheless remain sincere, certain, and firm in the laws of confession and therefore not fall from his degree of religion and faith, but instead travel through the earth, illuminating wherever he arrives the path of worship and proclaiming the laws of confession and the meaning symbolized by the Law, as he learned it from the higher *ḥudūd*, it follows that a mixture which happens to arise in the region of air, ascends to the upper edge of the body adjoining fire—that is, air—and catches fire, may not fall back and return to earth, but become an elongated meteor crossing the sky and illuminating the darkness of night so as to reveal the forms of things to the eye.

In the world of religion some people of the summons may rise to the rank of missionaries and, through abundance of knowledge and the power of the *ḥujja*, teach those who listen to them the sciences of interpretation and the ranks of the terrestrial *ḥudūd*, so that they are enveloped by the grace poured forth by the *ḥujja*.

It follows that vapors rising from the earth may form a mixture that does not ascend to the upper edge of the air, but remains at its lower edge because of the moisture of the air, and from it there forms mist, moistening plants and benefiting them.

Such is what the scales reveal, through which knowledge is apprehended in the world of religion by means of equilibrium and mutual correspondence—those scales that are the touchstone of the saying of the Most High:

“We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth.”

Glory be to God, who has led us to the good and removed doubts and uncertainty by kindling the lights of the world of religion and raising the guiding arks of salvation—Muḥammad and his pure family.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian. Excellent is this Protector, and excellent this Helper!

Footnotes

[1] The **two lower bodies** are earth and water; the **two higher bodies** are air and fire.

[1] Qurʾān 13:14.

[1] Qurʾān 53:9. **“At a distance of two bows”** is an idiom meaning “very near” (compare the Russian expression “at an arrow’s flight”). I retain the literal translation in order to preserve the wordplay employed by al-Kirmānī.

[1] The discussion of the **rainbow** is connected with the cited verse through a play on words: “rainbow” in Arabic is *qaws Quzaḥ*, literally **“the bow of Quzaḥ”** (Quzaḥ being the name of the angel responsible for the clouds).

[1] Qurʾān 41:53.

STREET THREE

On the three generated kingdoms—minerals, plants, and animals—beginning with minerals considered as bodies

In the previous section we spoke of the existent arising from the elements as mixture and as the mixed. We showed that just as mixture is divided into primary and secondary, so too is the mixed; and we explained what belonging to the first of these two is found in the region of air.

All this is sufficient for our true brethren, relying upon the prophetic work, to proceed further in deriving knowledge concerning natural existents.

In general, however, it is clear from what was said in the Fifth Quarter that the discussion of minerals as bodies belongs to the second part—that is, the secondary mixture—which exists only through the first.

We therefore say: since, with the division of mixture, the mixed is likewise divided into primary and secondary, and since we have already spoken briefly, along the path of religion, concerning the first, namely clouds and meteorological phenomena, we now add that the second of these two parts consists of the three generated kingdoms in their order: **minerals, plants, and animals**.

No individual of any species belonging to them exists except from a mixture arising from the four elements through the interaction of their four qualities—heat, cold, moisture, and dryness—and through the influence of the active celestial bodies situated above them, as previously explained.

Since the three kingdoms exist in this way, we say the following.

From the fact that the four elements act upon one another, so that according to the power of wisdom flowing through them the powers of some predominate over those of others, it follows that in every existent arising from them these four elements must be ordered according to the predominance and power of each and according to the actuality of that which predominates, so that the weak and potentially hidden element lies beneath the domination of the predominant, preceding, and actual one, as ordained by the Most High.

For example, in malleable bodies dryness is manifest in their mixture, while the other three qualities—heat, cold, and moisture—are hidden within them and ordered according to predominance and power.

Yet in truth moisture is the subordinate quality among them. It remains hidden within them and exists only because of the predominance of the heat of fire; when that heat reaches its limit, the moisture becomes manifest and they become flowing liquid.

Thus from the four elements there must exist **twenty-four kinds of the mixed**, which are the sources of everything formed.

Of these, eight are balanced; this balance gives life to plants and animals and fusibility to minerals. The others deviate from balance through excess or deficiency.

These twenty-four compounds (*murakkab*) can be represented so that they may be apprehended by the intellect. For this purpose each of the four qualities—heat, cold, dryness, and moisture—is designated by a letter:

- **a** = heat
- **b** = cold
- **c** = dryness
- **d** = moisture

They are then combined, with the quality whose letter comes first being predominant in the fourfold compound, followed by the second, and so on until the fourth, which is wholly subordinate.

The twenty-four compounds are therefore:

abcd, acbd, adbc, abdc, adcb, acdb,
bcda, bdca, badc, bdac, bcad, bacd,
cdab, cadb, cbda, cdba, cbad, cabd,
dabc, dbac, dacb, dcab, dbca, dcba.

These are the twenty-four possible rankings of the four qualities.

Generated beings (*mutawallidāt*) then multiply beyond reckoning through the celestial powers descending upon the mixture from bodies performing different motions relative to it, in accordance with their multiplicity and through the radiation penetrating it according to the numerous relations previously mentioned.

Each of these qualities occupies in every existent one of four ranks of being and predominance: one takes the first rank, another the second, and so on to the fourth, according to the sustaining causes that determine it. Through this, the mixture deviates from balance.

In the same way the existents themselves multiply without number.

Since the existents of the world of Nature are ordered in their being from the highest existent down to earth, which is most remote from the Principle—that is, the First Created and First Existent—in such a way that each is joined to the next, opposites are preserved from one another, and every existent possesses what is appropriate to it so that one is nobler than another, it follows that the generated beings produced from the four elements upon earth, which is farthest from the Principle, are likewise ordered.

An existent arising from the elements and composed from them, through possessing something absent from earth itself, stands nearer to the Principle than earth does, because from that extreme remoteness it rises to a rank nearer the Principle.

The same applies to an existent arising from an existent produced from them, and to an existent arising from an existent arising from an existent produced from them, until, increasing in complexity, moving away from this end most remote from the Principle, and

ascending through the ranks, the existent reaches that final goal beyond which there is no further goal.

It then becomes the **second limit of existence**, standing opposite the First [Existent].

This second limit is nearer to the First than all the other limits because it approaches it directly, resembles it, is like it, corresponds to it, and is homogeneous (*mujānis*) with it.

It is a second limit just as the First is a limit; it stands at the rank of resurrection (*inbiʿāth*) and conjunction (*luḥūq*), just as the First stands at the rank of precedence in being.

This is the nature of the generated kingdoms, as we stated in our treatise *Signs of Faith*: they are distributed among degrees and joined to one another by a union of proximity, through which they resemble that from which their being proceeds and which stands above them in the ranks of being.

For the genera of generated things contain species ordered according to nobility such that the first species of each genus is lower than all the others, while the final species is highest in rank.

Yet these species are joined together through mutual resemblance and homogeneity. The first species of each genus resembles what stands below it in rank through the homogeneity joining them, while from another aspect it resembles what stands above it in rank, through a different correspondence joining it to the higher.

Thus, for example, the highest celestial sphere, insofar as it is body, corresponds to bodies; but insofar as it possesses a mover belonging to a genus above it, it corresponds to the world of the Intellects.

In this way the generated kingdoms are inwardly linked, joined to one another, and ordered.

They are three in number: **minerals, plants, and animals—no more and no less.**

The first among them, whose being precedes the others, is minerals; then come plants, and then animals.

In this they resemble the world of religion, in which there are likewise three kinds of progeny.

The first is progeny that receives support from the world of Creation and thereby becomes a cause of the life of others—for example, the Prophets and the *ḥudūd* who succeed them, whose being in the world of religion precedes the being of those who follow them.

This progeny occupies the same position as **gold among minerals**, preceding all others in being and nobility.

The next progeny in being receives the first worship, namely the outward aspect of the Law and its ordinances. Its position corresponds to that of **plants**, whose being follows that of minerals.

The progeny following this receives both forms of worship together, namely the outward and inward aspects of the Law. Its position corresponds to that of **animals**, which follow plants in the order of being.

Minerals, then, are first among the generated kingdoms. In the order of being they stand nearest to earth.

The first species of minerals consists of those that are not malleable, such as gypsum.

This species resembles earth from which it arose more closely than any other. It possesses a shared character (*ishtirāk*): it resembles earth because it is like dust (*turāb*), while from the standpoint of the acquired meaning through which it becomes pulverized and thereby distinguished from ordinary dust, it resembles its fellow minerals, which are not simply dust and occur only in particular places.

After this come higher species.

Ascending in the order of being, the minerals terminate in a species that likewise possesses a shared character, being from one aspect stone and from another plant.

An example is **coral**, the marine "plant" that becomes stone when exposed to air, together with similar species of this genus.

Through the power of growth with which it is endowed, this species stands above the other mineral species while remaining below the species of plants.

Since the being of generated things proceeds from the elements and they arise from their mixture together with the celestial powers descending upon them, and since each generated thing is thus twofold—on the one hand possessing that upon which its being as body is founded and through which its essence is constituted, and on the other possessing that with which its life is connected—we say concerning minerals as bodies that they are divided into **malleable** and **non-malleable**.

The non-malleable minerals come earlier in being because they resemble earth and are nearer to it. They include sulfur, arsenic, salt, vitriol, alum, mercury, talc, and other things such as marcasite, antimony, magnesia, lime, and innumerable other kinds of mineral.

The malleable minerals are divided into lead, tin, iron, copper, silver, and gold.

All of these arise from vapors generated within the earth through the interaction of the elements. To them flow the power and radiation of the celestial bodies moving relative to them. These vapors become stagnant and confined with no possibility of escape; the matters are present, heating continues, and among these particles those capable of transformation are transformed through the powers gathered together.

According to the sustaining causes determining which quality predominates in the mixture, different formations arise.

If the powers are balanced, **gold** is produced.

If they are near balance, or remote from it, or extremely remote from it, other bodies arise, both fusible and non-fusible.

The fusible possesses life, while that which is not fusible because of excess in the qualities possesses powers through which it acts.

This occurs because all these bodies are close to the elements from which they arose, and consequently their complexity is slight.

Because their complexity is slight, the opposition among their particles is slight; and because there is little opposition within their essences, they remain unchanged for a long time, and if they are destroyed, this occurs only through external action.

The final end of these bodies is to become bearers of forms whose being is connected with human crafts—for example, copper becoming a narrow-necked vessel, gold becoming an ornament, and so forth.

These bodies are potential in relation to craftsmen, and their perfection is imparted by those craftsmen.

Since for the knowledge of existents that we seek we possess both the scales of religion and the treasury of the divine summons and its adherents, we turn to them in order to obtain further certainty and knowledge.

The fact that in the world of religion the human soul is the goal toward which are directed the lights of the *ḥudūd* that pour forth effusion and teach, in order to produce spiritual progeny from it, proves that the lights of the moving celestial bodies converge upon earth in order to produce natural progeny from it.

The fact that the *ḥudūd* are connected with one another in their being and ordered from the highest existents down to natural souls, their sought-for goal, being—as the Prophet said, may God bless him and his family—"like a stretched rope, one end of which is with God and the other with you," proves that natural existents are ordered and joined to one another from the highest existent down to earth and its generated beings, and that through the divine ordering uniting them they are as though a single thing: one end of this unity is the Created that received being from the Most High, while the other is the second resurrected being that is with us.

The fact that the human soul, being the limit of spiritual existence, is devoid of the sciences by which the existent preceding it is exalted, and cannot endure until it acquires them from the successors of God—peace be upon them—through worship by knowledge and action, and that it stands at the greatest distance from the highest Principle, namely the First Created and First Existent, and is therefore the lowest of existents, proves that earth, being the limit of corporeal existence, is devoid of everything by which the other corporeal existents are exalted and is lifeless until it acquires this by receiving, at God's command, the influences of the bodies moving relative to it.

Earth likewise stands at the greatest distance from the Principle and is therefore the lowest existent.

The fact that one who receives and acquires knowledge from the possessors of support through the two forms of worship and rises through instruction above the rank of sensation stands nearer to the Principle than one occupying the rank farthest removed from it proves that what arises from earth, after receiving and acquiring the powers illuminating it and rising above the rank of earth, stands nearer to the Principle than that which remains within earth at the rank of greatest remoteness.

The fact that natural souls, through the lights of effusion they acquire, become:

souls supported by heaven in worship of their Lord, in teaching, and in guiding others;

souls receiving only outward worship through action, obedient to their Lord and receiving instruction;

and souls receiving together both outward and inward worship through action and knowledge, obedient to their Lord, receiving instruction, and acquiring the life to come—

and that each of these ranks, through the various confessions falling beneath it, functions as a genus ordering species, while each species orders numerous individuals, proves that the existents arising from the elements, through acquiring influences, likewise become:

a generated being receiving soul and power, as in minerals;

a generated being receiving only the vegetative soul, as in plants;

and a generated being receiving together the vegetative and sensory souls, as in animals.

Each of these, through the various forms of existents falling beneath it—for example, malleable and non-malleable varieties of minerals, herbaceous and arboreal plants, flying and non-flying animals—is a genus ordering species, while each species orders an incalculable multitude of individuals.

The fact that every species of spiritual progeny occupying its rank has, on the one hand, a correspondence with those below it through which they are joined, and on the other hand, a resemblance to what stands above it through which it is joined to that higher rank, proves that the first species of every natural genus is related both to what lies below it and to what lies above it.

Among minerals, for example, gypsum occupies this position: on the one hand it is related to earth, being of its genus and sharing one nature with it; on the other hand, having acquired the power through which it ceased to be mere dust, gypsum is related to the other mineral species.

And since all the species of every genus of spiritual progeny are ordered so that some stand above others, with the first species standing below all the others above it and the sequence terminating in a species that shares a character with both its own lower fellows and the higher species of another genus, it follows that the first species of each natural genus stands below all the species above it and that the sequence terminates in an intermediate species.

Such an intermediate species resembles all the lower species of its own genus, because it belongs to that genus, while at the same time it corresponds to the higher species of another genus and thus stands beneath them.

Coral is the example: insofar as it is a mineral species it resembles the other minerals related to it; insofar as it is a "plant," it resembles the species of plants.

It therefore stands above minerals and below plants.

Since all those connected with religion are divided into those who take no interest in it and have neither intention nor conviction firmly to adhere to it—for example, the ignorant and many people in distant lands who concern themselves only with eating, drinking, sexual indulgence, vanity, arrogance, pride, cunning, and every form of greed—and those who care for religion and possess the intention and conviction firmly to adhere to it—for example, upright and virtuous people and those who oversee them, who observe religious ordinances and norms in their acts and conduct—it follows that minerals likewise divide into those whose particles are not united and which possess no power to preserve their being, such as gypsum, salt, and similar substances, and those whose particles are united, internally connected, and possess the power to preserve their being, such as gold, silver, and other bodies whose joined particles preserve their existence.

Since those entering the religious sphere occupy many different ranks, so that some are fit for the great task with which their being is connected while others are suited only to a very small task, yet all possess some usefulness, it follows that minerals likewise fall into ranks according to utility: some yield great benefit, while others yield little, though all are useful.

Since the ignorant, the arrogant and prideful, and the greedy acquisitive people who know nothing of the good of religion and possess no acquired intellect (*ʿaql iktisābī*), although useful in certain respects, are nevertheless impious evildoers whose company harms eternal life, it follows that sulfur, arsenic, vitriols, and other mineral kinds, although useful in certain respects, are all poisons, and consuming them harms natural life.

Since such communities, possessing neither religion nor a good nature, exist because they are remote from balance, and therefore receive the influences of the luminaries and natural powers reaching them in a manner corresponding to their mixture, it follows that all these kinds of vitriols, arsenics, sulfurs, and the like possess their particular nature and form because the influences of the luminaries reach them when they are far from balance.

Those influences therefore act upon them as fire acts upon one thing by binding it together and upon another by dissolving it, according to the nature of that upon which it acts.

Since the virtues through which perfection is attained are ordered in the Laws in such a way as to culminate in a Law that gathers all Laws together, it follows that the ordered minerals culminate in a body that gathers them all within itself and stands above all of them—namely **gold**, which stands above all minerals.

Since the cause of the existence of the Law and all else brought by the Prophet—may God bless him—and since this Law is complete in its rank and stands above the other Laws and ordinances, is that the divine power flowed within his soul and he received the effusion of the First Intellect so fully that he became the receptacle of that effusion, and to such a degree that

he became as exalted and perfect as it, it follows that gold among the other minerals over which it stands became gold because its matter attained such a degree in receiving the power of the Sun that the Sun's effusion upon it was complete, and because the powers of the Sun penetrated it so fully that they imparted to it the same color and brilliance as the Sun.

Since divine matters act upon the natural souls of humankind, and those souls receive them according to their mixtures and dispositions, so that one receiving them in perfect balance becomes complete and becomes a Speaker, while those deviating slightly from balance, then progressively more and more until very far from balance, become *ḥudūd*, each occupying the corresponding rank, it follows that celestial motions and influences act upon earth and its particles, which receive those influences according to their mixtures and dispositions.

If the influences are received in balance, the particles gather together and **gold** is produced.

If they are received less perfectly, and progressively farther from balance, the particles gather together and produce other bodies corresponding to their ranks and mixtures—silver, copper, lead, talc, and others.

Since the effusive divine matters are bestowed especially upon the Prophets and possessors of the great cycles, because they stand at the horizon of those powers and uniquely among the kinds of men possess conjunction with them, it follows that the powers flowing from the higher bodies to terrestrial particles are bestowed especially upon minerals lying within the horizon of those powers—upon some to the utmost degree and upon others less, as with gold and the other mineral bodies.

Since the *ḥudūd* differ by rank in their immunity from error, some being sinless and firm in religion and its ordinances—such as the Speakers and those who succeed them in preserving the laws and norms of the religious community—while others below them do not possess that same firmness, it follows that minerals likewise differ by rank in their resistance to fire and durability.

Some remain firm in fire, endure through the ages, and suffer no corruption, as gold does; others are corrupted and cannot withstand fire, as with other bodies.

Since the work of the *ḥudūd* in establishing religion and producing its progeny is completed only after many major and minor cycles, it follows that mineral bodies formed in their deposits reach the fullness of their being only after the passage of long ages (*dahr*), epochs, and years.

Since the total number of Laws, abrogating and abrogated, is six—the first that of Adam, peace be upon him, and the last that of Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family—it follows that the malleable metals are divided into six: **lead, tin, copper, iron, silver, and gold**.

Since the sixth Law alone remains un-abrogated until the Day of Judgment, it follows that gold abides perpetually without suffering corruption.

Since Laws lose their force because of corrupt innovations introduced into them and subsequently legalized, it follows that mineral bodies may likewise suffer corruption through

the intrusion of other bodies of their own kind—for example, silver through sulfur, or gold and diamond through lead.

Such are the results of the search for knowledge and the attainment of realities furnished by the scales of religion employed in the investigation of things.

Let us therefore glorify God, who has brought us to this limit; without His guidance we would not have found the path.

May God bless and greet His Messenger, our master the Prophet Muḥammad, our master the Legatee ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the pure Imams descended from their loins.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

Footnotes

[1] Minerals (*maʿādin*) — according to the medieval classification of existents, this term was used for all inorganic substances. Animals (*ḥayawān*) means all living beings, including man. When al-Kirmānī wishes to emphasize the distinction between man and the other animals, he calls the latter bahāʾim—"irrational beasts."

[1] The original has **talc**. This term apparently referred to **mica** (see al-Bīrūnī, *Collection of Information for the Knowledge of Precious Stones [Mineralogy]*, Leningrad, 1963, p. 447, commentary).

[1] Marcasite (*marqashīshā*) — "In medieval Eastern and European mineralogy this name embraced almost the entire group of sulfide minerals—the pyrites. Golden, silver, and copper marcasites apparently correspond to modern chalcopyrite, marcasite, and pyrite, and perhaps to other sulfide ores as well" (al-Bīrūnī, *Collection of Information for the Knowledge of Precious Stones [Mineralogy]*, p. 436).

[1] Al-Kirmānī here repeats an opinion widespread among his contemporaries. Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, for example, writes:

“Among stones there is none except lead that can consume, break, or spoil diamond. Lead breaks it and reduces it to powder. This stone [diamond] by nature ought to have become gold. But the water from which the diamond was formed, while it was in the mine, was dried out by the heat of the mine; its moisture disappeared and it condensed until there arose in it an adhesiveness like that of mercury. Then, through extreme dryness, it rapidly condensed into the state of stone, and saltiness arose in it. For this reason lead breaks it and reduces it to powder. Had it hardened gradually and slowly, it would have become gold. Because of its saltiness and extreme dryness it consumes other stones. But lead breaks and spoils it because of the sulfurous substance contained in lead. And because the nature of salt is contained in diamond, when it perceives the odor of sulfur it disintegrates.”

(*Cosmographie de Chems-ad-Din Abou-Abdallah Mohammed ed-Dimichqi*, Arabic text published from the edition begun by M. Fraehn and continued by M. A. Mehren, St. Petersburg, 1886; cited from al-Bīrūnī, *Collection of Information for the Knowledge of Precious Stones [Mineralogy]*, p. 85.)

Al-Bīrūnī, however, explains the matter differently:

“Moreover, in order to amaze, he [Abū Zayd al-Rājānī] reports concerning diamond that, although it is the hardest of stones and the most victorious among them, it is broken by the softest and weakest of metals, namely lead, which most resembles wax. And this, as they say, is a special property of lead, just like its ability through its odor to crumble gold. Indeed, litharge prepared from lead acts in the same way when the outside of a crucible is coated with it.

“But the matter is otherwise. Diamond damages the hammer and anvil if one attempts to crush it with them, thereby spoiling the surfaces of both. When it breaks, it is itself damaged and at the same time damages them. Therefore it is wrapped in a piece of lead and struck lightly until the force of the blows overcomes it; it is then unable to damage either the hammer or the anvil. In this way one can also prevent the diamond from decomposing and scattering. Lead can moreover be replaced by wax placed in a reed tube.”

(Ibid., p. 85.)

STREET FOUR

On minerals as natural souls; on the fact that they possess action and knowledge; and on the nature of that knowledge and action

Having spoken briefly of minerals as bodies, we now say the following concerning them as natural powers.

In the Fifth Quarter, when discussing the quiddity of Nature, we showed that the life emanating from the world of Intellect, being one of the two parts that constitute the embodiment of the world of Nature, flows through all existents and grants to each the perfection it must attain according to its mixture. We also showed that this life and the other part through which life exists are one thing possessing two relations, by each of which there belongs to it that which constitutes the perfection of its being.

Since, as we said, every existent in the world of Nature exists through the life flowing within it, every existent belonging to the genus of minerals likewise possesses something corresponding to what the soul is for a moving being. Through this it is alive, and through this it acts upon other existents.

Existing where it is, any mineral does not require a power greater than the one it possesses in order to preserve its own essence. It shuts its doors against what is opposed to it and capable of corrupting it, and opens its embrace to what agrees and corresponds with it.

For it is not complete, yet neither is it merely potential in such a way that it would need to extend itself in many directions—which would require numerous powers—as man must do in seeking the limit in which his perfection consists. Possessing the nature appointed to it in creation, it attains in its activity, within the state in which it exists, everything required by its mixture.

Its manifest actions are of this sort: some minerals rejoice in one another, while others withdraw into themselves at the sight of one another; some bind together, while others display aversion.

Thus there is aversion between iron and mercury: mercury does not bind with iron, does not open its embrace to it, does not allow iron to immerse itself within it, and does not combine with it as it does with gold and silver, except through special treatment.

There is likewise hostility between gold and lead: nothing harms gold as lead does, for lead corrupts it.

There is hostility too between lead and other bodies such as silver and copper, which it damages and destroys. For this reason lead is used in the purification of bodies.

There is also hostility between lead and diamond: nothing can damage or split diamond except lead.

By contrast, there is love between gold and mercury; love likewise between sulfur and gold, between arsenic and silver, between iron and copper—so that if the latter two are mixed they

cannot again be separated—and between the magnet and iron, for by reason of this love iron is drawn to the magnet and does not betray it.

There are many other examples of the same kind, familiar to those among the people of the [prophetic] work who have come to know minerals as, in the expression of Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, "that which is conditioned through causes."

All these phenomena possess a root and source. This means that there is something active with which they are connected, for such actions could not proceed from bodies simply insofar as they are bodies, because corporeality entails undergoing action rather than acting.

This special principle (*maʿnā*) through which such things occur is called the **soul** of that existent—although it would deserve a special name of its own.

This soul possesses an awareness (*maʿrifa*) like that discussed in the section on the quiddity of Nature; for it this awareness is analogous to knowledge (*ʿilm*) in a being endowed with sensation.

The soul is likewise an active power which, by the command of God, Lord of the worlds, acts in accordance with the transformations occurring in the mineral and the influence of the life flowing within it, striving to preserve its vessel.

The truth of what we have said is supported by the scales of religion through their establishment of correspondence and mutual equivalence.

Since the Scripture and Law brought by the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—are inseparably joined to the Imams who preserve them, peace be upon them, and who succeed the Prophet, so that neither can be separated from the other, and since without the Imams the Scripture and Law would be altered and replaced, it follows that mineral bodies possess essential powers that the Most High has inseparably joined to them so that these powers may preserve them; without those powers, the bodies would perish and their particles would scatter.

Since the ordinances of an abrogating Law deprive most of the norms of the abrogated Law of their force, so that the two are mutually incompatible, it follows that the powers present in mineral bodies are in opposition to one another and destroy one another.

Since some ordinances and norms of abrogating Laws sometimes agree with those of the abrogated Laws, it follows that some of the powers present in mineral bodies likewise agree with one another.

And since the rites and ordinances deriving from God are numerous, the minerals are likewise numerous beyond those six that possess power and upon which the benefits of the world depend.

Such is what the scales of religion establish, through equilibrium and correspondence, concerning the powers present in mineral bodies.

Let us therefore glorify God with thanksgiving. May He bless and greet His Messenger, our master Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and the pure Imams.

Footnotes

[1] It is interesting to compare this statement with the view of al-Bīrūnī, who wrote:

“All stones float on the surface of mercury without sinking, except gold, for it sinks in it because of its great weight, not because mercury combines with it and draws it toward itself, as some have thought. We tested this under [various] conditions, and it became clear that this occurs solely because of the property of heaviness.”

At the same time, al-Bīrūnī does accept interaction between gold and mercury:

“Mercury readily penetrates molten substances, but iron only with difficulty. It is destructive to gold, crumbling it by its substance and also by its odor [vapors], if these are emitted through fire or if the wind carries them to gold situated at some distance from it.”

(al-Bīrūnī, *Collection of Information for the Knowledge of Precious Stones [Mineralogy]*, pp. 216–217.)

[1] Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (ca. 796–861) — one of the best-known Egyptian Sufis.

STREET FIVE

On plants as bodies; on the fact that they are more complex than minerals and possess more instruments

We have already spoken of mixture—what it is—and of the way in which the elements, acting upon one another, intermingle. We have also explained how their complex combinations multiply through the differences produced by the multitude of continual motions of the celestial bodies relative to them, and through the influence of the radiation flowing from each of the elevated bodies, each of which, as previously explained, occupies at every moment its own particular position.

Since we have already spoken briefly of minerals and their divisions, and since plants follow them in the order of being, we now say:

It is the supreme divine providence, caring for existents, that preserves them in a strict order admitting no exception, and with this providence the being of everything is connected.

Making use of one intermediary or of several, providence establishes every existent as an aid to every other, so as to bring each toward its final goal, its perfection, and its limit.

Thus this providence wisely established causes for the descent of water upon all the projecting parts of the earth, so that, gradually moistened by it, now heated and now cooled, they might undergo transformation, depart from their original nature, and pass into a condition in which they could become plants.

Over those particles hidden in the depths of the earth it gave authority to natural heat, so that heat might draw them outward toward the air, which providence made a partner in assisting the vegetative soul arising within them. Through this they are enabled to reach the place where they may receive their allotted share of the active causes and where the Sun, by the power implanted in it by the Most High, may convey to them the fullness appointed for them.

Since this primary mixture was formed from things whose essences contain opposition and from powers coming from moving bodies differing in their qualities, its complexity is greater than that of the mixture from which minerals arose, and the oppositions within its essence are more numerous than in the mineral mixture.

Since these oppositions are causes through which its particles gradually, little by little, disintegrate from time to time, supreme divine providence gave the plant instruments—which stand to it as organs stand to an animal—in order to preserve its continued existence.

For the plant could not endure while containing oppositions within its essence and while also being continually subjected to additional external causes, the foremost assistants of its corruption, unless through these instruments it could replace whatever had been corrupted or fallen away.

These instruments also make the plant resemble animals, which stand above it in rank.

Thus it possesses roots for drawing in the required materials, corresponding to the mouth of an animal; a stem or trunk, corresponding to the animal's body; internal soft tissues—such as the pith of a palm, or the soft pale tissue within the hollow parts of branches, for example in the pomegranate or grapevine—corresponding to its stomach and belly; branches, corresponding to everything attached to the animal's body; places from which resin and gum are excreted, corresponding to the outlets for urine and excrement and to pores; bark, corresponding to skin; nodes, corresponding to joints; leaves, corresponding to hair; nutritive channels through which materials move toward its various parts, together with the veins on the reverse side of leaves, corresponding to veins and vessels.

Its fruits correspond to its deeds: pleasant fruits to good deeds, and repulsive fruits to evil ones.

Because of this there exist an incalculable number of plant species. In this condition they resemble the elements less than that which precedes them in being does, stand higher in rank, resemble what is above them more closely, and are nearer, as we have shown, to the Principle.

The species of plants are ordered in the same manner as the species of minerals.

The first of them, as we have already said, is both mineral and plant. It is therefore the highest species of minerals and the lowest species of plants, and through it minerals are joined to plants.

The species of plants then ascend in order according to their qualities until they reach a species that is at once plant and animal.

An example is the **wāqwāq tree**: it is a plant, but in the form of its fruits and in its voice it is an animal.

Another example is the shell-bearing snail found on sea coasts: insofar as it has a shell it resembles plants, while insofar as the creature living in the shell moves, it is an animal.

Or consider the date palm, which is a plant but resembles an animal in many respects, especially in that the setting of its fruit occurs through fertilization by a male individual. It is therefore nobler than the other plants and higher in rank than they, though still below animals.

In this manner plants are joined to animals.

Since among the existents serving as causes in the being of generated things, one is as though male and another as though female, while some are both, and since generated beings arise through the action of one upon the other, so that neither of the two—male or female—is sufficient by itself for the existence of what proceeds from them, but both are required together, we find the same among plants and animals.

Some plants have no need of assistance from male individuals, because in such species each individual equally possesses the organs of reproduction and is therefore self-sufficient in this respect.

Thus a date stone possesses within its own essence such a power that, when it encounters what is required for the manifestation of its activity, it becomes a palm.

Likewise every grain of wheat contains within its own essence everything that frees it from need of a male power.

Others, however—such as the date palm—can bear fruit only through a male power.

In this they resemble the causes of their own being and correspond to what stands above them in rank, namely animals, of whose existence plants are themselves one of the causes.

We also say that all plants and minerals, considered as bodies, are subjects (*mawḍūʿ*) for human crafts.

Wood, for example, receives from the carpenter the form of a bed; bronze receives from the caster the form of a cauldron or cooking pot; iron receives from the smith the form of an anvil.

All these bodies are potential in relation to their artificial forms, and their perfection consists in actually acquiring those forms.

The truth of all this is confirmed by the scales of religion, which establish mutual equilibrium and correspondence.

Since the proximate cause of the being of those who practice outward worship is that the explanations, instruction, and proofs of the *ḥujjas*—who succeed the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, in instruction and the summons—reach them and awaken their interest, it follows that the proximate cause of the being of plants is that water reaches the particles of earth, descending as rain from clouds ordered by the command of the Most High, and waters them.

Since those who respond to the summons enter beneath the protection of worship and cease to be what they formerly were, it follows that particles of earth receiving the moisture of water undergo transformation and depart from their former form.

Since the Prophet—peace be upon him—through the grace poured forth by the Most High and in obedience to Him, received authority over all people and commanded them to practice justice and goodness while forbidding transgressions, excesses, and injustice, so as to bring them out of darkness into light, it follows that the Sun, through the power implanted in it by the Most High, possesses authority over everything beneath it and draws particles hidden in the depths of bodies toward the air.

Since the *ḥudūd* of religion teach people religious matters, restoring what they have forgotten or failed to retain in memory, so that through this they themselves may be preserved, it follows that the branches and roots of a plant are the cause through which that which replaces its corrupted or lost particles is conveyed to it, thereby preserving its essence.

Since one who practices outward worship performs more actions, stands nearer to the *ḥudūd* in the temple of religious worship, and occupies a higher rank than unbelievers and hypocrites, it follows that a plant is more complex, nearer to what is elevated in the world of

Nature, and more closely resembles it than does earth, while departing farther from that in which earth and plant resemble one another.

Since all the people of the outward are distributed into ranks according to their fulfillment of obligatory actions—some standing above others because they diligently perform all prescriptions, others below them because they neglect everything prescribed, still others performing some prescriptions while neglecting others, and so forth, according to the quantity and quality of each action—it follows that plant species are likewise ordered: some stand above others, some resemble the higher species of the animal genus, others stand lower, while those below the lowest are the basest and resemble the lower species of minerals.

Since one who reaches the limit of outward worship and piety also begins to practice worship through knowledge and thus combines both forms of worship—knowledge and action—so that the characteristics of both become manifest in him, it follows that the limit of plants is constituted by that which combines characteristics of both plants and animals, being common to both and displaying the features of each.

Such are the testimonies of the mutual correspondence and equilibrium between creation and religious ordinance, tested upon the scales of religion.

Glory be to God, who has raised our Imams as the pillars of His religion and as a banner for those who seek guidance.

May God bless and greet His Messenger, by the light of whose dawn they shine and from the source of whose glory they are nourished—His Prophet Muḥammad, his Legatee our master ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and our masters the Imams descended from them.

[1] In the medieval Arabic world there circulated a belief in a tree growing on the island of **Wāqwāq**, from which the island supposedly took its name. As al-Bīrūnī reports, these "ignorant notions" concerned "a tree on which grow fruits resembling human heads and capable of crying out" (al-Bīrūnī, *Selected Works*, vol. 2, 1963, p. 205).

There were widely differing views concerning the location of this island. Al-Bīrūnī himself associated the island of Wāqwāq with the **Kmayr archipelago**, regarded as part of the Dīva islands—the Maldives—whereas others placed it near the coast of China or Africa (see ibid., vol. 3, 1966, p. 311, commentary).

STREET SIX

On plants as possessing a vegetative soul; on the mode of its being, its connection with the body, and its quiddity

Since, as has already been said, divine wisdom makes possible—through the paths of creation and ordering laid down by divine power—the formation from the higher and lower bodies and their influences of all species and genera of generated beings, it follows that that in which the particles of bodies assume different states and undergo transformations, passing into one another and acting upon one another through the alternating influences upon them and the motions relative to them, and through the wondrous things established by radiant power that bring about their continual change of state—namely **mixture**—must reach such a degree of subtlety and intermingling that it becomes commensurate with the radiant power of the celestial bodies.

Through this, the action of that power upon the mixture becomes easier, its influence appears within it, and by God's command there arises within it that spirit which is called the **soul**, known specifically as the **vegetative soul**.

This spirit resembles that which exists in the particles of terrestrial bodies that have attained subtlety and fineness and in the celestial bodies shining with light.

It resembles what arises from the conjunction of male and female.

It resembles the fire that arises from rubbing together sticks of *markh* and *ʿafār*.

It resembles the sparks struck from a fire-steel.

It resembles the ink produced when water is added to gallnut or vitriol after these have been rendered fine through crushing and grinding: the ink existed neither in the gallnut and vitriol nor in the water, but arose through this process (*tadbīr*).

Here the water is like the radiant power of natural bodies; the powder refined by grinding is like the particles of earth undergoing transformation; and the ink is like the spirit that comes into being.

This spirit is the **natural life** arising in bodies. It exists so long as the bodies exist and disappears with their disappearance.

This life is called the soul of plants and is known as the vegetative soul.

It exists through, first, the subtlety of those corporeal particles that have acquired such subtlety, and second, through the radiation of the celestial bodies acting upon them.

In relation to the radiant lights of the world of Creation, discussed in the chapter on Nature and the supra-natural Intellects, this life stands as those subtle particles stand in relation to the radiation of the active celestial bodies.

Just as that radiation acts upon the subtle particles so that life arises, so those lights act upon this life so that there arises within it something corresponding, in an animal, to **knowledge of what is beneficial to itself**.

For the complex natural bodies, with active souls implanted in them by God, are prepared—as we have shown—at God's command from the manifold matters remaining after the formation of the celestial bodies, through numerous actions and influences: from below, the actions of the elements upon one another; from above, the actions of the celestial bodies upon them all.

These actions bring such bodies to the limit constituting their **first perfection**.

They then become capable of encountering the supra-natural Intellects and the lights flowing from them through existents, and of becoming for them as though a matter appointed by the Most High.

The Intellects then care for these bodies, acting upon them and granting them, in accordance with the powers implanted by the Most High in natural bodies, the capacity to reach their **second limit**.

The matter is analogous to things that cannot be completed or perfected until, first, one craftsman produces their essence and, second, another artisan brings them to a second perfection beyond which nothing further remains to be acquired.

Thus the first perfection of a garment in its being is connected with the weaver, while its second perfection is connected with the tailor, who is not the same as the weaver. Until the weaver has completed his work, the tailor cannot begin and impart to the garment the form beyond which no further form remains.

Likewise, the first perfection of dirhams and dinars is connected first with the work of the coiner, while their second perfection—the application of the required inscriptions—is connected with the work of the die-cutter. Until the coiner has given them the necessary shape and figure, the die-cutter cannot begin his work.

Again, the first perfection of an astrolabe is connected with the bronze-worker, who gives the bronze the required form, while its second perfection, consisting in engraving, is connected with the scholar, geometer, and astronomer. Until the bronze-worker has first given it the proper form, the engraver cannot mark and engrave it.

Thus this life existing in the kingdom of Nature and manifested in plants becomes **knowing** through the impressions produced within it by the influence of the kingdom of Creation.

Accordingly, we observe in plants things that would cause no astonishment if they occurred in animals.

A plant sends its roots toward places where it can find moisture, avoiding stones and other obstacles in its path.

It extends its branches out from beneath a tree or other shade that blocks the sunlight and restricts its access to open air, striving to free itself and seeking encounter with the Sun.

Since its body arises from differentiated things, just as does that from which the body itself arises, and since, being composite, it is not free from oppositions within its essence, which bring about its gradual dissolution and transformation from one state into another both from within and from without, it must seek materials to replace what is lost through dissolution.

For this purpose it performs **four actions**, completed by a **fifth**.

It **attracts** (*jadhb*) materials—that is, draws and pulls them in.

It **digests** (*haḍm*) the attracted material so that it can become assimilated to its own nature.

It **distributes** (*daf*ʿ) the material assimilated to its nature—that is, sends it out in portions to the remotest parts of its essence so as to build itself from that material in accordance with its needs, guarding against corruption and harm.

It sends the material in every direction, upward and downward, so that it may find a place both in its outer parts and within, in its depths and at its highest extremity, in branches, leaves, and fruits, as well as wherever its body has suffered damage through dissolution.

Finally, it **grows**, increasing through what has been sent into all its parts, including its leaves and fruits.

Since individual plants, because of the oppositions present within them and the corruption entering into them, cannot endure forever, once these four actions have been completed there arises in the plant a fifth: **reproduction** (*intāj*).

This is the fruit of their actions in seeking continued existence, so that although their own essence disappears, their likeness may remain and their form be preserved.

These five powers are diffused throughout the whole body of the plant and through all its parts.

For this reason branches planted in the ground may take root, provided they are not excessively weak or incapable.

In an animal the opposite is the case, because of the multiplicity of its powers and because each power is assigned only to particular organs.

This fifth power, possessing all the preceding powers and thereby completing what precedes it in being, is the foundation for the being of everything higher than it and higher than all those powers; it is as though a mother through whom another being comes to exist, or a gate leading toward souls greater in being than these themselves—of which, God willing, we shall speak later.

The scales of religion, the reliable support for deriving true knowledge, bear witness to this.

Since in the temple of worship the *ḥudūd* are ordered for performing the rites of religion, calling to divine unity, and teaching souls prepared to receive, so that all this may produce eternal life, it follows that the Most High has ordered bodies in the world of Nature so that

they act upon the particles of earth, causing plants to arise from them and producing natural life.

Since those beneath the *ḥudūd* who have responded to the summons speak with one another and act upon one another through argument and disputation, it follows that the powers within the bodies situated beneath the higher celestial bodies act upon one another.

Since the souls of those who respond to the summons are acted upon by the instruction and guidance of the *ḥudūd* standing above them, it follows that the radiation of the celestial bodies acts upon the transforming particles of earth.

Since souls, perceiving in outward worship through action the light of guidance, become receptacles for the sciences of interpretation disclosed to them and become capable of performing worship through knowledge, thereby combining within themselves both forms of worship, it follows that vegetative life receives the lights of the kingdom of Creation and that the influences of those lights arise within it.

Through these influences this newly arisen life becomes a receptacle of the action of the lights flowing from the world of Creation, and through those lights acquires that by which it combines within itself two souls: the **vegetative** and the **sensory**.

Since the order of instruction is such that the authorized respondent first learns what pertains to worship through action, after which the missionary teaches him what pertains to worship through knowledge, so that this good teaching becomes as though the form of what he already knew and thereby completes his felicity, it follows that the order of the created world is such that Nature and the celestial bodies are prepared, through the power implanted within them by the Most High, to receive the influence of the supra-natural Intellects.

The lights of those Intellects flowing from the world of Creation then act upon them because of this prior preparedness, so that they attain their perfection.

Since in outward worship action is obligatory for everyone, so that in this worship all are as one, and an action may suit the least knowledgeable among them and be within his capacity just as much as it is for the most knowledgeable who has learned worship with reverence, fear, and conscientiousness, it follows that the powers of the vegetative soul are diffused throughout all parts of the plant, because all those parts resemble one another; even a small shoot planted in the earth may take root and become like the parent plant.

Since anyone who knows outward worship and instructs others in it may be regarded as an unsurpassed master of it, with every action within it accessible to him because he is capable of performing them all—unlike one who teaches and guides through the paths of inward worship by knowledge, where the sciences are distributed among ranks and nothing can be grasped before that which lies below it has first been grasped—it follows that in a plant a planted shoot can take root and become like the parent plant because most of its parts resemble one another.

In an animal this is impossible because its parts differ and different powers are connected with different parts.

Since the existence of outward worship through action and of the people who practice it is as though the foundation for the existence of inward worship through knowledge and its adherents, it follows that the existence of the vegetative soul with its powers is as though the foundation for the existence of the sensory soul.

Since those who practice outward worship, by performing its rites and thereby worshipping God, perform five actions—first, they learn; second, they imprint what they have learned; third, they express what they have learned; fourth, they manifest what they have learned in action; and fifth, they teach what they have learned to others—it follows that the vegetative soul likewise performs five actions:

attraction, corresponding to learning;

digestion, corresponding to imprinting;

distribution, corresponding to expressing what has been learned;

growth, corresponding to manifesting it;

and **reproduction**, corresponding to teaching others what has been imprinted.

Such are the results of investigating the hidden aspects of the created world by means of the scales of religion, which bear witness to the correctness of what we have said.

Glory be to God, the Creator and Bestower of Form, the Ordainer and Guide.

May God bless and greet the infallible inhabitants of Paradise who lead their followers after them—Muḥammad and his pure family.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

[1] ***Markh*** — a creeping or upright thorny shrub, without leaves or spines, that catches fire easily. I retain a transliteration of its Arabic name, *markh*, since I have not found an established Russian equivalent in the literature known to me. Its Latin name is *Leptadenia pyrotechnica*; possibly also *Cynanchum pyrotechnicum*. Al-Bīrūnī reports:

“Sometimes, when the wind causes the branches of *markh* to rub against one another, they ignite and burn.”(al-Bīrūnī, *Selected Works*, vol. 4, 1973, p. 806.)

ʿ**Afār** — the strawberry tree, *Arbutus unedo*. These two shrubs entered into a proverb:

“In every tree there is fire, but most of all in *ʿafār* and *markh*.”

STREET SEVEN

On animals as bodies; on the principle from which they arose; on the fact that they are more complex than plants and possess more instruments than plants; and on the fact that they are the limit of existents beyond which there is no other existent

We have already shown that divine providence, seeking to bring into existence that which proceeds from the celestial bodies—and first having created those celestial bodies themselves—namely the ordered generated beings whose final goal is animals, while their species ascend toward man, the second limit of existents beyond which there is nothing further in being, ordained that some bodies should be active, as already explained, and others passive.

Thus, when the passive undergoes the action of the active and through that action acquires powers by which it too becomes active, so that one acts upon another, the number of actions increases, complexity grows, and motions multiply, announcing the existence of everything that wisdom has ordained to be.

Accordingly, the existents arising through the differences in the states and motions of the celestial bodies and through the variability of the essences and transformations of the particles of terrestrial bodies are such that every body more remote in being from the Principle is more complex than one nearer to it, while the corporeal existent nearer to that Principle is less complex.

Since we have already spoken of mixture and its divisions, and of what exists—first, of the celestial bodies, and second, of minerals and plants—we shall now speak of animals.

An animal arises from a mixture produced by the mingling of the particles of the elements as they act upon one another and by the penetration into them of the powers of the moving bodies, similar to the mixture from which plants arise; but into it are additionally mixed particles belonging to the species of plants, mingled with one another, so that all together are transformed into a single thing and become another mixture, possessing a greater number of parts and greater complexity.

For this reason the animal comes after the plant in the order of being.

The complexity of animals exceeds that of all other generated beings. The animal continues to exist because it is sustained by feeding upon plants, and from this proceeds its second mode of being, namely the generation of offspring (*tanāsul*).

As for its first mode of being, it proceeds from the earth: when the powers gather together in those particles of earth that constitute its quintessence (*sulāla*), they swell, become pregnant, and an animal emerges from them.

In this way many animals are generated from the earth even in our own time: mice, for example; or crickets, with which the earth becomes pregnant and swells, then splits open and their brood comes forth from it; or locusts formed in the earth; or even those individuals belonging to the human species who are born in the place known as Mount Barakāt.

As for reproduction, it takes place as follows: when the powers multiply in a nourished animal and the reproductive instruments are prepared, it moves in search of pleasure, and from this, as we have said, offspring and progeny arise.

It is like a watermill: when all the instruments have been prepared and installed, moving water sets them in motion, and the intended goal is attained—the grain is ground.

The first human individual arose, like the first individuals of the species homogeneous with it, from the earth and its quintessence, as the Most High said:

"God caused you to grow from the earth like plants."

The form in this first mode of being was not the same as the form in the second mode of being, which is based on reproduction, nor was human knowledge in that first mode the same as it is in this one.

The second mode of being, then, is through reproduction.

Since wisdom made it possible for the animal—and here I mean man—after having arisen from the earth, to continue in existence through reproduction, so that this mode of existence might lead toward the intended realization of the second final limit corresponding to the first, divine providence arranged the instruments necessary for this, so that through them what wisdom had ordained might be realized.

Here too providence proceeded in the same manner as before, when bodies were divided, as we have already said, into active bodies, such as the celestial spheres and stars, and bodies acted upon, such as the four elements, from which generated beings arose.

Likewise this species—that is, man—was divided into women and men. Women were given a womb in which the fetus is formed and an excess of blood from which its body is built, while men were given semen to be deposited there, so that blood and semen together might complete its physical constitution and form.

Semen and blood are of one nature, just as celestial and terrestrial bodies belong to one genus. Yet semen, because of the heat it has acquired, acts upon the blood homogeneous with it and differs from it, just as celestial bodies differ from terrestrial bodies.

It acts upon the blood as rennet acts upon milk: when mixed with it, it binds and coagulates it, thereby transforming it into flesh receptive to the influence of the radiation of the celestial luminaries directed toward it and flowing within it.

Thus from two things there arises a harmonious creation. Great and glorious is the Most High, the most skillful of creators!

Thus, for the fetus to exist, seven things are necessary, without any one of which it cannot exist:

the man and the woman; the place in which they unite in intercourse; the matter produced through the father's erection; the time during which the influences of the planets reach the

fetus; rest, which preserves the mother's equilibrium and protects the embryo; and finally a successful birth.

Man is the last of all species; after him there is no other species.

For this reason he is called the **"species of species."**

He stands above all species and is nobler than any of them because of everything he possesses and because there is more in him than in all species preceding him.

His constitution is higher and nobler than all others, and he possesses more instruments and parts, because he is precisely that creation which wisdom sought.

Everything that exists in the macrocosm exists also in man in a corresponding form appropriate to him. Therefore man is the likeness of the macrocosm—and, as is said, its child—so that everything in one has something corresponding to it in the other.

For man is the second limit and the completion of everything sought in creation, just as in every work its fulfillment is attained through its second limit. Beyond this limit the being of corporeal existents comes to an end.

Thus man is the quintessence of everything produced in the creation of the Greatest Craftsman.

His physical constitution includes different organs, among them principal and subordinate, serving and served, prior and posterior in being.

The first thing the Most High created, through what He had established, was that which arises in the coagulated matter—that is, in the substance formed from blood and semen—through the penetrating influence of the luminaries: namely, the **heart**.

The heart is the abode of the subtlest thing contained in the physical constitution of man, namely bright crimson blood (*dam qirmizī*), from which the flame of life is kindled, from which innate heat (*gharīziyya*) awakens throughout all parts of the body, and which rules over all the organs distributed according to degrees of nobility.

Thus matters similar to it are joined and fused with the whole bodily aggregate from which the heart itself arose: light and subtle matters are directed toward those organs that must be subtle and light, while dense matters are directed toward those that must be coarse and firm.

In this way the organs and instruments are formed at the proper time in their intended completeness.

Then those organs that must be separated become separated, and openings arise in those in which openings are required.

When the influence of everything that acts has been completed, this form finally appears, containing the powers of that which acted upon it, according to how those powers happened to be.

After this, once the creation has been completed, there remains only to direct the instruments prepared for it by the Most High toward sensible things, so that these may become for the soul—the existence of which was the goal here—the matter through which it is formed and transformed into a **"new creation."**

Thus the heart precedes all other organs in the order of being.

It is the first organ served, because everything is connected with it, and it is likewise the first servant of all the organs, because it supplies them with that innate heat which gives life.

The heart guards and rules like a prince presiding over his principality, and all the organs live through it because it is the abode of that bright crimson blood through which life exists, carrying within itself the sensory and vegetative powers.

After the heart, the next rank of governance belongs to the **brain**.

Through its coldness it serves the heart, moderating by that coldness the heat diffused throughout all parts of the body and thereby restoring balance.

Likewise the liver, gallbladder, spleen, lung, kidneys, bladder, and intestines each occupy their own place in the hierarchy of service.

The liver serves the heart by supplying it with its matter and serves the whole body by distributing blood to all its organs through the nutritive vessels arranged for this purpose. It is itself served by the stomach, which digests what comes to it from the mouth, teeth, tongue, jaws, and esophagus, so that the liver may more easily transform it into blood.

The lung serves the heart by cooling it through respiration, removing hot vapor and supplying in its place air that preserves it, so that its innate heat does not go out; and the lung is itself served by other organs.

The spleen serves the stomach and liver, which is a service to the whole.

The kidneys, bladder, and intestines likewise serve the stomach and liver by receiving what these cast off.

The teeth, mouth, tongue, and jaws serve the stomach and lung, as well as the other organs.

Each of these organs, even though occupying later degrees in being, both serves and is served by others—not only by these internal organs but also by the external ones.

All these organs were created so as to preserve the whole aggregate, so that each assists another and the whole is preserved through all of them.

Since the mixture from which the animal arises possesses more parts and is more complex, its internal opposition leading to corruption is also stronger, for mixture arises from different and opposing things.

And since it contains more parts and greater complexity and opposition, divine providence takes greater care for its preservation.

Therefore it gave the various animal species that by which they may preserve themselves and ordered them accordingly.

The first species of animals is simultaneously plant and animal; thereafter the animal species are ordered in the same manner as the plant species.

The animal body is divided into divisions (*abʿāḍ*), and the divisions into parts; the parts are composed according to the mixture prepared by the celestial and terrestrial bodies.

Animals are divided into two groups: those that fly by means of wings and those that move upon the earth.

Those moving upon the earth are divided into many-footed animals, having more than four feet; quadrupeds; bipeds; and those entirely without feet, such as snakes.

Wings and feet serve these animals as instruments for seeking what is beneficial and avoiding what is harmful.

As for the snake, the parts of its body, for reasons explained by our predecessors, are adapted to fulfill every impulse it has.

Those moving in water are fish; aquatic animals likewise possess instruments for locomotion.

The first species of animals shares something both with the species of the genus below it and with the species of its own genus.

An example is the wāqwāq tree and similar things: they occupy the highest degree among plant bodies and the lowest degree among animal bodies.

Then the animal species are ordered by degrees of nobility, ascending toward a species that shares something both with animal and with man.

Examples are apes, whose nature resembles man in some respects while their appearance resembles animals, and bees, which are animals in bodily constitution but resemble man through the art of governance prevalent among them.

The bodies of the various animal species are ordered by degrees of nobility precisely according to their possession of sense organs.

Since wisdom ordained that the world and its existents be divided into five kinds—the tangible, the gustatory, the olfactory, the audible, and the visible—and since the perfection of animals consists in apprehending all of these, divine providence gave them five sense organs, each corresponding to one of these kinds, for their apprehension.

Accordingly, the bodies of the various animal species are ordered according to their possession of these organs.

Some possess only that which senses tangible things, namely the skin.

In this they resemble the bodies of all animal species, but differ from them through lacking the other senses: they have no organ of taste, smell, hearing, or sight, as in the earthworm and shell-bearing snail.

This species stands above the wāqwāq tree and below those possessing a greater number of senses; it is more complex than plants but simpler than the other species of its genus.

In this respect, namely touch through the skin, all parts of the animal body are alike, because all possess the power of this sense, except those whose nature deviates from balance, such as hair, nails, hoofs, horns, and the like, which serve the animal either as ornament or as instruments for overcoming external danger and seeking benefit.

The tactile parts of every living generated being are alike so that this sense may encompass it from every side and, in moments when the soul is unaware, serve as a vigilant guardian protecting it from whatever might introduce corruption from without, thus preserving its body as far as possible.

Others possess the organ of taste in addition to touch, while lacking smell, hearing, and sight, as in leeches and caterpillars.

Individuals of this species are more complex, according to the mixture receptive to complexity, and higher in rank than the earthworm and snail, which while feeding do not perceive the taste of the matter sustaining them.

For this reason they are drawn more strongly toward food and gather more diligently what must be conveyed to their bodies, because the need caused by dissolution within their bodies is greater than in the less complex species.

Others also possess smell, that is, they perceive odors, while lacking hearing and sight.

Examples are the dung beetle and the ant.

Individuals of these species are more complex, according to the mixture prepared to receive influences and impressions, and higher in rank than those possessing only touch and taste.

They are so constituted in order that they may find in greater abundance everything necessary to replace what is lost from their bodies and so that the matters they gather and transform into strength for their bodies may be more plentiful in proportion to their increased complexity and the greater dissolution of their particles.

Others possess the organ of hearing, through which they perceive sounds, while lacking sight, as in the mole; and some, such as flies, possess sight, through which they perceive colors and forms, but lack hearing.

Individuals of these species, according to their receptive mixtures, are more complex and higher in rank than those possessing touch, taste, and smell, because in seeking what they need they require a broader field: if they fail to find food in one place, they move to another in order to find what they seek and fully secure their nourishment, so that what would cause their destruction by its absence may never be lacking.

Some possess the organs of all five senses.

These are the most complex of all, the most cunning, and the most avid, because they possess all the organs that provide perfection in the pursuit of pleasures. They seek those pleasures so that, by the ordinance of the All-Knowing Wise One, they may thereby generate offspring and produce their likeness.

They are further ordered according to those instruments that secure benefit and advantage for them and provide the pleasures through which they reproduce their like.

Some are self-sufficient and have no need of a male individual, as for example a hen that lays eggs without mating with a rooster.

Others require a male individual and mate through coupling; familiar examples are horses, asses, sheep, cattle, and humans.

They are further ordered according to the manner of giving birth: some are viviparous, while others lay eggs. Those whose ears are hidden and not visible lay eggs, while those whose ears are exposed and project outward give birth to live young.

They are also ordered according to whether they gather with members of their own species: cranes in flight, crows at their nesting places, starlings that always migrate together, geese, and man, who forms societies in seeking the means of subsistence, all gather together; others, such as falcons, hawks, and similar animals, do not.

We have said all this in order to establish for it the scales of religion through equilibrium and mutual correspondence.

Since the clarified Law—which is the true faith—the last of all Laws, is more splendid and higher in rank than all preceding Laws, it follows that man as a corporeal being—that is, the species of species—is higher than all animal species.

Since the number of ordinances and prescriptions in the true confession through which one draws near to the Most High exceeds that in all previous religions, it follows that the complexity of the human species and the number of its parts and instruments exceed those of the other animal species.

Since the true confession is that limit beyond which there is no further limit and no Law that will abrogate and replace it, and since it is complete and requires neither addition nor diminution, it follows that the human species is the limit of creation at which the being of corporeal existents comes to an end.

Since the formula “There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God” is in the world of religion the beginning and foundation upon which all other norms, ordinances, and rites are built, and since its primacy is connected with the existence of the Speaker, who is the foundation of the completeness of the ordinances, rites, and *ḥudūd*, it follows that the heart in the human body is the beginning of its being, and that this primacy is connected with the existence of the vegetative soul, which is the foundation for the being of the other organs.

Since religion has six divisions, that is, six outward rites—ritual purity, prayer, purifying alms, fasting, pilgrimage, and jihad—all of which are connected with a seventh, the cause of their being, namely the Speaker, without whom they would not exist, it follows that the physical constitution of man contains six divisions: two legs, two arms, the head, and the trunk, all connected with a seventh through which they exist, namely the vegetative soul, without which they would not exist.

Since religion with its ordinances, rites, and ritual acts proceeds from the Prophet, who is the cause of their being and their guardian, and since he is the child of the Intelligible world, as we explained earlier, it follows that the human species with its bodily divisions and soul is the child of the natural macrocosm.

Just as in the macrocosm there are encompassing celestial spheres, luminous stars and planets, the four elements, cloud-piercing mountains, flowing rivers, diverse plants, various minerals, and many other things too numerous to recount, so in the microcosm there are correspondingly ordered instruments, luminous apprehending sense organs, four natures, solid bones, blood flowing through vessels, growing hair, external nails, and other things already explained when we balanced the world upon the scales of religion.

Since the Prophet—may God bless and greet him—is higher in rank than the Legatee, and the Imam higher than the *ḥujja*, the rank of the heart precedes that of the brain.

Since the Legatee depends upon and follows the Prophet—peace be upon him—the brain likewise depends upon and follows the heart.

Since the matter of knowledge flows to the *ḥudūd* from the *ḥujja* who succeeds the Legatee, it follows that the liver distributes the nourishment of the body and from it blood flows to all the organs.

Since the *ḥujja* depends upon and follows the Prophet, assisting him by spreading and establishing his Law, establishing equilibrium between his actions and his Law and between the creation of the Most High, and teaching the *ḥudūd* and believers of the world of religion, it follows that the liver serves the heart through its materials.

Since the instructing missionary reflects upon outward and inward questions of the summons and religion and formulates explanations concerning difficult religious questions—whether put to him or discovered by himself—so that when he presents them to the *ḥujja*, the latter accepts what is admissible, separates what produces doubt and uncertainty, selects what is pure and genuine, and makes it nourishment for spirits differing in rank in the world of religion, it follows that the stomach, serving the liver, digests the food entering it so as to transform it into blood, separates from it the moisture contained within and sends it as urine to the bladder, extracts pure blood from it for the nourishment of the body, and distributes it to the organs according to their degree of subtlety or density.

Since all missionaries serve the instructing missionary by bringing their questions to him, thereby making those questions the cause of the benefits that subsequently flow from him back to them—just as a morsel of food useless to the mouth and teeth that chew it, once it enters the stomach, is digested and conveyed to the liver, which extracts pure blood from it, and thereby becomes their nourishment and strength—it follows that the mouth, teeth, jaws,

and tongue grind food, assisting and serving the stomach, while from the liver, which is served by the stomach, there returns to them what benefits them.

Since those connected with both forms of worship—knowledge and action—possess more knowledge and judgment concerning religious matters than those connected only with outward worship through action, it follows that the animal, possessing instruments both for growth and for sensation, is more complex than the plant and possesses more parts and instruments.

From the fact that there are more oppositions in the animal than in the plant, it follows that there are more differing bodies of knowledge and confessions among those practicing both forms of worship than among those practicing only outward worship.

Since the celestial *ḥudūd* take greater care of the people of both forms of worship because of the numerous conceptions, destructive confessions, and ruinous errors arising in the soul owing to its dependence upon the mixture of its body, and since, wishing to preserve it from destruction, they most truthfully established for it five preceding *ḥudūd*—the lawgiving Speaker, the explaining Foundation, the preserving Imam, the teaching *ḥujja*, and the missionary who calls and awakens—who protect them from destructive conceptions and ruinous errors and direct them toward right guidance, it follows that because of the greater opposition among its parts God bestowed upon the animal **six senses**, so that these might serve to preserve it and help it seek what is beneficial.

Since the people of the second worship possess sciences, and every science has its divisions and propositions, all of them as received through the instruction of teachers, it follows that animal bodies have divisions, the divisions have parts, and each part is composed according to the influence of the active celestial bodies.

Since one entering the temple of worship is close to the knowledge possessed by those like him among the people of inward worship, because he shares something of that knowledge with them and, though lowest in rank, has something in common with all of them, it follows that the first animal species resembles both plants and the animals above it, while by nature standing below all of them.

Since the temple of worship contains people of both forms of worship who come both from among protected peoples and from among the people of outward worship, it follows that animals arise from a mixture composed both of the four elements and of plant particles mingled with that mixture.

Since the prophetic summons is the beginning of the being of spiritual forms in the world of Intellects, it follows that in the world of Nature the forms of human bodies first arose from the earth, which is their beginning.

Since knowledge received through celestial support and revelation is not the same as knowledge received through instruction, it follows that the form of humans in their first mode of being, when they arose from the earth, was not the same as their present form, in which they exist through reproduction.

Since through celestial support and revelation knowledge is given first all at once and in general, and only afterward in detail and separately, it follows that the human form first arose

from the earth all at once and subsequently, after becoming divided, continues through reproduction.

Since celestial support and revelation make the soul firmer, stronger, and more faithful than instruction through similitudes and resemblances, it follows that in the beginning of their existence from the earth the strength of humans was greater than that of those who later arise through reproduction.

Since all the *ḥudūd* are ordered according to ranks of worship, with some standing only at the first degree of nobility—for example, the missionary, who possesses only the rank of the summons and only those sciences connected with inward worship already mentioned—while others stand higher, and others higher still, up to the *ḥadd* possessing all ranks, namely the Prophet who gathers all virtues and ranks, it follows that animals are ordered according to their possession of the five sense organs: some possess one sense, others two, others three, and so on up to the one possessing them all and being the best of all, namely man.

Since the *ḥudūd* in the temple of worship experience bliss and delight in conversation and disputation, through which instruction occurs, it follows that the animal seeks sensory pleasures, through which reproduction takes place.

Since some among the people of both forms of worship, content with conversing among themselves, do not require a missionary for certain sciences of inward worship, it follows that some animals do not require males for reproduction, as in the case of the hen.

Since some among the people of both forms of worship cannot dispense with instruction from the higher *ḥudūd* in matters connected with the intellect, nor with assimilating what escapes the senses to that which makes them animals in the animal kingdom, thereby making it easier for the soul to know it, it follows that some animals—quadrupeds such as cattle, sheep, and the like, as well as birds such as pigeons, peacocks, and so forth—cannot reproduce without males.

Since outward worship is the cause that gives the soul strength in religious sciences, correct dispositions, and judgments and prompts it to seek joy in instructing those below it in knowledge, it follows that the plant, by giving the animal its lightness and subtlety, becomes the cause of its strength, impelling it to seek the pleasures of intercourse through which it produces its like.

Since those receiving support through the effusing grace of unity are exalted in the temple of worship, surpass the other sons of their genus who occupy a lower rank in being, and take precedence over them, so that they are the **superior** (*fuḍalāʾ*) while those in relation to them are the **surpassed** (*mafḍūlūn*), it follows that those humans whose bodily mixture possesses an excess (*faḍl*) of the power of heat—which the Most High made an instrument for the existence of virtue (*faḍīla*)—surpass the other members of their genus standing below them in rank: these are men, while the others are women.

Such is the equilibrium established by the scales of religion, bearing witness to the correctness of what we have said.

Glory be to God, whose power is unshakable, whose proof is irrefutable, whose beneficence is inexhaustible.

May God bless and greet Muḥammad, great in deeds and exalted in station, and the pure Imams of his lineage.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian. Excellent is this Protector, and excellent this Helper!

[1] In VII, 8 al-Kirmānī returns to the question of the origin of animals and calls the **quintessence** the subtle particles of earth mixed with particles of plants.

[1] Qurʾān 71:17.

[1] ***Qirmizī*** — this adjective derives from *qirmiz*, meaning **cochineal**, a red dye widely used in the Middle Ages and produced from insects living on trees.

[1] "Protected peoples" (*ahl al-dhimma*) — in medieval Islamic states, this term referred to non-Muslims who paid the poll tax, acknowledged Muslim rule, and consequently enjoyed Muslim protection. **"People of outward worship"** refers to Muslims.

STREET EIGHT

On the animal as a sensory soul; what it is and how it is; on the knowledge it possesses for preserving its body; on its perfection and power and its principle; on what it shares with the human species and in what it differs from it

What has been said thus far provides us with a sufficient foundation for ascending to knowledge of that soul stained by evil which is called the **sensory soul**.

We say first that when the essence of something cannot be apprehended by the senses (*lā tudrak*) or perceived directly, so that one could thereby know whether it exists, its existence must nevertheless necessarily be established through the testimony of its actions, because those actions are more manifest to sense than the agent itself.

Sensation, for example, is an action more manifest to us than the essence of that which senses.

This provides a means of facilitating the path toward what is sought: judgment from actions becomes the basis for inferring the necessary existence of that concerning which sensory testimony alone cannot tell us whether it exists.

Accordingly, the visible actions and motions performed by an animal through its instruments, which do not proceed from the essence of those instruments themselves and do not enter into the definitions by which those instruments are what they are, constitute the surest indication of the existence of the soul, and the existence of those actions is the greatest proof of it.

This has been sufficiently explained in our book *The Luminous Proof of the Imamate*.

We have already said that the vegetative soul arises from subtle particles of earth undergoing transformations, as explained, through the influences penetrating them from the things established for that purpose, and from the radiation of the celestial luminaries shining into and acting upon the lower bodies.

It arises as we illustrated through the production of ink from gallnut and vitriol, or through the production of fire in iron under the effect of repeated blows of the hammer.

Now, pursuing our present purpose, we say: these particles of earth, rendered subtle so as to become plant, when mixed with particles of plants, become a new mixture whose powers have multiplied many times over, which the Most High called the **“quintessence of dust.”**

The conjunction of that luminous radiation of the luminaries through which the vegetative soul arose with this mixture prepared and formed from particles of earth and particles of plants—that is, with this quintessence—is the cause of the being of the soul now under discussion.

Its arising resembles the appearance of a flame in a heap of charcoal when burning coals are placed within it, or the reddening and glowing of iron beneath the blows of a hammer.

This soul is not the vegetative soul.

It is an essence nobler and higher in rank than the vegetative soul. It possesses what the vegetative soul lacks and performs together the actions of both the vegetative and sensory souls.

In its mode of being it is like the number one hundred, which gathers within itself both the order of tens and the order of hundreds.

Or it is like medicines, some of which act only upon one organ of the body—for example, tablets acting only upon the liver and correcting it when taken, or pills acting upon the brain—while others possess universal action and combine both effects, such as strengthening decoctions and the like.

For this soul, the supra-natural Intellects and their lights flowing through all bodies are what the radiation of the bodies acting upon the subtle particles was for those particles when the vegetative soul arose.

The lights of the Intellects act upon this soul, and because it is prepared and receives from them many times more than the vegetative soul receives, there arises within it knowledge of its own advantages and benefits.

This knowledge constitutes its perfection, and through it the soul seeks everything appropriate to itself and flees everything opposed and incompatible with itself.

In the same way yellow and red colors arise in existing fruits through the action of the Sun when it reaches them and they attain their perfection.

According to its nature and mixture, this soul possesses its own particular habits and performs its own particular actions, from which it does not deviate through choice, reflection, or opinion.

In its actions it resembles fire, which burns and heats, and water, which moistens and flows, without reflection or choice.

It does not need to learn any of this, because its own essence is sufficient through the knowledge that has arisen within it from supra-natural things and imparted perfection to it.

It apprehends sensible things within the limits of its apprehension through the instruments prepared for it, but does not establish their forms within its own essence in such a way as would enable it to reflect upon them.

The bestial soul (*bahīmiyya*—that is, the soul of all animals other than man) does not receive and retain forms because by its natural constitution (*jibilla*) it arises from a mixture resembling the mixture of vegetative life.

Although its mixture is stronger and higher in rank, it is nevertheless nearer to the elements than is the human mixture, which is farther removed from them.

Therefore, lacking what it lacks, this mixture is also deprived of what would arise from that missing capacity and by which it could receive and preserve forms in its own essence, because it stands below the rank of that which is capable of receiving forms that remove its deficiency.

Thus the final goal of the being of this soul is simply that its rank stand above the rank of vegetative life.

And it can stand above the vegetative soul only by surpassing it in all the respects that make a growing thing a growing thing.

If the growing thing seeks the matter needed to preserve its body in the depths of the earth, this soul seeks it upon the earth.

If the plant sends its roots to right and left and into the depths of the earth while itself remaining motionless, this soul moves in every direction, traveling over the earth.

If the plant's possibility of seeking the necessary matter is restricted because it possesses only one patch of earth, this soul has a broad field open to it through its many instruments for seeking that matter and through movement across many regions of the earth.

If the plant lacks certain things capable of bringing it matter and preserving its body from external corruption, this soul possesses senses that guard its body like sentinels.

Being constituted in this way, it does not receive the forms of existents in their own form, as they are, and does not retain them.

It is like paper manufactured from specially prepared parts by a particular process and receiving its first being from the craftsman who makes it, but which possesses nothing by which it could preserve the writings and forms entrusted to it in their proper shape—neither rice-water nor starch to give it firmness, nor polishing to help it preserve what is entrusted to it by smoothing the projecting parts and preventing the written forms from spreading and being lost.

At the stage at which it is merely paper, the purpose of its being is to be suitable for what will later be arranged upon it, to keep its particles gathered together and prevent them from scattering—not yet to receive writing.

Thus this soul occupies in being a rank in which it is incapable of fixing forms.

It exists in order to be the perfection of its body, making do in preserving that body with innate knowledge.

Existing within the living being, accompanying and assisting the body—which suits it better than existing independently, since it is too ignorant and its essence too empty for such independent existence—this soul possesses individual being, and because of this it is divided into species.

Therefore the learned, in defining soul—that is, the animal soul, among whose animals the human species is included—say that it is **the perfection of a natural body possessing instruments**.

This is a general definition applying to the different species of soul.

Such is the soul of nonhuman animals (*bahā'im*): beasts, birds, and others.

We say of this soul that it is not potential in such a way that by becoming actual it might acquire additional nobility.

No: in this quality it already possesses its final goal.

What is bestowed upon it by supra-natural things—which we compared with the redness and yellowness given to fruits by the Sun—is its second perfection, through which it is actual.

For this reason its actions are constant and unchanging, and the sounds it produces are always the same and do not vary.

Similarly, among plant species each possesses its own individual and invariant action and produces its own particular and constant fruit.

Likewise among mineral bodies, each species possesses its own particular action from which it does not deviate, because that action is its limit and has become its second perfection.

As for the **human soul**, although it belongs among animal souls, it is unlike them because it is potential rather than actual.

It is so because it exists not only for its body, as the souls of animals do, but also for itself, since it is the limit toward which the whole of created Nature ascends.

When the wheel of reproduction began to move, as we have explained, the human soul absorbed into its being the powers of plants and animals and was nourished by them.

Possessing instruments prepared for it and nourishment supplied to it, it became like the earth from whose particles, together with the particles of plants, the spirit of plants and animals had arisen.

Thus its being proceeded from those two subtle genera produced by Nature, plant and animal.

It became maximally remote from natural coarseness and darkness, and its preparedness surpassed that which it had previously possessed in its first mode of being.

Its powers multiplied to the same degree that, as we have said, the combined powers of plants and animals had multiplied.

It thereby became the highest species, allied with all genera, neighboring the species of the genus standing above it and forming the limit of its own genus, a species gathering within itself everything that relates it both to its own genus and to the higher.

In the same way gypsum possesses that which relates it both to earth and to minerals; coral possesses that which relates it both to plants and minerals; and the wāqwāq tree, shellfish, and date palm possess that which relates them both to plants and animals, as already discussed.

For this reason the human soul is called the **species of species**.

And it does not exist merely in order to be the perfection of its body.

For if this were so, then like the other souls homogeneous with it, it would cease to exist when the being of its body ceased. The increase in its instruments and complexity would then be meaningless.

The knowledge possessed by the human soul would amount to nothing more than knowledge of what benefits its body, as in the souls homogeneous with it, for it would need nothing beyond this as an excess (*faḍl*).

Wisdom would then be deficient because something capable of existing would fail to exist.

Since this is not the case, but rather the opposite, it is established that the human soul exists not only for its body but also for what it possesses for its own sake.

Thus it occupies a position below that of the higher existent, yet is separated from the souls homogeneous with it, all of which are actual.

Its perfection does not consist in the preservation of its body proper to animal souls, but in things belonging to its own essence and not to its body.

These are not the natural living forms of knowledge that both it and the souls homogeneous with it possess.

Being such, it is potential in relation to what lies above it, the supra-natural, and in order to acquire its second perfection in actuality it requires exercise, labor, and acquisition under the guidance of those supported by heaven.

Its actions are changeable and its habits mutable, for this is precisely the character of what is potential, since this soul has not yet acquired or reached its perfection and is not actual, unlike the souls of the other animal species, whose actions are always uniform.

Were it actual and already to have attained its perfection, its actions, proceeding from virtue, purity, and holiness, would always be uniform.

And since these actions are for the sake of its own essence rather than its body, this soul, considered purely as the limit of all species of the animal genus and as the result of everything that Nature, both moving and moved, has brought into being, stands as an essence in the same relation as the species of the other genera stand as bodies rather than souls: namely, that in relation to craftsmen and artisans they are potential.

The transition of this soul into actuality comes from the supra-natural Intellects, just as wood supplied by the plant world is potential and is brought into actuality by the carpenter, who

gives it the forms of his craft, and just as mineral bodies are potential while their perfection proceeds from craftsmen—jewelers, casters, and smiths—and is imparted through the forms of their crafts.

Concerning its being—that is, its first perfection—and the fact that to attain its second perfection it requires not the same cause through which it exists and possesses its first perfection, but another cause, we must say the same as was said in the chapter on plants, when we gave the example of things produced by craftsmen whose first mode of being is connected with one artisan and whose second perfection is connected with another, not with the one responsible for the first.

Thus, being potential, the human soul differs from the other souls, which are actual.

It exists for its own sake and not for something else.

Its perfection lies in the rational and sensory together, whereas the perfection of the other souls lies in the sensory but not the rational.

Its actions change and undergo transformation, while theirs do not change and undergo no transformation.

It thinks and fixes within its own essence the forms of things, whereas they neither think nor fix the forms of things within their essences.

It remains after the dissolution of its physical bearer (*shakhṣ*), whereas they perish and disappear like accidents.

Its definition is **the perfection of its own essence**, whereas their definition is **the perfection of their body**.

Although it differs from them in these respects according to its essence, it coincides with them according to its mixture in actions performed only through its body.

Thus it becomes angry, takes revenge, and performs other actions for its own benefit; seeks nourishment; pursues what is appropriate and flees what is unpleasant—for example, seeking shade when hot and seeking the Sun and warmth when cold; seeks intercourse and pleasure, which are the cause of reproduction and the generation of its likeness; seeks victory; resorts to treachery and cunning; and performs similar actions conditioned by the natural constitution of its mixture in pursuit of ever greater advantages and pleasures for its body.

As for the beginning of its being—that is, of the animal soul—there is no difference in this respect between it and the human soul.

The vegetative soul together with its powers serves both it and the other species of animals as the foundation (*aṣl*) and proximate sustaining cause, without which they would not exist.

The vegetative soul stands to it as three stands to the numbers, since three is a sustaining cause for the being of four; or as four stands to five; or as the tens stand as sustaining causes for the being of one hundred.

In this respect the human soul is related to and resembles the animal soul.

Yet the preparedness of the mixture belonging to the human soul is higher and nobler than that original preparedness.

The receptive matter present in the womb is prepared and refined to such a degree that among sensible things it may be compared to balsam prepared, under the influence of the Sun's heat, for fire to arise within it.

Thus the body of the embryo in the womb, prepared internally by the vegetative power, is like balsam extracted from the balsam tree; the lights of the moving celestial bodies filling the air and the world are for it like the Sun in relation to balsam; and the arising of life within it is like the arising of fire in balsam under the action of the Sun.

All this is because the human soul is the limit beyond which there is no further limit in the being of another existent.

The laws of the prophetic work and its scales, which are the scales of religion, testify to the correctness of what we have said.

Since the believer who enters the temple of worship, combines both forms of worship, and worships the Most High possesses a human soul rather than the soul of beasts, and since a human soul alone is not sufficient here but also requires the grace and power of outward worship, it follows that the being of the sensory soul proceeds not from earth alone after earth has gathered the powers of all the other bodies, nor from its own powers alone, but from these powers together with those of plants.

Since the human soul practicing outward worship is impelled toward the heights of inward worship and thereby acquires knowledge useful to itself in its outward worship, it follows that the powers arising from earth and plant particles—that is, the animal soul—receive the influence of the active celestial bodies, through the same kind of influence by which plants had previously arisen, and thereby acquire knowledge beneficial to their body.

Since in the temple of both forms of worship there are among human souls hypocrites, such as the "newly converted," for whom religious actions serve only to preserve their position, wealth, and power for worldly ends, as well as righteous believers who seek through their actions both this lower world and the world to come, it follows that in the kingdom of Nature there are among animal souls both the souls of beasts, wild animals, birds, and other creatures, each according to its rank, whose actions are directed only toward their bodies, and human souls whose actions are directed both toward body and soul.

Since human souls not bound by divinely instituted forms of worship and divine laws, being occupied with struggles for power and profit, acquiring wealth, killing, seeking satisfaction of lusts and passions like wild beasts and cattle, desiring to rule without limit, oppress, and act arbitrarily—since such souls are far from the good, never acquire eternal bliss, and will disappear (*dusūr*) from the arena of being after death—it follows that the sensory soul possessed by wild beasts and cattle, caring only for the preservation of their bodies and the satisfaction, according to their mixture, of all their passions and desires, is far from the bliss bestowed by divine knowledge, cannot exist after the destruction of its body, and must disappear.

Since the actions of one who is righteous in outward worship of the Lord and in performing the rites of his religion are invariant—so that when he performs one of them, such as ablution, prayer, bowing, prostration, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, jihad, and the other obligatory and legally prescribed acts connected with outward worship, he performs that same act on another occasion in exactly the same way, without exceeding the first—it follows that the habits and actions of the sensory soul of beasts are likewise invariant and uniform, so that when it produces sounds or performs any other action it always does so in the same way as before.

Such is what the scales of religion have revealed to us through mutual equilibrium and correspondence, bringing to light what was hidden and what can be reached most correctly, reliably, swiftly, and excellently through the testimony of the prophetic ordinances, the ranks of the summons, and the divine sciences.

Glory be to God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, the All-Powerful.

May God bless and greet our eloquent and sweet-speaking Prophet Muḥammad, the pearl of messengership, his Legatee ʿAlī, and the pure Imams of their lineage.

[1] ***Ḥāliyya*** — the term is formed by combining the interrogative particle *hal* with the abstract-noun suffix *-iyya*.

[1] "We created man from a quintessence of dust" (Qurʾān 23:12).

[1] "Human soul" — this expression renders *nafs al-bashar*. The term *bashar*, "humankind" or "human beings" collectively, is generally used when speaking of qualities shared by the human race as a whole. The word *insān*, "man" or "human being," is more often used when al-Kirmānī wishes to emphasize the distinction between particular individuals who have attained perfection and the general mass of humanity.

[1] See note 2 to IV, 3.

STREET NINE

On the human soul as sensory; on what arises within it in its being—its first perfection—and through what it acquires its second perfection, and what the sustaining cause of that perfection is; on the final goal it reaches in its actions; on what in it plays the role of matter and what the role of form; on the impressions of acquisition that arise within it; on its place among existents; and on the fact that it is both one and many

After what we have said concerning the being of the soul and what it is, we have come sufficiently close to knowledge of it that its apprehension should no longer be difficult for us.

There is in it something that is not found in the natural things and celestial luminaries from which it arose—for example, nourishment, growth, and the capacity for choice (*ikhtiyār*). It possesses these not because of those celestial luminaries themselves, but because of that within it which is, as it were, receptive.

How this exists for it and within it may be clarified by the example of the Sun, which blackens the skin although its rays contain no blackness; or by anger, through which the body grows hot although anger itself contains no heat; or by a whetstone, which sharpens iron although it contains no sharpness in itself.

Thus the soul in its essence is receptive. In its initial being it possesses neither forms nor knowledge, just as its body in its initial being possesses no clothing, and it needs to cultivate itself just as the body needs clothing, nourishment, and care. Its felicity consists in acquiring forms and in acquisition itself, insofar as it succeeds in doing so, just as the felicity of its body consists in sufficiency and renewal insofar as these are attained.

At the beginning of its being, the soul is ignorant.

Ignorance is the absence of true knowledge in the essence. In this respect the soul may be in one of two states, one better and higher than the other.

The higher state is ignorance in which it possesses no forms of the knowable.

The lower state is one in which the forms of the knowable that it has acquired contradict and fail to correspond to the knowable itself.

This is misery and the greatest trial.

For this reason common and base people, submitting to the dictates of their mixture, receive satanic promptings and counsels that corrupt them and lead them to destruction more readily than they receive the counsels of virtuous elders offered for their welfare.

Thus the soul is free of the forms of sensible and intelligible things, possessing them no more than a blank sheet of paper or an unwritten writing tablet does, or than a sense faculty when there is nothing for it to apprehend.

It is likewise devoid of knowledge except for that naturally conditioned by its mixture and connected with its body.

This is because it is potential. In this state it is like matter—a potential substance prepared to receive that which will complete its essence.

Since it is such and possesses no knowledge, the Most High said:

"God brings you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you know nothing."

And the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—said:

"Every newborn is born in the bosom of Islam; then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian."

This means that every soul that comes into being is pure, individual, and free, possessing neither form nor knowledge nor confession nor thought. It acquires confession and knowledge through instruction by teachers, of whom the nearest to it are its parents.

They teach it according to what they themselves know. If they are Magians, it becomes a Magian; if Christians, a Christian; if Jews, a Jew; and if Muslims, a Muslim.

If the soul originally possessed within its own essence a form—that is, knowledge not naturally connected with the interests of its body—then, possessing that form, it could not receive an adventitious one, that is, new forms of knowledge.

For that which receives a form must not already possess another form in its essence; otherwise the existing form would prevent it from receiving the one that comes to it.

Thus, as is well known, hearing cannot receive and comprehend the meaning of another sound while it is already occupied by one sound; a gemstone cannot receive another engraving until the first has been erased; and water that has received a red color cannot receive another color as such.

Thus the soul is free of forms in its own essence. As we have said, it is naturally arisen life.

Although it is called "soul" or "spirit," the meaning through which it is what it is is **life**.

Both names are correct and do not pass beyond life: the living soul is soul, and the same applies to spirit.

If in thought one deprives a living, powerful, knowing human being of knowledge, the removal of knowledge does not remove either his power or his life. But if life is taken away from him, knowledge and power disappear as well, together with everything connected with life and existing through it.

Since life gathers all these attributes and is therefore receptive of them, it is the foundation of the existence of everything else, and nothing else precedes it.

Thus it is life existing in the world of Nature, furnished by divine wisdom with preordained instruments established for it, receptive of all the forms it is meant to receive that resemble that primordial created Life discussed in the introduction to this book.

Occupying this rank, it cannot be an actual substance, for substance is something self-subsistent, whereas the soul becomes what it becomes through the acquisition of that which makes it other than what it was.

Nor can it be said to be an actual intellect, although humans are said to be rational. At this rank it is potential; but through practicing the obligatory rites, rituals, and divine ordinances of the religious community it will become an actual intellect and will then truly be rational.

It is called **soul** because actions proceed from it in accordance with its mixture and primordial nature.

But if the actions proceeding from it are conditioned by the will to acquire felicity and remove the causes of suffering, then it is **intellect for souls**; it then receives everything that will move it from its present rank to its final limit.

For this reason it is the last of existents and their second limit, just as that created Life—that is, the First Intellect—is the first of existents and their first limit.

It is therefore the completion of the circle of creation.

Everything realized through wisdom leads toward its perfection.

And because in its being it ascends toward that limit which in foundation and station corresponds to the primordial foundation, namely the First Intellect, effusion is poured upon this life. This life receives, while the other—that is, the First Intellect—joins with it and is conjoined to it, so that the two become united, as we shall discuss later.

There then arises within the soul that which constitutes its perfection and directs its essence toward attaining the second perfection: namely, actions proceeding from a sustaining cause belonging to its essence, through which they emerge onto the arena of being and rise toward **desire** (*shawq*).

“Desire” is their universal name; according to each particular object desired (*mushtāq*), it receives an individual name determined by that object.

Thus desire is the sustaining cause of what arises within the soul.

Since the soul in its essence is potential, deficient, and in need of the knowledge that grants it felicity and in which its perfection consists, and since because of its deficiency and sensory character there is in its essence a need drawing it toward that which would satisfy it, and since this need is desire, the soul therefore possesses desire.

Yet this desire, like the soul itself, is potential.

When its senses encounter sensible things, desire grows strong; its fire is kindled and flares up, and through desire the soul becomes actualized, driven by it toward performing the actions conditioned by that desire in each state of its essence.

Thus desire is prior in rank to everything arising within the soul that is not desire and through which perfection is acquired, even though the actualization of desire itself depends upon actual sensation.

According to its object, desire receives different names, just as the soul itself receives different names according to its actions.

If the object of desire is pleasure, desire is **appetite** (*shahwa*).

This belongs both to the vegetative and to the sensory soul and is connected with the body, because it assists in obtaining the materials required for preserving it.

Appetite is divided into species, each possessing its own name.

The appetite for food is **hunger**; for water, **thirst**; for sexual intercourse, **sexual desire**; and so forth.

If the object of desire is requital, it is **indignation**.

Many animals are devoid of indignation—for example, worms and similar creatures whose bodies are externally protected by an environment favorable to them.

It belongs to animals that stand higher in mixture, subtlety, and balance.

The apprehension of indignation belongs to the actions of that mixture which distinguishes the sensory soul, actions directed toward preserving both its body and its own essence.

The body is protected from that which might bring corruption upon it from outside by being hostile and opposed to it: such a thing is either expelled or the soul withdraws from it.

This receives many names according to the kind of indignation and the action proceeding from it: complaint, reproach, rancor, enmity, hatred.

If these actions are accompanied by power, they become insult, beating, imprisonment, killing, merciless punishment, and the like.

If they are not accompanied by power, they become flight, withdrawal, hostility, and similar responses.

The soul's own essence is likewise protected against what may destroy it, and this too receives many names according to the kind of indignation and the action arising from it.

If it concerns vile and shameful things which the soul resists and flees, it is **pride** (*anafa*).

If it concerns what is blameworthy, it is **protective indignation** (*ḥamiyya*).

If it concerns what is base and ignoble, it is outrage.

If it concerns wicked and sinful actions harmful and shameful to the essence and provoking displeasure, it is condemnation, jihad, the performance of necessary actions, and the like.

If the object of desire is the acquisition of felicity through knowledge of the preceding sustaining causes and through carrying out the prescribed worship and obedience, then this desire is **will** (*irāda*).

From it proceed actions, each with its own name.

When the soul seeks, regarding it as good, to avoid deception and to return every thing to its owner, this is **trustworthiness** (*amāna*).

When it seeks to fulfill the divine commands and follow them in everything, this is religious profession.

When it seeks nearness to the Most High—concerning which the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, said, "The servant is nearest to God when prostrating"—and seeks to occupy the soul with intimate converse with its Lord and humble itself reverently before Him, this is **prayer**.

When, sincerely and not merely from obligation, it seeks the good of fulfilling what is due for the sake of God's grace, this is **purifying alms**.

When it seeks to restrain the soul's lust, this is **chastity**.

When it seeks to strengthen the soul in following the divine ordinances and norms and to temper it in the furnace of divine commands and prohibitions, this is **fasting**.

When it seeks to resemble God's *ḥudūd*, the Prophets, Messengers, and angels brought near in witnessing the temple of worship and performing its rites, this is **pilgrimage**.

When it seeks benefits from God, this is **supplication**.

When it seeks to establish truth, this is **justice** (*ʿadl*).

When it seeks to aid the oppressed, this is **mercy**.

When it seeks to equalize the two sides and exact from the oppressor what is due to the oppressed, this is **equity** (*inṣāf*).

And so with other things similar or opposed to these: for each, will has its own name.

All these wills arise in the soul as culminating states after that which precedes them in its being. They are directed toward the welfare of its own essence, completing and rectifying it.

These wills are the most characteristic of the soul's actions performed for its own sake rather than for the sake of its body.

As for their opposites, they are determined by the mixture, whose quality causes them to appear in the soul arising from that mixture when it has failed to adhere to the ordinances of the religious community and observe them.

Thus **desire**, which is another expression for the soul's need, is divided into **appetite, indignation, and will**.

Through these three the soul is strengthened and perfected for actions of accord or aversion, seeking and fleeing, welcoming and turning away, loving and hating, friendship and hostility, fear and tranquility, contentment and indignation.

From them arise within it the dispositions that determine its actions, as we wrote in *Signs of Faith* and *The Crown of the Intellects*.

All of the foregoing arises gradually, one thing after another.

Perfection, however, is attained when the limit is reached through which everything that ought to disappear disappears.

For it is known that desire proceeds from need and deficiency. When perfection is attained, need and deficiency disappear, and with their disappearance the desire proceeding from them likewise disappears.

The sole exception is that desire connected with the soul's own essence for embracing what is beyond mastery.

For the desiring soul this desire becomes praise, glorification, exaltation, and magnification.

This desire is the greatest final goal.

It occurs when the soul's rank becomes the same as that of the Intellects that intellect their own essences and are simultaneously intellecting, intelligible, and intellects.

When this desire arises in the soul, it seeks, impelled by the forms it needs, the completion of its own essence.

Then there arises within it sensation of sensible things existing outside it and of one nature with it.

It attains its first fullness by acquiring their forms through the instruments prepared for it and implanted in its body, by means of which it is filled and acquires.

In its essence, as we said earlier, it resembles white paper treated with rice-water and starch, free of writing and prepared to receive whatever encounters it.

The soul receives the forms of sensible things through certain external intermediaries established because neither the soul by itself nor sensible things by themselves are sufficient for its perfection; intermediaries resembling them are also necessary.

Thus perception of forms through the eye occurs through the mediation of **air and light**. Forms, colors, and qualities impressed in these are conveyed to the visual power in the eye when light stands opposite them and touches the surface of the pupil. The eye then senses them and is colored by their colors; without light, the eye could not be joined with them.

The eye is only one of the sense organs through which the soul receives, and this reception is called **apprehension inward**.

For what is perceived by the ear, **air alone** serves as intermediary, touching the ear and connecting it to the place from which the audible sound proceeds. When the particles of air are set in motion, the soul senses, without needing light. The distance at which sound is perceived depends upon the strength of the sound that sets the air particles in motion.

For what is apprehended by smell, air again serves as intermediary, though odors are carried by air only insofar as there is olfaction; smell depends upon the strength of odors and the extent to which they spread through the air.

As for taste and touch, no mediation of air is required: they occur through direct contact.

All of this is **apprehension inward**.

In this state the soul does not resemble the sensible forms it happens to acquire, nor do those sensible forms resemble it—not because their substances are opposed, but because both are deficient and, being potential, need one another in order to become actual.

When, through the sense organs, the sensing being encounters the sensible object and the sense apprehends the object of its sensation by receiving its form, the two become alike, are joined, and become actual: the former becomes an actual sensor and the latter an actually sensed object.

Iron and fire likewise differ qualitatively, yet when iron receives the form of fire it becomes like fire, while fire in acting upon iron becomes like iron. It is not fire itself that has entered the iron, but its effect, through which the iron becomes like fire.

Likewise white cloth and saffron are unlike one another, but if the cloth receives saffron dye through the mediation of moisture carrying it into the depths of the fabric, the cloth becomes yellow like saffron. It is not saffron itself that enters the cloth, but its effect—that is, its color—so that the cloth becomes like saffron.

Thus the sensory soul receives sensible forms, and they become actual within it and, through resemblance to the soul and conjunction with it, become like it.

These forms, received and preserved in the soul's essence, are no longer as they originally were in the sensible object; here they are separated from matter and exist by themselves.

In this way the soul attains its **first perfection**.

Having reached this degree, at which its essence alone possesses these forms, the soul rises above its relation to beasts and wild animals and approaches, on the path toward resemblance

and correspondence with what lies above it, the threshold beyond which, through reception (*istifāda*), it is transformed into an **acquired, received intellect** (*ʿaql muktasab mustafād*).

The role of **matter** in it is played by that which, as we have said, arises from the natural mixture.

The role of **form** is played by the knowledge acquired through the senses and by the grace of performing the laws of worship, which are the causes of its rectification and of its transformation into an abiding substance through conjunction with what abides.

Through this there arises in the soul an activity called **imagination** (*takhayyul*).

When a sense directs itself toward receiving from outside the forms of sensible things, the reception of these forms becomes the sustaining cause of the existence of imagination, which is the soul's action upon their forms and qualities once these have been perceived and preserved as such—that is, apart from their matter.

The forms apprehended by the senses and present within the soul—which have become one with the soul and constitute its first perfection—become the object of the soul's action: it combines them and weighs them against one another.

The completeness and fulfillment of this activity proceed from encompassing these received forms, just as the completeness and fulfillment of sensation proceed from the sensible object.

Since these sensible forms constitute the soul's first perfection, just as length, breadth, and depth constitute the first perfection of bodies, and since intelligible forms as such constitute its second perfection, just as all artificial forms and qualities constitute the second perfection of bodies, these sensible forms present within the soul become the object of an action belonging to the soul's own essence, upon which it acts essentially through imagining and assimilating.

Sensation and **imagination** are two actions of the soul.

When it acts upon the sensible and apprehends it outside itself, this is sensation.

When it acts upon the forms received from sensible things as upon something sensible for it, even when the sensible thing itself is no longer present, this is imagination.

One of these actions is external and the other internal.

The state and degree occupied by the soul are higher in the latter action: when it acts upon the sensible thing existing outside the soul as matter and form, it acts upon something corporeal and material; but when it acts upon that same thing separated from its prime matter and matter—that is, upon the form of the sensible thing present within the soul—it performs a spiritual action detached from prime matter.

It is higher in this respect because in this action it requires neither the assistance of the senses nor that of its body, whereas in the former action it cannot dispense with such assistance.

These two actions are in fact one action, but the difference between their objects makes them two.

Imagination—that is, action upon a form separated from matter—almost always accompanies the possessor of sensation, for sensation produces imagination as soon as it encounters a sensible thing.

Thus imagination acts together with sensation: as sensation acts outwardly, imagination acts inwardly.

For it is known that the same essence performs both actions, and when there are apprehension (*idrāk*) and understanding (*fahm*) produced by sensation, which is an action from without, there are almost always also memory and thought (*fikr*) produced by imagination, which is an action from within.

The need for one is like the need for the other. This activity is established in every respect, and sensation precedes imagination only in rank.

The matter resembles wax receiving and preserving an impression: neither the preservation of the impression precedes its reception nor its reception precedes its preservation; both occur together.

The same applies to sensation, although when the two are arranged by rank, one precedes the other.

The imprinting of sensible forms does not mean that these forms as such come to exist within the soul's essence in such a way that, if the soul wished to cast them outward again and attach each to its original place, it could do so.

Rather, it means that the soul receives together the **forms and quiddities of sensible things**.

As for those forms that are not spiritual but are qualities, they arise within the soul as soon as the sense encounters the sensible thing. They may become lodged in the sense and remain there, or they may not remain.

But as for their quiddities, it is precisely these that the soul receives, and they remain within it permanently.

The same applies to quantity arising from imagination—that is, from inward action upon the impressions of sensible things.

It is this that strengthens and supports the soul's innate disposition (*jibilla*).

For example, to know the quiddity of body—namely, that it possesses length, breadth, and depth—does not mean knowing whether it is square, triangular, or shaped like an idol.

Likewise the quiddity of man consists in being perfect, apprehending the norms of the religious community, virtuous, and, generally speaking, living, speaking, and capable of resurrection—not in being white or black, tall or short, male or female, old or young, witty or dull.

The same applies to definitions.

All this is supplied to the soul by imagination.

Yet the soul differs in the performance of this action called imagination.

Its imagination—that is, its action when it compares forms, establishes their similarities, combines them, and opposes them—may be false because the soul itself was in doubt and needed a further imprinting of forms, as happens in dreams when we encounter things that do not exist outside the soul.

Or imagination may be true because this action—its acquisition, ordering, establishing, and balancing of forms—corresponds to what exists outside the soul, even if that external thing is established but not yet known.

When this action is performed from within the soul's own essence, and when the instruments and everything through which the soul acquires and distinguishes forms are present so that it is capable of this activity, the first result of these actions is **shame**, gradually maturing within the soul.

This occurs when a boy begins to conceal his corrupt and evil actions, not wishing the disgrace to become known, even though his soul is not yet strong enough to prevent those ugly actions themselves from occurring, because at first it is still weak and empty.

At this point he must be directed onto the path of good character and the performance of divinely prescribed acts, so that this innate disposition (*jibilla*), shame, may grow strong within him.

Its growth and strengthening indicate that the substance of his soul arises from a balanced mixture and show that the time has come for it to turn toward upright conduct and devote itself entirely to fulfilling divine prescriptions and to knowing sensible things that are matter and form—for example, performing obligatory and prescribed religious acts and interpreting them.

Through this, its condition will be rectified and the bad habits and blameworthy inclinations within it removed.

If it becomes accustomed to fulfilling the divine commands and adhering to them in everything, its rank rises, and it begins to reflect upon the causes sustaining those existents that are intelligible and separated from matter, such as the angels, and upon the sustaining causes of the worship it practices.

Then, when it has attained this degree—having imprinted the forms of sensible things, made them objects of imagination, become capable of performing and interpreting the acts prescribed by the Law, which are the source of grace and the foundation of every good, and through practicing them acquired its perfection—it becomes as though **matter prepared to receive intelligible forms**.

This is the final goal attained by the soul at this stage through acquisition.

Thus, in order, there comes first the being of the soul as an essence and the desire inherent in that being in all its varieties; then sensation; then, through sensation, imagination, an activity leading to **choice** (*ikhtiyār*), so that will comes into being.

Will is desire for knowledge accompanying sensation, while **choice** occurs through imagination, discrimination, and the completion of deliberation and reflection.

The soul, which is a potential intellect, thereby becomes itself the performer of all these actions: it receives intelligible and artificial forms, distinguishes good from evil actions and dispositions, and deliberates about what ought and ought not to be done.

All its knowledge is twofold: **knowledge of the sensible** and **knowledge of the intelligible**.

The sensible is that which is apprehended by sense in the heavens, on earth, and between them, and knowledge of it is gathered within the acts prescribed by the Law.

The intelligible is that which is established and known by the soul itself, and is likewise gathered as the meaning of the rites, fulfilled interpretations, and higher correspondences.

The good of the soul is accordingly divided into that which is brought about by action and that which is brought about by knowledge; and each of these is further divided as we have previously explained.

Thus the soul is **one in essence and many in its forms and kinds of knowledge**.

As the soul of this or that existent, it occupies corresponding ranks, just like a believer who has fulfilled everything in religion and worship and has risen in knowledge above everything connected with the corporeal world and the world of religious ordinance, so that nothing remains for him to know except the incorporeal Intellects brought near.

He is then like a cluster of unripe grapes changing its sourness into sweetness, lacking only one further thing for that sweetness to become actual; or like a finished cloth that has received all forms and lacks only the form of cutting and sewing, which is the last of forms and the limit beyond which there is no further limit.

The correctness of everything said is confirmed by the source of proofs and correspondences, namely the affairs of religion and its established ranks, which are the scales of religion.

Since the believer devoted to acts of worship and learning from the missionary the forms of religion is wholly absorbed in observing the norms of outward worship and knowing its obligatory ordinances, laws, rites, what invalidates that worship and what makes it valid, accepting on faith the prescriptions of the Prophets and Messengers, the revealed Scriptures, and all commandments, and devoting himself exclusively to this without thinking of anything else, it follows that the soul of beasts possesses only that knowledge connected with the interests of its body.

For the Law and the acts and rituals it prescribes are, as it were, a body for the soul: it makes use of them in order to acquire virtues.

If the soul possesses no knowledge of the ordinances and prescriptions of the Law, it cannot act; if it cannot act, it cannot acquire virtue, depart from vile baseness, or acquire good character.

This knowledge of the soul is **knowledge of "how"**: relying upon it, the soul maintains ritual purity, prays, and performs the other acts.

Thus the soul's knowledge of what is prescribed by the Law corresponds to the beastly soul's knowledge of what benefits its body, through which that soul exists.

Since after this knowledge through which actions are performed—that is, the first worship, worship through action—the believer learns another knowledge connected with the second worship, worship through knowledge, and acquires knowledge through interpreting those things prescribed by the Law through which he comes to know God's creation, which we too seek to know—as in God's sayings:

"Do they not see how We constructed the heaven above them and adorned it, so that there are no fissures in it?"

and:

"Let man consider from what he was created,"

and:

"Say: travel through the earth and observe how He began creation"—

and since in this second worship the believer gathers the first worship together with it, it follows that the sensory soul performs both the actions proper to the vegetative soul, seeking materials for preserving the body, and its own actions, acquiring the forms of sensible things, which it knows through healing interpretations, as we explained in our *Crown of the Intellects*.

This knowledge is for it as a form upon which it acts through thought.

If it possesses no thought, it cannot rise, cannot acquire virtue, and its essence will not be sufficient for it to become powerful and incorporeal (*mujarrada*).

This is knowledge of quantities, through which corporeal existents and the number of the *ḥudūd* of God's religion are known; acquiring such knowledge is useful for encompassing them.

Since it is better for a believer to possess no knowledge at all of the second worship than to hold within it something contrary to truth, it follows that the state of the sensory soul when it is entirely without knowledge is higher than its state when it has imprinted forms contrary to truth.

Since the believer devoted to worship will more readily accept the word of any seductive claimant to knowledge who leads him into error and deception than the word of a true guide and teacher—for the believer is so weak that he resembles and is akin to the deceiver, and

therefore the latter's word, proceeding from whim and caprice (*hawā*), is nearer, more agreeable, and dearer to him than the word of a learned guide pointing toward truth, which consists in removing the influences of caprice—it follows that the soul becomes lodged among noisy fools and ignorant people when it more readily accepts the words of corrupt people than those of the virtuous and well-disposed, because such souls are inexperienced and incline toward what resembles them.

Since one who possesses a doctrine and knowledge does not receive another knowledge until convinced that the first is false, it follows that the soul that has imprinted and encompassed forms does not receive others so long as those former ones remain forms for it.

Since the believer entering upon the path of the second worship of the Lord initially possesses none of the knowledge belonging to that worship, it follows that the soul initially possesses no forms or knowledge connected with the good of its own essence.

And since the believer, insofar as he is a pure believer, receives knowledge, rises through the ranks, and in worship of the Lord reaches the degree of the virtuous and well-disposed, it follows that the soul, being a substance, receives forms and through them reaches the highest ranks of nobility and perfection.

Since a believer is a believer through **word, action, and intention** (*niyya*), through which he rectifies his actions and thoughts, it follows that the soul is what it is through three things: **appetite, indignation, and will**, which bring bodily and psychic actions into being.

Since one beginning the path of the second worship does not resemble the virtues belonging to it, does not possess them, and is not like them until he has acquired the forms of the knowledge of that worship, whereas when the believer and these forms of knowledge meet, his soul becomes the bearer of this knowledge and the knowledge becomes that which it bears, so that likeness is attained and virtue acquired, it follows that before the sensory soul imprints the forms of sensible things—that is, the existents gathered by the acts of worship together with its laws, prescriptions, and deeds—its essence does not resemble them.

Once it has acquired these forms, it becomes like them and is completed through them.

Since the believer, by learning and imprinting forms, becomes like the one from whom he received those forms and through whom he came to possess form, it follows that the soul, in acquiring the forms of sensible things, becomes like those sensible things.

Since the rank of faith is the foundation for receiving the degrees of the *ḥudūd*, so that this rank is like matter prepared to receive another rank, while the other rank received is like form, it follows that within the soul there is something playing the role of matter and something playing the role of form—namely, **the acquired** (*muktasab*), whether good or evil.

Since the believer who has responded to the summons inwardly reflects with his soul upon what the higher *ḥudūd* have taught him concerning worship of God, while outwardly he performs with his body the acts of worship, and since this is acquisition—that is, piety constructed through the conjunction of the two forms of worship—it follows that when the soul acts upon a form separated from matter, supplied by the senses and known through religious laws, obligatory norms, and rites, this action inwardly and outwardly is **imagination**, that is, acquisition.

Since in the believer who has established the pillar of his faith through outward worship in word, action, and purpose and has thereby responded to the call of inward worship, the first things to arise are reverence and fear of allowing corruption into his religion and worship, so that he avoids this and manifests only upright conduct and worship, it follows that the first thing to arise in the soul from religious actions is **shame**, which causes it to conceal what is bad and manifest what is worthy.

Since the believer who learns and acquires knowledge rises toward knowledge of the angels brought near and of the world to come and distinguishes which rites, laws, and obligatory prescriptions constitute the most complete and worthy forms of worship, it follows that at the most perfect rank of imprinting the forms of sensible and intelligible things, which entails obligatory acts and religious laws, the soul acquires knowledge of the **Created Intellects**, through which it abides, and of the higher angels, and distinguishes good and evil, the transient and the abiding.

Since it is precisely the believer who adheres to both forms of worship—outward worship through acts prescribed by the Law, which produce good character and remove base, evil, and corrupt dispositions, and inward worship through knowledge, namely knowledge of existents, the *ḥudūd* of the Most High, His angels, Scriptures, Prophets and Messengers, together with observance of commands and prohibitions, which brings knowledge of all that precedes and follows in being—who gathers both forms of worship and deserves to abide with the Lord of the worlds, it follows that it is precisely the soul that senses, knows forms, and thinks that gathers together the actions of both the vegetative and sensory souls and deserves to receive the lights of the Kingdom.

Since the believer passes from interpreting knowledge of religious laws and obligatory norms to knowledge of the great cycles, and from knowledge of these to knowledge of the angels standing above them, it follows that from knowledge of the sensible forms supplied by the acts prescribed by the Law, prescribed rites, and prophetic divine commands, the soul passes to knowledge of the **Intellects, which are the angels**.

Since after acquiring religious knowledge the believer rises toward knowledge of the afterlife, it follows that after knowing the sensible and intelligible through reception of the Law and its norms, the soul turns toward knowledge of its own essence and intellects it, so that **the intellecting becomes the intelligible and the intelligible becomes the intellecting**.

This is attained at its final rank.

Such are the forms of knowledge apprehended by the scales of religion through the establishment of mutual equilibrium, correspondence, and resemblance.

Glory be to God, the Mighty, the All-Sovereign, the Most Great, the One whose proof encompasses all.

May God bless and greet the Prophet Muḥammad, the best of those sent with explanation and proof to spirits and humankind, together with his Legatee and the purest Imams.

Footnotes

[1] Qurʾān 16:78.

[1] "Self-subsistent" — this word is in fact a calque of the Arabic *qāʾim bi-dhātihi*: *qāʾim* literally means "standing," and *bi-dhātihi*, "through itself" or "by itself." **"Becomes"** renders *yaqūm*, that is, "becomes self-subsistent."

[1] In the original: *ʿilm kayfiyya*, literally **"knowledge of quality."** Below it is contrasted with **"knowledge of quantity."** In the first case the question is **how**, and in the second **how many**; moreover, the "how" and the "how many" concern entirely different objects: **how** religious rites are to be performed, and **how many** ranks there are in the hierarchy of existents.

[1] Qurʾān 50:6.

[1] Qurʾān 86:5.

[1] Qurʾān 29:20.

[1] Al-Kirmānī has in mind one of the well-known maxims of Islam:

"Actions are judged according to intentions."

Arabic: *al-aʿmāl bi-l-niyyāt*.

STREET TEN

On the human soul as speaking/rational (*nāṭiqa*); what it is at this degree; whether it is the sensory soul raised to a higher degree, or whether man possesses three souls—the vegetative, the sensory, and the speaking/rational—as some maintain; whether it is a substance or an accident, and, if a substance, whether the same accidents belong to it as to bodies or whether its accidents are peculiar to it; and what in it plays the role of matter and what the role of form

From what has already been said, it is clear that the human soul, considered as sensory, is not actual in such a way that it would itself constitute the limit and thereby be like the other animal souls, which are the perfection of bodies seeking their own benefit. Rather, it is potential and constitutes that final goal whose perfection is attained for its own sake and not for the sake of its body, through what stands above it in rank; it then becomes an **actual intellect**. Nor is it bounded by that sensory condition, for by imprinting forms it passes beyond it.

Here, by the **speaking/rational soul** we mean the soul acting in accordance with what its perfection determines: adhering to the ordinances and laws of the religious community, rising through acquisition above sensible things and no longer needing them, so that in acquisition the place formerly occupied by sensibles is taken by intelligible essences, which intellect themselves and are supra-natural. For this soul, the intelligible is what the sensible is for the sensory soul.

In this respect the two are alike. If the sensory soul does not act upon the sensible—which is potentially intelligible—and thereby become strengthened and acquire radiant actuality, it remains potential. It is like the nutritive power: if it does not act upon food, it remains useless; but when it acts upon food and the food becomes like it and assimilated to it, its powers penetrate it and the two become one.

Likewise the speaking/rational soul: if it does not intellect the intelligible that intellects itself, and thereby attain likeness with it and become actual, it remains potential, occupying the rank of the sensory soul.

As we have already said, the sensible through which the sensory soul acquires actuality stands to that soul as the intelligible stands to the speaking/rational soul.

Just as, from the standpoint of actuality, the sensible and the sense faculty are unlike one another, so too the intelligible and the speaking/rational soul are unlike one another. But when the soul intellects the intelligible—that is, the Intellects—they become alike and are conjoined. The soul, like them, becomes actual; like them, it is abstracted from everything connected with prime matter, intellects its own essence, and is intelligible to its own essence.

It becomes distinct from those forms belonging to prime matter, in which the intellecting subject is one thing and the intelligible object another. In its abstraction from matter its essence reaches a degree at which it acts within itself and no longer needs sensibles bound to prime matter.

In short, just as artificial forms bring matters into actuality—for example, making wood into a bed—so **intelligible forms make the potential intellect actual**.

Accordingly, the final goal of the sensory soul—which is an intellect bound to prime matter—and the nobility of its action upon sensible existents outside itself, which are potentially sensible, by means of the instruments it possesses, consist in its acting upon the impressions of those sensible forms that are present within its essence through sensation, abstracted from matter.

Thus the receiving essence and what it receives become one and actual: the former becomes actual sensation and the latter the actually sensible.

In this way the soul becomes **imaginative**.

The final goal of this imaginative soul—as imaginative, acting upon the impressions of sensibles actually present within its essence—is to become capable of imprinting the forms of that which is originally immaterial and actually intelligible.

This is its perfection.

Yet while the soul is still at the degree of the imaginative soul and has not attained conjunction with what is above it—and this degree is the primary rank of the speaking/rational soul—it is counted among the natural forms, although it possesses a certain resemblance to the supra-natural Intellects, which are the **celestial letters**.

In the same way, species intermediate between two genera share a resemblance with both. Species, however, resemble what lies above them through certain meanings or characteristics, whereas the soul resembles what is above it through its very essence, according to the extent of its preparedness to attain complete likeness with the higher and complete separation from the natural essences beneath it.

So long as it occupies this rank, that resemblance does not remove it from its present degree. What moves it from this rank is that through which it becomes an actual intellect resembling the supra-natural Intellects and conjoined with them.

What raises it to this rank, beyond which there is no further limit, is not the divine sciences connected with inward worship alone, but these together with the prophetic acts prescribed by the Law and connected with outward worship.

This conjunction is called in Sacred Scripture—that is, the Qurʾān—**piety** (*taqwā*).

It is the soul's provision, its foundation, its nobility, its beauty, and its crown.

Thus the potential sensory soul becomes, through sensible things, an actual imaginative soul; yet in relation to what stands above it, it remains potential.

Then, by imprinting the forms of the intelligible that intellects itself, it likewise becomes actual and intellective.

Here the lights of the separated Intellects—which are the angels brought near—play the role of leaven placed in dough, making the dough like itself because of the correspondence and likeness between the two. Without that correspondence and likeness, one could not be receptive and the other active.

Thus leaven and palm wine, having lost such likeness, do not correspond, and putting leaven into palm wine does not produce what it produces in dough.

This likeness arises within the soul because through each of its actions of sensation and imagination—which together encompass what belongs to the two forms of worship—it acquires something that gives it resemblance, correspondence, and perfection.

Likewise, for example, a minted dirham or dinar reaches the limit of receiving the craftsman's actions—assaying, weighing, casting, hammering, giving it a round shape, and heating. Through each of these operations it acquires and is prepared for the final thing it receives: the inscription impressed upon it, through which it becomes a dirham or dinar. That inscription gives it completion and likeness, leaving nothing further for the dirham or dinar to receive.

So too the sensory soul—that is, the potential intellect—reaches the limit of receiving the lights of the influences of the celestial bodies and the instruction of the *ḥudūd* of God's religion. These act upon and influence it, removing its bad dispositions through obligatory actions and endowing it, through imagination, with the knowledge conveyed by prophetic ordinances.

There are degrees in all of this through which the soul ascends, becoming increasingly like what is above it, until the forms of the actual, separated Intellects above it are the final forms that it imprints.

By imprinting their forms, it reaches its perfection, encompasses and intellects its own essence, becomes complete, and becomes like and similar to them.

After this there remain no further forms for it to acquire.

The speaking/rational soul cannot perform its actions—knowing truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood in the sciences belonging to the second, inward worship, and knowing good as good and evil as evil in the acts belonging to outward worship—without something that is to it what light is to the eye.

This proceeds from those with whom its perfection is connected: the celestial *ḥudūd*, namely the perfected Intellects, and the terrestrial *ḥudūd*, namely God's vicegerents and servants of the Most High.

What proceeds from them is **universal knowledge** (*ʿulūm kulliyya*) connected with the soul's establishment.

The soul must strive to know these things and bind itself firmly to them: knowledge of the angels who act upon the soul, as the Law teaches; of God's *ḥudūd*; of outward worship; of the minor and major cycles; of the Last Judgment; of recompense and punishment in the hereafter; of Paradise and fiery Gehenna.

This knowledge possesses the same necessity as knowledge that three and three make six, that subtracting two from ten leaves eight, or that adding six to nine makes fifteen.

The sensory soul receives this knowledge. Yet it cannot arise within it until the soul has received that which plays the role of form for it—that is, until its essence possesses a form separated from sensibles and begins to reflect upon it, which is to imagine.

That form itself can arise within the essence of the soul only when sense encounters the sensible; and this encounter occurs through the instruments prepared and established by means of the mixture in which sentient life arose.

Thus the encounter of sense with sensible becomes in the soul as though **prime matter and matter**, while thought, or the formation of forms—that is, imagination—becomes the **form** of this.

Then the thinking and imagining soul becomes as though prime matter for receiving the intelligible forms, which are the angels brought near.

Upon reaching this rank, the soul enters the angelic empyreans and is called the **speaking/rational soul**.

It can acquire this only through what is prescribed by the Law, training itself and following the divinely ordained laws in both the outward and inward.

When it has imprinted their forms and conducts itself according to them as we have described, it can no longer be said to be prime matter, because it has risen above that rank and acquired actuality.

Then, at the degree of self-sufficiency and felicity it has attained, nothing contrary to the interests of its body will concern it; rather, it will steadfastly oppose its passions, the influence of its mixture, and all its capricious impulses.

It differs from the body as a ripe and sweet grape differs from that basis from which its proximate being proceeded, namely the bunch of grapes.

Its actions will then be only good, proceeding from its perfection, and it will enter among those blessed ones upon whom there is neither fear nor grief.

Being capable of apprehending knowledge through the establishment of equilibrium, it will attain the utmost limits in knowledge of existents, so that there will be nothing among them that it cannot know; and it will enter among those upon whom there is neither fear nor grief.

Thus the human soul is **one**, and not, as some say, three souls in man: vegetative, sensory, and rational-speaking.

Those who say this judged from the actions proceeding from man.

Seeing that he obtains nourishment—which is an action of vegetative life—they attributed to him a vegetative soul.

Seeing that he senses and seeks food and pleasure—which are animal actions—they attributed to him a sensory soul.

Seeing that he knows and intellects, thinks and discriminates—which are acts of intellect—they attributed to him a rational-speaking soul.

Yet having said that man possesses three souls, they did not explain what those souls themselves are.

Man does not perform these actions because he truly has three souls. His actions are multiple because his instruments are multiple, and each instrument deserves its own name.

Thus one who worships God is called, when he prays, a person praying; when he fasts, a person fasting; when he performs pilgrimage, a pilgrim; when he gives alms, an almsgiver. Yet a single person performs all these different actions, although "one praying" is not the same designation as "one fasting," and "almsgiver" is not such for the same reason that he is a pilgrim.

Similarly, a carpenter, when sawing, is a sawyer; when drilling, a driller; when working with a scraper, a scraper-user; and so forth. The carpenter himself is one, while his instruments are many.

It cannot be that one of these actions is performed by one agent and another by a different agent, for that would mean that sensation deceives us.

Likewise the soul is one, while its actions differ because of the different instruments prepared for it according to the action sought.

When it acts for the benefit of its body through the stomach, liver, and internal and external organs, it is said to possess a **vegetative power**.

When it acts through the eye, ear, and other sense organs and seeks pleasures, it is said to possess a **sensory power**, apprehending sensibles and also possessing the power of growth.

Likewise this same soul possesses the power of memory (*quwwa ḥāfiẓa*) and the power of acting upon something else, in which respect it resembles Nature itself.

But the soul itself is one, and none of these is something separate within it.

Since this is so, the judgment that the soul is one but multiple in its actions remains valid further on as well.

Because sensible things move it, it possesses sensory power; because it is capable of retaining sensations, it possesses another power. Yet it itself is one, though multiple in virtue of its different actions and the different names given to them, for it is a soul possessing powers.

Nor should an opponent object, misled by the duality that appears within the soul of an angry person, when one thing within him impels him to revenge and another urges him to suppress his anger and forgive the offender—an argument similar to the case of a man who finds a

purse of money kept in his house and is supposedly impelled at one time to take it and at another to leave it untouched.

One might argue that if the soul were one, it would not produce two contrary impulses but only one, since supposedly different things cannot proceed from one essence.

But such an objection is invalid.

This difference does not arise because several agents exist within the soul, but because in its actualization the soul occupies different degrees, and these produce different actions.

Uniform action is produced only by that which is already actual—for example, the animal sensory soul, whose actuality is determined by its natural mixture. Such a soul cannot choose whether or not to perform its act; it always produces the same action.

In man, however, dual and differing actions arise precisely because, although there is within him what is conditioned by the animal sensory soul, his soul is not actual as sensory but potential and directed toward actualization, toward becoming through everything prepared for it something other than the sensory soul.

Therefore it also has actions contrary to those of the sensory soul.

In this it resembles an unripe date within a cluster of dates. A limit is appointed for that date, and upon reaching it the fruit is called ripe.

Suppose one side of the unripe fruit has completely received the influence of the Sun, the luminaries, and the elements created by God for this purpose, thereby attaining its perfection and limit and acquiring the sweetness adorning it, whereas the other side, which has not yet attained that state, remains astringent because it is still what it originally was.

Or take a single bunch of grapes in which one berry is sweet and another unripe and sour: one contributes sweetness to the bunch, another sourness.

Does the existence of sweetness in one berry and sourness in another imply that the bunch has two souls, one imparting sweetness and the other sourness?

No. Reason does not affirm this.

Rather, when something is potential and destined eventually to pass into actuality and be realized at the limit appointed for it, the impressions and signs determined by that limit appear gradually, one after another.

Insofar as and wherever these are actual within it, it too is actual; insofar as and wherever they remain potential, it remains what it originally was—that is, conditioned by its mixture.

Accordingly, since the being of the soul consists in becoming intellective and resembling the supra-natural Intellects, and since it is potential, those actions characteristic of it as final actions—the result of actualization and of acquiring goods through acts prescribed by the Law—do not appear in it all at once in pure form.

They appear progressively, to the extent that the divine commands and the causes leading it toward perfection become effective within it: the things prescribed by the Law and the divine rites that give the soul piety, trustworthiness, justice, forgiveness, mercy, truthfulness, generosity, steadfastness, chastity; and also sciences and forms of knowledge, together with the ability to employ the method of deriving knowledge through equilibrium on the basis of the Law, the Ordinance, and the prophetic divine prescriptions.

To the degree that the soul is diligent in these things, the perfection determined by them becomes manifest within it.

Since the soul is one, and since within it there are both what is originally determined by its mixture and what is produced by the acquired impressions of perfection—from which proceed actions characteristic of its perfection—its conduct fluctuates between what is determined by its mixture, which determines potentiality and imperfection, and what is determined by perfection acquired through actions and knowledge.

If the power of the mixture prevails, the action arising in anger will be hard-hearted revenge, like the sourness of unripe grapes and the astringency of an unripe date.

But if what is contained in the form of religious profession, divine rites, and prophetic commands prevails, the action arising in anger will be forgiveness or suppression of anger, like the sweetness of ripe grapes and dates.

Therefore in those who are **truly human**, such as Prophets and those supported from heaven, one does not observe vile actions.

Their souls are actual, having acquired perfection, virtue, and eternal felicity. They resemble a fresh ripe date that has reached perfection and produces nothing but sweetness, or a bunch of grapes containing not a single sour berry.

Thus the soul is one, while its actions differ according to its instruments, the quality of its mixture, and the divine forms it has acquired.

Therefore we, children of the true confession, must patiently and diligently perform the religious acts obligatory upon us and adhere to the divinely prescribed laws, so that through such diligence our souls may become intellective and ascend upward, rising above the degree of the visible and sensible to the angelic degree and reaching their final goal—the station of the supra-natural Intellects.

May they become like grapes and dates that were formerly green but have now ripened and reached perfection, transforming their former sourness and astringency into sweetness; and may the soul likewise transform the vices conditioned by its natural mixture into virtues and, by following the path of the two forms of worship, become from base and corrupt a noble intellect.

If someone argues that the speaking/rational soul is noble when it makes exact judgments and reaches its limit in understanding, knowledge, and unclouded certainty, but low when its judgments are erroneous and it is dull, ignorant, and confused; and that since none of these qualities is attributed to the nobility or baseness of the sensory soul, the sensory soul must

therefore be something different from the speaking/rational soul—we answer that what we have already said refutes this objection.

Correct opinions, discrimination, and the other higher qualities arise within the soul over time through training and acquisition, when it attains its perfection and that perfection begins to appear within it.

Its lower qualities, by contrast, proceed from its mixture and what it acquires under the influence of that mixture until it begins to train itself in the furnace of the two forms of worship, outward and inward.

All this is the consequence of its potentiality, and there is nothing here that requires the existence of two souls or contradicts what we have said.

Correct opinion, sound discrimination, exact judgment, and true understanding belong to imagination.

But imagination truly proceeds only from sensation, and sensation belongs to the sensory soul.

If exact judgment and true understanding proceed from sensation, and sensation from the sensory soul, why cannot this very sensory soul, once endowed with discrimination and accurate opinion, be the speaking/rational soul—provided only that it has acquired from outside what transferred it into actuality and now acts in accordance with what its essence determines through what it has acquired?

It is like a date palm fertilized from outside by something homogeneous with it and thereby becoming an actual fruit-bearing palm; had it not been fertilized, it would have produced nothing.

Thus the soul is one, but multiple with respect to the degrees determined by its acquisition.

The soul is a **substance**, and this in two respects: both with respect to that which within this substance plays the role of **bearer**, and with respect to that which plays the role of **what is borne**.

As for that which plays the role of what is borne, it is known that the being of everything proceeds from something required by wisdom; otherwise it would not exist.

It is likewise known that the human soul acquires kinds of knowledge that it does not need for preserving its body or securing its bodily benefit—for example, knowledge of sustaining causes and their effects, of the properties of substances and accidents, and so forth.

It is therefore established that everything that exists exists because of something required by wisdom.

From the fact that the soul possesses knowledge that it does not require for preserving and benefiting its body, it follows that such knowledge does not exist in it for the sake of the body—for if it did, beasts and wild animals would possess the same knowledge, whereas we find that they possess not even anything lesser of this sort.

If, then, it is established that this knowledge does not exist for the body, the knowledge possessed by the soul—while the body is adequately served by the primordial knowledge of its own benefit—can exist only for the soul itself.

If it is not for the body, it is for the soul's essence.

It comes to the soul from outside and is received by its essence.

These things are adventitious, while the soul receives them; and that which receives must necessarily be a substance.

Therefore **the soul is a substance**.

As for that which plays the role of bearer within it, it is known that the First Existent from the Most High, or the First Intellect, is the first limit of existents.

Since it is the first limit, with nothing preceding it—otherwise it would not be a limit—it must be an abiding substance.

For if that whose being proceeds from the Most High were an accident, it would require some receptacle to preserve its being, which would stand to it as matter, and such a receptacle would therefore have to exist.

But such a receptacle does not exist, as can be demonstrated in two ways, each of which excludes the possibility that the First Intellect is an accident.

First, if such a receptacle existed, it would be eternally existent and beginningless (*qadīm*)—just as some speak, for example, of the eternity of the fivefold prayer.

In that case it would have no greater claim to be the receptacle than that from which this supposed accident proceeded; indeed, neither of the two would have greater reason to be active than the other.

This would mean that each possesses something the other lacks, and from that differentiation it would follow that something prior to both bestowed those respective properties upon them.

The same would then have to be said of that prior bestower and of the receptacle standing with it, which would again entail another bestower prior to them; and so on without end.

This would entail the nonexistence of existents.

But the existence of existents testifies to the impossibility of such an infinite regress.

The impossibility of such an infinite regress means that this receptacle does not exist.

And if no such receptacle exists, then the First Intellect is an abiding substance and not an accident.

Second, if the Existent from the Most High were an accident while the receptacle upon which the existence of accidents depends did not exist, the being of the First Existent would be impossible.

But the impossibility of its being would imply the nonexistence of all existents, whereas the existence of existents itself demonstrates the impossibility of that which would entail their nonexistence.

Therefore the First Existent cannot be an accident.

Thus, by either argument, the First Existent from the Most High cannot be an accident.

And if it cannot be an accident—for that leads to an impossibility rejected by sound intellects—it must be a substance.

If, then, the First Existent as the first limit is a substance, and if the human soul is the final existent in the order of being, after which there is no other existent, then the human soul is the **second limit of existents and their completion**.

Since it is the second limit, it too must be not an accident but a substance.

For if it were an accident, it would not be homogeneous with the first limit and could not be conjoined with it, since natural accidents join natural things so that those things attain their perfection.

The human soul, however, is itself a limit; therefore it possesses its own perfection and sufficiency, receiving some things and not receiving others.

Since we find that it becomes conjoined with the First Intellect and that the impressions of effusion arise within it, this proves that, as the second limit, it is a substance receptive of what comes from the first limit.

Thus it is a substance, the final goal toward which Nature ascends in its action, and after it there is no further existent.

The same is true of things analogous to it, other final products: for example, wood, the resultant (*ḥāṣil*) of everything counted as plant, or mineral bodies.

For all these, fulfillment and perfection are supplied not by Nature—whose action reaches its limit simply in producing them as they are, that is, still imperfect—but by man, who, through the divine powers nourishing him, stands above them and can therefore bestow perfection upon them by imparting artificial forms in which their perfection consists and beyond which nothing further remains.

Likewise the perfection of the human soul proceeds from what is higher: from the supra-natural Intellects contained within the first limit, in accordance with the soul's mode of being and acquisition.

The soul has two states.

In the first, namely the state of its initial being, its essence resembles accidents because it requires something to preserve its being, bind it together, and bring its activity to completion.

For this reason the ancients differed concerning it.

Some said that it is an accident, and they were correct with respect to this state of the soul.

For if, in this condition, it becomes separated from the body, its essence disappears just as accidents disappear when they leave their receptacle, and it loses its being.

Thus, if it remains in this condition—empty and dependent upon the body for its being—it is like an accident.

But in its second state, when it has acquired, the human soul is a substance.

This is the state of its final being, when it has acquired and attained essential perfection, received the forms poured upon it that bring it to completion, become fulfilled through the knowledge it has encompassed, and in most of its actions ceased to require the body.

It was with regard to this state that the ancients called it a substance, and in this respect they too were correct.

But they did not distinguish between these two states; each followed his own path and proved what seemed correct to him.

Thus, **when the soul acquires, it is a substance**.

In its lower, initial state it is potential and apprehends neither its own essence nor anything else.

But when the life-giving moisture of the imprinting of forms begins to flow within it, it begins to intellect both its own essence and the essences of other things.

These states succeed one another because it moves along the paths toward actuality and receives one form after another, while its original powers do not disappear, since it continues to need them for preserving its body.

As a substance, it is not like bodies.

The accidents in which the perfection of bodies consists do not belong to it, just as the accidents that perfect the soul do not belong to bodies, as we explained in our *Purest Treatise*.

It possesses no surface (*misāḥa*) such as bodies possess, nor is it apprehensible by the senses through which bodies are apprehended.

Bodies, in turn, do not possess what the soul possesses: knowledge, life, power, and the ability to know through contemplation (*naẓar*), division (*taqsīm*), analysis (*taḥlīl*), and composition (*tarkīb*).

It is therefore not a body.

If it were itself a body, then as it approached perfection it would not become increasingly indifferent to its body and think of it less and less, nor would bodily weakness arising from the original potentiality determined by the mixture from which it arose leave it unaffected in its knowledge.

Rather, the strengthening and perfection of its body would necessarily bring its greatest strength in knowledge and cognition.

But this is not what occurs: when the body is weak, the soul may be stronger in knowledge, and when the bodily powers reach an extreme degree of decline, the soul may become more capable of apprehending divine knowledge.

Thus it is established that the soul is not a body and is not divisible or partitionable.

It is therefore an **incorporeal substance** whose being, as we have shown, arises from both the corporeal and the incorporeal.

It possesses that in which it resembles the corporeal and that in which it resembles the incorporeal.

It resembles the corporeal in that it receives accidents and becomes possessed of life, knowledge, and power—just as a body possesses length, breadth, and depth—and in that its deficiency is initial while its perfection is final, just as a body is initially deficient and reaches its final perfection after receiving forms.

It resembles the incorporeal in that it intellects its own essence, gathers all virtues, and pours forth effusion and grace.

Just as those Intellects are from the outset living and powerful, intellect their own essences, gather all virtues, and pour forth effusion and grace, so the soul becomes such at the end, and thus a correspondence exists between them.

When its being first begins, then becomes filled with sensory powers and actions conditioned by the mixture, then imprints the forms of sensibles and possesses those forms apart from their matter, then begins to display impressions from the action of worshipping God, its Most High Lord, and imprints the forms of those preceding it in being as well as those following it among the *ḥudūd* of God's religion—which at that stage resembles the reception of accidents—then, in this perfected condition, that which plays the role of **matter** in it is its gathering of all sensible things and reaching the final goal in this through imprinting forms and imagining.

That which plays the role of **form** is the divine forms and the lights of the eternal Intellects, which are its final goal and perfection.

At that point it is called the **second resurrected**.

To summarize: the human soul, ascending in its being toward ultimate perfection, possesses ranks—like the ranks of numbers which, as explained in the introduction to this book, are

used to compare corporeal existents and weigh them on the scales of correspondence—and lofty degrees that it acquires and from which it moves to still higher ones until it reaches the limit.

Diagram:

Outer ring	Translation	Inner ring	Translation
السلالة(*al-sulāla*)	quintessence / extract	المزاج(*al-mizāj*)	mixture
النطفة(*al-nuṭfa*)	semen-drop	النباتية(*al-nabātiyya*)	vegetative [soul]
العلقة(*al-ʿalaqa*)	blood-clot / clinging clot	الحسية(*al-ḥissiyya*)	sensory [soul]
المضغة(*al-muḍgha*)	lump of flesh	المتخيلة(*al-mutakhayyila*)	imaginative [soul/faculty]
العظام(*al-ʿiẓām*)	bones	الناطقة(*al-nāṭiqa*)	speaking/rational soul
اللحم(*al-laḥm*)	flesh	العقل(*al-ʿaql*)	intellect
الخلق الآخر(*al-khalq al-ākhar*)	the other / new creation	البعث الثاني(*al-baʿth al-thānī*)	the second resurrection

Initially, at the first degree, it is **vegetative life without sensation**, when within the womb of the mother there appears the form of the mixture through which it exists.

With this vegetative life is connected the completion of its body and the organization of its physical form.

In its activity it rises to its final goal, at which only one thing remains: that it should receive a form through which it becomes sensory and passes to the next degree.

At this stage it is the center around which everything connected with the formation of instruments and limbs for its body is completed.

Then, emerging into the air and becoming exposed to the lights of the celestial bodies and incorporeal Intellects, it receives a form and begins to sense pain and pleasure.

This is the age of the child and then the adolescent.

At this point its powers as a sensory soul become strengthened in apprehending and imprinting sensible forms until, in addition to its outward-directed activity of apprehending sensible forms, it acquires the ability to act upon the sensible forms introduced into its own essence, combining and balancing them.

Through this capacity it becomes **imaginative** and passes to the next degree.

At this degree it is the center around which the acquisition of sensible forms takes place.

Then, after acquiring the ability to establish correspondences, judge one thing by another, and imagine—that is, when it begins to reflect upon existing things and seek knowledge of their sustaining causes—it reaches, as an imaginative soul, such a degree in balancing sensible

existents against what is prescribed by the Law, in accordance with the scales of religion and with the knowledge of the laws of outward and inward worship received from God's vicegerents, that it acquires the capacity to imprint the forms of the similitudes of the actual Intellects, which are the angels.

Through this it passes to the next degree.

At this degree it is the center around which takes place the acquisition of knowledge of the similitudes of the immaterial Intellects through imagination and the establishment of likeness.

Then, when through sensation and imagination it becomes capable of receiving from the existents it apprehends the forms of the similitudes of the immaterial Intellects—which are the angels—it encompasses everything hidden from the senses.

This is intellect.

This occurs when it imprints the forms of the being of existents insofar as they are created and insofar as they are the first and final emanation.

Being capable of apprehending knowledge through the establishment of equilibrium, it reaches such a degree in understanding the primordial necessity of the being of existents before their existence that no knowledge concerning an existent can escape it.

Then the light of Intellect is kindled within its essence and conveys to it the grace of the world of Unity.

At this degree it is the center around which the encompassing of existents and acquisition take place.

Then, through the power it has acquired and its capacity to encompass those existents whose necessity of being is primordial, prior to their existence, a light is kindled within its essence in approximately the same way that fire arises in balsam oil when it comes into conjunction with heat.

The Intellects become conjoined with it, and it becomes an immaterial intellect like and resembling them.

This is the moment when the gates of wisdom are opened before it and it no longer requires the assistance of anything else in performing its actions.

Then it reaches the limit, and after this there remains no further degree to which it can ascend.

At this degree it is the center around which complete likeness and resurrection are acquired.

It gathers all ranks, all multiplicity, and all forms and becomes **the form of all forms**.

We have represented this visually.

Yet God's own saying concerning this is truer, more eloquent, and more demonstrative:

“We created man from a quintessence of dust; then We placed him as a drop of semen in a secure receptacle; then We transformed the semen into a clot of blood; then We transformed the clot into flesh; then We transformed the flesh into bones; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We brought him forth as another creation. Blessed be God, the most skillful of creators!”

These are the **seven degrees** through which the physical form of man is created.

He told us this so that, by knowing these, we might know the degrees of the soul in its ascent toward its second perfection.

The quintessence of dust from which semen emerges corresponds to the mixture from which the vegetative soul arises.

The semen from which the blood-clot emerges corresponds to the vegetative soul from which the sensory soul arises.

The blood-clot from which flesh emerges corresponds to the sensory soul from which imagination arises.

The flesh transformed into bones corresponds to imagination from which the speaking/rational soul arises.

The bones with which flesh is joined and by which they are clothed correspond to the speaking/rational soul through which the supra-natural Intellects are known.

The flesh through which another creation is produced corresponds to acquiring the forms of the Intellects and their degrees, through which the **second resurrection** is completed—the perfection and second limit beyond which there is no further limit.

Here we have represented how the soul moves through these ranks.

The scales of religion confirm and necessitate this.

Since in the world of religion the Speaker nurtures the Legatee, teaches him, and brings him to perfection, it follows that the immaterial Intellects care for souls in the world of Nature, especially rational souls.

Since, if the Legatee did not act according to the Law and its norms and did not follow the divine commands, his soul would not attain perfection, it follows that if the sensory soul does not act upon sensible things, it does not imprint the forms of the intelligibles in which its perfection consists.

Since initially the soul of the Legatee was not like the soul of the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—but through instruction and action became like it, so that the two came to resemble one another, for which reason the Prophet likened his soul to the Legatee’s soul, while God, when commanding mutual invocation, said, “…ourselves and yourselves,” it follows that the sensory soul is not initially like the intelligible; but when through knowledge and action it imprints the intelligible’s forms, it becomes like it and resembles it.

Since the Legatee who has attained perfection and occupied his degree is actual and therefore no longer resembles anything pertaining to Law, governance, and legislation either outwardly or inwardly, and at this degree needs nothing—as formerly he needed the Prophet—it follows that the speaking/rational soul, upon attaining perfection, becomes self-sufficient.

Since the Legatee is self-subsistent and firmly established in his degree, and no one can take from him that with which God has honored him, whereas initially he was deficient, it follows that the speaking/rational soul is an established substance, although formerly it was deficient and resembled accidents.

Since the Speaker—who is the human being in the true sense—gathers within himself the ranks of prophecy, caliphate, and imamate, it follows that the human soul is one and gathers within itself the three degrees corresponding to the teaching *ḥudūd* of God: vegetative, sensory, and speaking/rational.

Since the order within the summons is such that the believer first learns outward worship, which corresponds to the sensible, and performs its ordinances, and then passes to knowledge of their interpretations, in which consists knowledge of the *ḥudūd* of God's religion, it follows that the soul first acts upon the sensible in order to imprint its forms and then reflects upon these forms so as to know what they are and what their essence is—that is, it imagines.

Since the order in the kingdom of religion is such that the believer, after learning the interpretations of outward worship whose rites and laws he preserves through action, balances the corporeal world against this knowledge in order to infer from it the necessary existence of the angels brought near, hidden from the senses, and to know their ranks, it follows that the imaginative soul balances and sets forms against one another until, on the basis of the corporeal, it arrives at imprinting the forms of the intelligible.

Since the people of both forms of worship are as though receivers, while what they know in their religions is as though what is received, it follows that in the soul its essence proceeding from the world of Nature plays the role of matter in reception, whereas what it apprehends, knows, and whose forms it imprints plays the role of form.

Since the acquiring believer does not profess, seek, and know the same things sought and known through acquisition by villains, base people, and fools, it follows that the accidents proper to the soul through which it acquires and in which its perfection consists differ from the accidents of bodies.

Since the believer, moved by his desire for the highest assembly—to behold the angels brought near, the Prophets and Messengers, and especially our Prophet Muḥammad—and by necessary knowledge that God "knows the unseen and the visible," and that nothing a servant does openly or secretly is hidden from Him, duly performs worship and restrains himself from disobedience and violation of prohibitions, it follows that through that which has become necessary knowledge for the soul and to which it remains inseparably attached—namely the **first principles of intellect** (*awāʾil al-ʿaql*)—the soul seeks knowledge for the sake of its own essence.

Such is what the scales of religion, through which sciences are extracted, have revealed.

Glory be to God, the Great and Almighty.

May He bless and greet the radiant Muḥammad and his sharp-edged sword, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, together with the pure and virtuous Imams descended from them.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

Notes

[1] Al-Kirmānī's point is that the sensible existent outside the soul is **actual as an existent**, but remains **potential as a sensible object** until the soul apprehends it.

[1] See note 2 to I, 2.

[1] Or: **"as the first emanation and the final resurrection"** — see note 4 to I, 4.

[1] Qurʾān 23:12–14.

[1] "And if anyone disputes with you concerning this after the knowledge that has come to you, say: Come, let us summon our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves; then let us invoke [God] and call down God's curse upon those who lie!" (Qurʾān 3:61). These words of God are addressed to Muḥammad.

STREET ELEVEN

On the speaking/rational soul and the nature of its actions; whether these actions come into being with the aid and participation of the body, or whether the soul can perform actions by itself without its body; on the difference between its actions and the final goal it reaches through them; on its first and second perfections; and on how it becomes a complete, abiding intellect

What has already been said is sufficient to indicate approximately what the speaking/rational soul is.

We now say the following.

Being through acquisition a knowing, powerful, and living substance, it performs numerous actions.

Some of these actions are determined by its mixture, from which its being initially proceeds; others are determined by its own essence in accordance with what it has acquired.

The actions determined by its mixture are precisely those performed through instruments prepared for the soul and implanted in its body.

Both kinds of action are qualities produced by the soul and bring benefit or harm either to its own essence or to its body.

Among those actions performed by means of instruments prepared for the soul and implanted in its body, some occur **within**, in its body, while others occur **outside**, in external matter.

The actions occurring internally within its body are of three kinds.

The first are connected with caring for the body and replacing the particles that have fallen away or been lost. These are performed by all the internal organs—the stomach, liver, lungs, spleen—and also by organs situated at the body's surface, such as the mouth, tongue, throat, and others.

These actions are called **nutrition**.

The second are connected with caring for the soul. They are performed through organs and parts specially appointed for this purpose—the heart, eye, ear, tongue, head, hands, feet, and the subtle paired organs—in the manner commanded by religion.

Their purpose is to heal, rectify, strengthen, and discipline the soul so that it may acquire virtues.

These actions are called **worship**.

The third are connected with caring for body and soul together.

These consist in locomotion by means of the feet, which carry one away from what is undesirable and toward what is sought.

Actions performed in external matter are twofold: in some, the passive matter is a body; in others, it is a soul.

Those actions whose passive matter is body are themselves twofold.

Some are performed upon that matter solely for the benefit and acquisition of the soul.

Others benefit body and soul together.

Those actions that benefit body and soul together are of two kinds.

Some require both bodily instruments and additional instruments drawn from outside.

Others require only the instruments of the body.

The actions requiring both bodily and additional external instruments include all the many crafts and arts, both low and high: playing the drum, flute, and lute; goldsmithing; knitting; the crafts of carpenters, cooks, and shoemakers; and, at a higher level, commerce and tailoring, building and agriculture, the crafts of calligraphers, physicians, and geometers, the special art of producing accidents and thereby transforming the essences of bodies, the art of wonder-workers, and warfare.

All these crafts and arts are impossible without special instruments: warfare without a sword or other weapons; writing without pen, ink, and paper or something equivalent; medicine without drugs and the physician's instruments; geometry without compasses and other devices; and that special art requiring perseverance and persistence without a retort, alembic, and similar apparatus.

Actions requiring only the instruments of the body are likewise numerous and bear different names: slapping, striking the face, striking with the hand, kicking, praising, reviling, grasping what is sought or removing what is unwanted with the hand, approaching or withdrawing by means of the feet, and the like.

Both groups of actions benefit body and soul alike: the body because it receives nourishment replacing what it has lost, and the soul because it is preserved through preservation of the body.

The actions performed in external matter exclusively for the benefit and acquisition of the soul are likewise twofold.

First is the acquisition, through the five sense organs, of forms of knowledge used by the soul alone without the body: apprehension through sight of colors and figures, which divide into many forms, as we discussed in *Signs of Faith*; apprehension through hearing of sounds, which divide into pleasant and unpleasant; apprehension through taste of different flavors—sharp, sour, sweet, and others; and apprehension through touch, that is, the skin, of roughness and smoothness, heat and cold, moisture and dryness.

Second is the pleasure connected with reproduction performed through the subtle paired organs.

All these actions are divided into two classes.

Some are prescribed by God and permitted by the most precious Law—may God bless its proclaimer and his family.

Others are forbidden by the Most High and not permitted by the Law.

The former are praiseworthy; the latter blameworthy.

Everything we have mentioned constitutes matter for its agent.

That is, performance of each of these actions brings to the soul and body some immediate or remote benefit, or its opposite.

Both soul and body participate in these actions and share between them their benefit or harm.

As for actions whose passive matter is the **soul**, these are twofold.

Some are performed through divine support, which is of various kinds.

Others are performed through knowledge of natural things in all their diversity, acquired by instruction.

Actions performed through instructed knowledge of natural things in all their diversity are themselves twofold: some are performed through speech, while others through external intermediaries.

Among those performed through speech is, for example, **oratory**. This consists in imprinting the desired thing upon the hearer's soul in the best possible manner through clear exposition and exact definition, employing verbal harmonies and rhyme, stringing words together, marking their meter through rhythmic recitation, relying upon their order, adducing proverbs and examples, and deriving proofs.

Another is **poetry**, which combines words according to known meters in order to communicate both truth and falsehood, to praise or disparage, give thanks or revile.

There are also incantations, spells, and everything of this sort produced by indignation for the sake of vengeance.

Among actions performed through external intermediaries is, for example, **talismanic action upon a soul** through operations performed upon likenesses of its physical bearers. Such activity requires knowledge of appropriate times, stellar configurations, correspondences, and equilibria supplied by geometrical art, which makes what is difficult easy.

Another is **divination** (*kihāna*), consisting in acting upon a soul through orientation toward the totality of natural things.

Others include tracking by traces (*qiyāfa*), augury from the flight of birds (*zajr*), and wonder-working.

The action performed through **divine support** is the fulfillment of the prophetic mission.

From this proceed the whole art of governance, the laying down of the laws of the religious community, and the determination of the legally prescribed rites.

Through this, souls divided by self-will, views, desires, and confessions are gathered into a single order beneath the protection of commands and prohibitions.

This preserves them from destructive abominations and leads them toward acquisition of felicity.

Attached to it are all the general and particular sciences of governance connected with religion.

We maintain that, when carefully examined, their order corresponds to the actions and ordinances of the Most High, who ordered His creation with radiant wisdom manifested in erected structures and balanced proportions, as well as in the magnificent creation that is the human being.

No one who merely desires it can attain anything comparable to this prophetic mission, except the one whom God chooses and endows with the light of His support and inspiration, through which he apprehends truth and reality.

Such are the Prophets and Messengers.

And herein lies the distinction between **a Prophet and one who merely prophesies**.

Therefore the obligatory religious laws and rites that guide the world beneath the protection of divine governance and preserve nations are like the craftsman's instruments or the limbs of a living being, drawing what is beneficial and repelling what is harmful.

Just as in a living being certain organs are appointed to possess greater sensitivity—for example, the face, hands, feet, and subtle paired organs—so in governance the "faces" and "hands" of nations and the other people, namely rulers and their subjects, are appointed to occupy different ranks according to their capacities.

Just as all organs are created obedient to the heart, the abode of inspiration and life, conforming themselves to its commands, judgments, and prohibitions, so in governance the management of people's affairs is entrusted to the Imam, the receptacle of God's light, while the people are to act in accordance with his judgment, so that the entire **Order** (*amr*) is brought to unity.

Just as in creation the organs are organized through the heart and live through the heat reaching them from it, so in governance people's welfare and tranquility come through the commands of the organizer of their affairs reaching them.

Just as in creation there are organs that benefit the whole body, such as the eye, ear, and others, so in divine governance there are persons appointed to transmit, guard, and care for reports, so that the entire community may thereby be preserved.

And just as in creation blood is distributed throughout the body among the internal and external working organs according to their degrees of subtlety and density, so in governance the property assigned to those who carry out the universal command is distributed in greater or lesser measure according to their ranks: among cavalry and infantry, weak and strong, old and young.

Just as a living organism is destined to contain corrupt humors (*akhlāṭ*) harmful to the whole body and leading to illness and destruction, which are treated either by expelling them from the body and purifying it of those humors where possible, or, if they cannot be expelled, by restraining them through other means so that the body may recover, so in governance, when bearers of corruption and harm appear who cast the people into the narrowness of darkness, they must be restrained—by killing, by coercion or inducement, or by giving them that which will turn them away from corruption, as with the "newly converted"—so that general tranquility may be established and corruption removed.

Just as creation contains the impulse to capture nonhuman animals that resemble man in their mixture and to nourish oneself on their flesh, so in governance the inhabitants of the "far ends of the earth," who resemble those living beneath the hand of the Most High, are to be compelled into common social life and employed as assistance.

Just as different organs are afflicted by different illnesses and are treated differently—by incision, cauterization with iron, application of healing ointment, inhalation of medicinal odors, administration of bitter or sweet medicine, and the like—so in governance different methods must be followed in correcting different people, whether fools, intelligent persons, or servants, and in turning them away from the corruption they desire, disciplining them as they deserve: by striking, imprisonment, reproach, abuse, or preventing them from achieving what they seek.

Just as in creation one organ is appointed to rule another only through the heart, so in governance no one ought to possess authority over another or issue commands except with the ruler's authorization.

And just as in creation night and day are appointed for living beings—a time for rest and a time for seeking nourishment—so in governance people are allotted a time for worship, which is the eternal nourishment of life, and a time for worldly concerns.

If one continues in this way, one reaches everything corresponding to rites and laws.

Whoever wishes to govern must kindle the light of his governance from God's light.

No governance that does not follow the divine command can be complete; it leads only to arbitrary rule and oppression, destroying both the living and the dead.

Such are the actions performed with the aid of instruments, whether within the body or outside it.

As for actions performed by the soul **through its own essence**, without need of instruments other than itself, these proceed from it only after it has performed the mixed actions requiring instruments prepared for apprehending knowledge, and after it has thereby attained a degree higher than that which it previously occupied.

When it comes to engage in intimate converse (*munājāt*) with its Most High Creator—which cannot occur before it has taken upon itself the burden of the commands of the divine community and lordly governance, gathered through knowledge, worship, and performance of prescribed rites the forms of sensible things, which were potentially intelligible and have now become actually intelligible for it, and thereby itself become actual—then under their influence the lights of the acquired Kingdom are kindled within it.

It will then possess that light of holy purity which makes unnecessary the external light coming through instruction and acquisition—a light inaccessible except by means of instruments and the apprehension of knowledge.

This inner light is kindled because of the soul's proximity to the First Cause, to Creation, and to the First Emanation.

Through its previous acquisition it then gains likeness and correspondence with the supra-natural Intellects.

At this point it acts without encountering obstruction and without needing the assistance of the members of its body.

Among these actions, some are **principles** (*awā'il*) and others **ends** (*awākhir*).

The principles are those accompanying knowledge obtained through experience.

Thus we know, for example, that ten minus two is eight, that three plus three is six, or that one is less than ten.

The ends are those that the soul possesses through establishing equilibrium and mutual correspondence, combining and extracting the matters that have come to exist within its essence through acquisition.

For example, it knows that a heavy thing can be raised easily and simply when this is done at a distance through special mechanical instruments such as lever balances and weights, which, as is known, although small can balance many times their own weight.

Or consider the so-called **self-turning wheel**: through calculations the soul imagines what such a wheel could be; then it searches within itself and finds that which strengthens its confidence that it will rotate; afterward this is realized actually in a sensible instrument and proves correct, corresponding to the operation previously conceived.

The same applies to encompassing sustaining causes, sustained effects, quiddities, opposites, and relations.

In all these things the soul has no need to employ an instrument.

Nor should anyone say that whatever has its form imprinted must be something apprehended and imagined; that what is imagined must be sensible; and that the sensible can be apprehended only by means of an instrument.

The falsity of this view is demonstrated by the fact that the forms of sensible things present within the soul are not bodies that might themselves function as instruments.

The form has already been separated from the matter of the sensible thing, imprinted in the soul's essence, and through the knowledge that has dawned within the soul has become one with it, while the sensible thing itself remains outside as before.

In the same way, everything placed near camphor acquires something resembling its odor, so that the odor of all those things comes to resemble camphor although no camphor itself is present within them.

Furthermore, the soul by itself speaks and measures, takes and gives, forbids and commands, soars upward and descends downward, plunges into the depths and rises to the surface, looks and sees.

The actions seen by a person in dreams, whose interpretation may prove true, are sufficient testimony and proof of this.

All these actions occur without the aid of bodily instruments, for those instruments remain motionless with the body while the soul flies and wanders through cities and regions.

This is what should be said briefly concerning these actions in order to clear a path toward understanding this question.

Each differs from every other.

The difference between an action of the soul for the benefit of its body and an action for apprehending knowledge is as follows.

An action for the benefit of the body is performed through instruments prepared within the body for receiving and digesting food.

The cessation of this action harms the body's particles and leads to its destruction and dissolution—that is, death.

An action for apprehending knowledge is performed through instruments established for the soul on the outer surface of the body—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and organ of touch.

The cessation of this action brings the functioning of the senses to a halt—that is, sleep.

Further, the difference between the soul's action of apprehending knowledge through instruments and its essential action upon the forms of knowables already present within it is that in an action performed by instruments, the absence of the sensible object causes the action to cease.

For the instruments naturally act upon external sensible things; if there is nothing outside them upon which they can work and sense, no action proceeds from them.

But in the soul's essential action, even when the sensible object itself is hidden from the senses, its form—that is, the impression received from it—remains within the soul's essence, and nothing prevents the soul from performing the action called imagination.

Thus this action takes place and continues uninterruptedly, whereas the other is interrupted and ceases when the sensible object disappears.

Such is the action performed within the soul's own essence.

Through it the soul rises above the rank of the sensory, for this is not sensation but **the imprinting of forms, knowledge, and attainment of the summit of likeness and correspondence with the Most Holy**.

The final goal of the soul in these actions is to encompass what is hidden from the senses and supra-natural and, in knowledge and affirmation of divine unity (*tawḥīd*), to reach the degree at which no existent escapes its knowledge, so that only **He from whom all existents proceed** remains beyond its knowledge.

At that threshold it halts in bewilderment, unable to equal Him or seek to encompass Him, and humbly acknowledges its impotence.

It truly knows that the path toward the encompassing it sought is closed; that all existents are distributed among degrees; and that although it has reached the heights of nobility, power, and encompassing knowledge, its being is nevertheless not through its own essence and it does not subsist through itself, but through Him—the Most High, the One God.

This final goal is its **second perfection**, just as being imaginative—which is the perfection and final goal of the sensory soul—is its **first perfection**.

We call it the first perfection because initially the soul did not possess this degree; it acquired it only by rising to it from its former degree.

This is the first degree attained through acquisition.

Beyond it, in order to reach its final goal, the soul must traverse many degrees, ascending to each through the light of acquisition reaching it, acquiring knowledge, performing actions, and following the legally prescribed path of the community.

Day by day it acquires what is necessary to give abundance and nobility to its substance until it becomes an **abiding intellect**, inaccessible to the schemes of the devil and the destructive temptations of the accursed adversary.

Likewise a tree is initially a weak shoot that can easily be destroyed by rubbing it between the fingers or trampling it underfoot, if heat or lack of water has not already killed it. But day by day it draws in matters from which it derives strength; its branches and trunk grow firm, until at last it stands immovably established in the earth.

The same is true of certain minerals, such as mercury. A craftsman takes this weak, gelatinous, trembling body, which volatilizes when heated, and joins it with another mineral beloved by it; that mineral envelops and binds it, hardens it, and gives it strength.

Likewise, if a person follows the path accepted in the religious community for rectifying the soul, after some time he will no longer be what he was initially, but will become strong, capable of acting upon bodies and resistant to flame, whereas before encountering it he was afraid of it.

So too with milk produced by animals: when the herdsman puts rennet into it, the milk coagulates and is bound together through it; what was formerly fluid and yielding becomes a firmly established solid body.

The soul likewise rises to its limit through acquiring knowledge and action, attaining through both nobility, power, radiance, might, and abiding existence.

All this follows one and the same pattern:

"You will see no disharmony in the creation of the All-Merciful."

The scales of religion then further establish that, since the actually existent teaching *ḥudūd* of religion occupy different ranks in the prophetic summons—some, such as the Legatee, teaching by means of something like an instrument, while others, such as the Speaker, teach without such an instrument—it follows that the soul's actions divide into those determined by the mixture and performed through instruments, and those determined by the soul itself and performed without an instrument.

Since the teachers are ordered such that some—for example, the Imam—preserve the outward aspect of the Ordinance, which secures the physical organization of the community, and summon people to it; others—for example, the Gate—teach the outward aspect of the Law, which is outward worship; and still others—for example, the *ḥujjas*—teach outward and inward worship together, it follows that actions of the soul performed by means of instruments are, first, either actions within the body for preservation of its physical bearer (*shakhṣ*) or actions connected with the joint benefit of soul and body.

Likewise, among the ranks of the summons, some—for example, the adherent and the missionary, who teach the outward and inward aspects of the Ordinance—know the interpretation of the outward aspect of the Ordinance, from which follows knowledge of the cycles and of the number of the *ḥudūd* of God's religion from the beginning to the end of the age (*dahr*).

Others—for example, the instructing missionaries, who teach concerning the rank of the Intellects and the supra-natural *ḥudūd*—know the ranks of the angels brought near, from which proceeds knowledge of divine unity.

Accordingly, the soul's actions are likewise performed either in the soul or in the body.

Since the instructing missionaries are capable of establishing correspondences from which divine knowledge arises without instruction, it follows that the soul is capable of acting without an instrument.

Since the difference between teaching the outward, which is connected with action, and teaching the inward, which is connected with knowledge, consists in the fact that cessation of instruction in the rules of outward worship leads to the destruction of the members of the community because its rites weaken and disappear, whereas cessation of instruction in interpretive knowledge separates knowledge from the soul and leads to the folly of heedlessness (*ghafla*), it follows that the difference between the soul's action for the benefit of its body and its action in apprehending knowledge is that cessation of the former leads to the destruction of its physical bearer, whereas cessation of the latter leads to folly and ignorance.

And since the difference between the action of apprehending knowledge and the soul's essential action is that the former is connected with sensible things, which may move away from the sense organs and cease to be sensed, whereupon the action ceases with their disappearance, while the latter is connected with forms present within the soul's essence, so that nothing prevents the soul from performing this action within itself, it follows that the difference between interpretive knowledge connected with the outward aspects of the Laws and rational forms of knowledge (*al-maʿārif al-ʿaqliyyāt*) is that the sensible undergoes transformation and change in different interpretations, whereas **the intelligible is abiding and immutable**.

Such are the conclusions arising from consideration of existents.

Other conclusions are likewise not hidden from the attentive thinker; they will increase his knowledge and give him firm certainty.

Glory be to God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, who has bound great and small together upon a single thread.

May God bless and greet His greatest Messenger, our radiant master Muḥammad, the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the Imams of their lineage.

Notes

[1] "The subtle paired organs" — in the original, *al-ashrafān*. From the context of its use on p. 363, it is clear that this term refers to the **genitals**.

[1] "The art of wonder-workers" (*shaʿwadha*) — in the Middle Ages this was generally understood as the ability to create in spectators the illusion that certain things are present when they are not (see note 3).

[1] "Talismanic action" (*ṭilasmāt*) — the ability to act upon things by means of other things. Ibn Khaldūn writes:

"The sciences of magic (*siḥr*) and talismans are the sciences concerning the manner in which the human soul can influence the natural world either without any intermediary or through the mediation of celestial powers. The former is called magic, and the latter talismanic action. … Although all human souls belong to one genus, they differ in their specific characteristics. … Souls capable of magical action (*al-nufūs al-sāḥira*) are of three kinds. First, those that act solely through their own energy (*himma*), without any instrument or intermediary; this is what the philosophers call magic. Second, those that act by relying upon an intermediary—the celestial spheres, the elements, or the properties of numbers; this is called talismanic action. Third, action upon the faculty of imagination. Such a person in a certain manner subjects the imaginative faculty to himself and forms various images within it, then presents them to the senses of the spectators by acting upon them through the power of his soul. The spectators see these images as though they existed externally, although nothing is actually there—as when, it is said, some of them see gardens, rivers, and palaces where nothing of the sort exists. This the philosophers call wonder-working."

(Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, Beirut, n.d., pp. 496–498.)

Clairvoyance/divination (*kihāna*) — the ability to predict the future. Those who practice it claim to obtain knowledge of the unseen from spirits that listen to the angels. Ibn Khaldūn writes that "diviners are capable of disclosing hidden things with the aid of demonic powers" (ibid., p. 497).

[1] See note 2 to IV, 3.

[1] A Qurʾānic expression (13:41; 21:44). What is meant are lands that have not yet come under Muslim control.

[1] Qurʾān 67:3.

STREET TWELVE

On the speaking/rational soul as abiding; on the cause of its abiding, what brings it abiding existence and felicity, and what brings it destruction and torment; whether this comes to it from outside or from that nature (*ṭab*ʿ) from which its being proceeds; and on what torment is and what felicity is, what its death is and what its life is

If, as we have said, the speaking/rational soul has through acquisition attained all those ranks lying between its potentiality and actuality, if its substance has become colored by nobility, and if, in addition to what has already been said, the remnants of its former natural condition have been transformed into rational form—as the sourness of green grapes receiving the relevant influences is transformed into sweetness—then it has thereby attained abiding existence and perfection and has become abiding, complete, and eternal at the degree of the **second resurrection**.

We now say that the cause of its abiding is this: that which is eternal and abiding is Paradise, that is, the assembly of the Created and Emanated Intellects whom the Most Holy and Most High God has made such. The soul can become abiding and rise to the degree of the Created and Emanated Intellects only by entering into correspondence with that Paradise, becoming connected with it, and receiving its effusion in such a way that its essence is transformed into intellect.

It is precisely these effused and received powers and this grace that make the soul undergoing this transformation perfect—just as fire perfects charcoal or leaven perfects dough—transform it into an intellect resembling the source of its effusion, preserve it from transformation, and unite it with that source. It then abides with eternal abiding and lives an eternal life, which is the continuity (*dawām*) of being.

These are the **second, proximate cause**.

The Created and Emanated Intellects from which grace flows pour their powers into existents, caring for the world of Nature. When they encounter a soul possessing even the slightest likeness or correspondence with them, they pour their effusion upon it, rescue it, and retain it with themselves.

So too among masters you will see that if they find the upbringing or character of a servant to correspond or agree with their own, this becomes a cause of his remaining with his master.

If we say that their effusions become attached in the same way as a spark attaches to tinder, the correspondence of the analogy will be complete: tinder is prepared to undergo the action of fire and receive its likeness, just as the soul, under the influence of the rites of the religious community, is prepared to receive divine grace.

Thus **they, the Intellects, are the first cause of the soul's abiding**.

They may pour their effusion even upon a sensory soul that possesses no correspondence or likeness with that effusion, provided only that its essence is not covered by some natural stain that prevents it from receiving the effusion.

It is as though a servant may be taken into a household and trained in accordance with the habits of the master, provided his own habits or innate disposition do not prevent such training. The absence of such obstructive habits therefore becomes a cause of his remaining with the master.

Or we may compare it to cotton that has not been dampened with water and is free from everything that would prevent it from receiving the action of fire—that is, from catching fire. This too would be a fitting and balanced analogy, though here the correspondence is at its weakest.

This example applies only to the Prophets—for example Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, of whom it is related that even in childhood he performed virtuous and orderly actions—or Jesus and Abraham, peace be upon them. We shall discuss this in the section on inspired revelation.

The abiding of the soul is connected with its acquiring knowledge from the possessors of revelation, while the actions and states connected with its passage to the other world, through which it is sustained and perfected, are difficult and exhausting.

For abiding is the limit of what it can attain, whereas left to itself in its actions it would merely follow its mixture. It therefore requires special care, training, and diligent exertion so that everything necessary for acquiring felicity may be imparted to it.

It is like damp firewood, to which fire attaches only after particular effort and labor.

As for the relation of the soul's own essence to its acquisition of felicity, its essence performs only those actions that proceed from its mixture, and its inclinations are determined solely by the character of its preparedness.

If its preparedness is such that its mixture is balanced, as we have said, then by its own essence it refrains from much evil, though not from all of it, and performs orderly actions, though again not in every respect, but to a greater or lesser degree.

The nobility it attains depends upon the teacher, guide, and companion it receives from outside.

If it is fortunate enough to have a teacher from among God's *ḥudūd*, and that teacher strengthens it through instruction and urges it to perform the prescribed acts, then it becomes prepared, acquires nobility, and becomes attached in the highest degree to piety and goodness, never departing by so much as a step from God's holy friends and the ordinances of the *ḥudūd* of His religion.

But if it does not happen to encounter missionaries who guide aright, and in its actions turns only to itself and receives from companions like itself, then this condition gradually corrupts it, because indecent actions, through repetition, become habitual.

For if the sensory soul is not corrected from outside, it necessarily becomes corrupt and sinks downward.

And if its mixture is far from balance, repulsive actions proceed from its essence, as we explained in *Signs of Faith*.

For as a sensory imaginative soul, it acquires and imagines in accordance with its mixture, from which the being of the sensory soul itself proceeds. It knows only what it takes to be its felicity and does not know wherein its torment lies.

It may therefore imagine that precisely what its mixture suggests to it—useless pleasure, domination, ostentation, luxury, violence, and the like, qualities that, incidentally, characterize most rulers of our own time—is what it ought to pursue, cherish, and surrender itself to completely.

Yet it is precisely this that will obstruct its felicity and bring it calamity and wretchedness.

If there is someone outside it to teach and correct it, directing it toward constant observance of the divine commands prescribed for the most noble community, then all its corruption and misery will dissolve and be transformed into a source of goodness and benefit.

But if this does not happen and it has no guide or teacher, then by following the attachments of its mixture and evil teachers it will perish.

We therefore say that the soul, like the body, may be healthy or may suffer illness.

Just as some bodily diseases are mild and pass quickly—such as a one-day fever or a two-day cold—while others last long and are difficult to cure, such as dropsy or intermittent fever; and just as health may be easily destroyed, as in one recovering from illness, or may be strong, as in those of sound and powerful bodies, so precisely, point for point, the soul too may be healthy or sick.

Just as fever, chills, and the other conditions arising in the body during illness can be removed by treatment and the body restored to health, so too a soul diseased by bad habits, base dispositions, and corrupt doctrines can be trained to repel all these vices—which it came to possess by allowing its actions to follow its mixture, and which constitute its sickness and disease—and can thereby be changed and turned toward goodness. Thus it becomes healthy and is preserved.

For those vices belonging to the soul because of its mixture and because of the reckless fools and devils who indulge it in such things, serving their own interests and arbitrary caprices—if they are passed, as we have said, through the furnace of constant observance of the divine commands and obligatory prescriptions brought by the Prophet, may God bless him and his family—are capable of being transformed into virtues, just as sourness is transformed into sweetness, and of changing toward the good.

Likewise the action of the human soul at the moment of indignation or appetite is, by exact correspondence, like the action of animals; virtually nothing that belongs to it in actuality at this level is absent.

Beyond this rank there is nothing further for it to reap in the field of acquisition except transformation through the acquisition of divine signs: it becomes transformed toward goodness and abiding existence.

Whoever does not apply this treatment in order to heal his soul is far from every good. Souls of this kind, when they come into being, undermine the order of the world and weaken the human community.

The arrangement of the celestial luminaries, Nature, and generated beings, which we have previously described, is such that they neither harm nor promote the preordained goal of the supra-natural Intellects, namely the deliverance of the soul.

Thus it sometimes happens that their influence produces souls that are supported from heaven, or souls that are not supported from heaven but for whom **time** acts as an ally.

Such persons establish justice in God's cause.

An example is Moses, for whom time, through the instruments prepared for him, assisted beyond that in which he was supported from the Abode of Holiness, so that he might attain the goal toward which the Intellects supported him: he guided his people upon the right path and destroyed the adulterers, which accorded with the goal of the Intellects.

Or take Muʿāwiya and those like him, who prevented God's vicegerents from realizing and spreading the affair of the Most High. This harmed the goal of the Intellects.

At other times their influence produces souls that are supported by the supra-natural Intellects, but time does not assist them in realizing their aims.

For example, time did not assist the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, although he was supported by the Abode of Holiness; therefore adulterers, erring people, and idle talkers remained among the community after him until time assisted his successors, who accomplished what he himself had not accomplished.

Likewise ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may God bless him: although chosen by the Most High, time did not assist him, and therefore his adversaries overcame him and led matters astray.

There are also souls whom time does not assist even though the Intellects do not support them either—for example, numerous evildoers whom time does not assist in carrying out their actions, so that they remain fettered and powerless.

Such actions are produced by the celestial and terrestrial bodies through producing the mixture from which the being of these souls proceeds, but not because those bodies seek to assist the goal of the Intellects or obstruct it.

Rather, they act so simply because this is what they are and what they were established to do: to bestow upon every matter the powers it is capable of receiving according to its preparedness, through numerous motions and differing transformations.

The **two forms of worship** encompass all the acts to which the children of the true faith are summoned: ritual purity, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, jihad, obedience to God's vicegerent upon His earth who preserves His commands and prohibitions, and following all his summonses and instructions.

They also encompass all forms of knowledge: apprehension of divine unity, which is the highest of the causes through which, as we have said and shown, complete felicity is attained; refraining from every judgment about God that would amount to a description of the Most High—that is, that would attribute to Him what belongs to others and would therefore constitute false fabrication; knowledge of the existent incorporeal angels brought near and of their actions; knowledge of corporeal substances and the attributes of each, of terrestrial bodies and their actions, of man and how his being arises; knowledge of the Prophets, peace be upon them, the masters of the cycles, the Legatees, the first and subsequent *ḥudūd* of religion, divine laws and ordinances, and the ultimate outcomes of the adherents of the various confessions.

These forms of knowledge are acquired in two ways.

Either they are acquired through heavenly support—this applies to the Prophets, Legatees, and also the raised-up ones among the Imams, peace be upon them—or through instruction by means of correspondence and assimilation, so that within the essence of the learner there arise likenesses accurately reproducing these forms of knowledge.

In this latter case, the imprinting of forms and assimilation varies according to differences among minds and intellects: for some the slightest resemblance is sufficient; others require the most exact and unshakable similitudes, encompassing the whole nobility of the virtues.

These two forms of worship are gathered and fulfilled only by the best, the most religious, and those richest in deeds, those who look upon their life in this lower world from the perspective of the world to come and know that good recompense belongs only to the pious.

Through their constituent parts, these two forms of worship act upon the soul just as the Sun’s heat acts upon fruits, transforming their astringency and sourness into sweetness.

Likewise in the soul, when it performs these two forms of worship, binds itself with their chain, and devotes itself to them without ceasing, vices are transformed into virtues.

It then acquires correspondence with the abiding supra-natural Intellects in the Abode of Holiness and becomes self-subsistent.

It is no longer what it was at the beginning.

In its initial state it is a prisoner of the mixture, like the souls of animals, and is subject to transformations; in this condition it is not spoken of as a soul in the full sense.

But in its second state, acquired through acquisition, it belongs to the higher assembly, having become intellect through that which it has intellected and whose forms it has imprinted within its essence.

What was said of it before can no longer be said of it: its essence has now been sanctified by what it acquired through the two forms of worship.

After the acquisition in which it has labored diligently and assiduously, it is now connected with the Intellects, whereas before it was potential and possessed no correspondence with them.

It is connected with what is abiding and eternal, just as iron, once actualized as iron, is connected with the magnet and is drawn to it, whereas previously, while still iron only potentially within the ore, it was not attracted to the magnet.

After diligent labor and fiery treatment it becomes actual iron, drawn to the magnet and connected with it for as long as the magnet exists.

So too the perfected soul no longer needs its body and requires no one's assistance in performing its actions, because it is self-subsistent and acts within its own essence just as the supra-natural Intellects do.

Likewise a child, while weak and helpless, needs a wet nurse and caretaker. But once it has absorbed strength and grown firm, it no longer needs its wet nurse, educator, and guardian—that is, its mother—because it is now strong and obtains nourishment for itself, and it suffers no harm if its mother is separated from it.

So too the soul, which formerly needed its body in order to exist, no longer needs it when death comes and the bodily instruments cease functioning.

Just as a chick fully formed after hatching is not harmed by the breaking of its shell, so the soul is not harmed by the cessation of the body.

These two forms of worship act upon the soul in the same way that air acts upon coral.

Coral, which is a plant, emerges from sea water, and air transforms it into stone beyond the power of time: through air coral changes its vegetal nature.

For the soul, the two forms of worship are also like the fertilization that comes to date-palm fruit from outside itself: without that fertilization no fruit would set, while through it there is both setting and fruit.

Likewise, even if a soul belongs among those of good disposition, yet without the *ḥudūd* of religion and the divinely implanted ordinances they establish, without diligence in the two forms of worship, without acquiring knowledge through them and performing their deeds, it remains barren.

The two forms of worship are **felicity** for those who are diligent and faithful in them, and **torment** for those who neglect them or violate their ordinances.

In short, **torment** is the presence within the soul of anything that prevents it from attaining perfection in the acquisition of virtue, while **felicity** is the presence of that which perfects it in virtue.

With this is connected the eternal life of the soul.

The death we mentioned above, saying that it occurs when the soul ceases to use its instruments for the interests of the body, is **natural death**.

There is another death: the killing and suspension (*taʿṭīl*) of the sensory soul.

This occurs through refusing to fulfill the natural caprices it desires and through restraining (*ʿaql*) the soul from them.

Such restraint is attained only through the two forms of worship.

There is yet another death: the killing of the soul when it ceases to acquire knowledge and deeds, in which its completion consists, and therefore lacks them.

This occurs when the two forms of worship are forgotten and when, because of external circumstances preventing them, the soul's essence has previously died.

For the soul this is the greatest harm.

In short, **death is the soul's abandonment of its actions, both those proper to it and those incumbent upon it**.

As for **life**, we have already said that there is natural life proceeding from the bodies established to act and to undergo action.

But there is also another life, a **holy life**, which stands to natural life as spirit stands to it.

Through this holy life the soul will live on the Day of Resurrection if it is faithful and diligent in the two forms of worship.

The correspondences and equilibria of the scales of religion serve as confirmation and proof of this.

Since that which the Prophet—blessing and peace be upon him—brought from the Most High was the proximate cause of gathering together that to which he summoned people, it follows that it is precisely through the two forms of worship that the soul acquires correspondence with the Abode of Holiness, and that these are the proximate cause of its connection with it.

Since the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, singled out among his Companions those who received knowledge well, followed him, and possessed conviction, taught them, and poured his light upon them, it follows that the supra-natural Intellects likewise single out souls according to the degree to which their essences receive their influences.

The Intellects are therefore the **first cause**.

And since the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, summoned everyone to accept what he had brought and taught everyone in whom there was no impediment to doing so, it follows that the supra-natural Intellects care for all souls and act upon all sensory souls whenever nothing within them obstructs that action.

Such is what follows from sensible things in which the soul experiences no doubt, as testified by the scales of religion.

Glory be to God, the Most Great and Most Glorious, the Mighty and Unknowable.

May He bless and greet the Prophet Muḥammad, his Legatee ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the Imams of their lineage.

[1] Al-Kirmānī treats questions of eschatology in detail in VII, 13 and VII, 14.

[1] Muʿāwiya — Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (ca. 605–680), Muḥammad's brother-in-law and the son of one of the Quraysh leaders who had been hostile to Muḥammad. His name is associated with several crucial episodes in the history of Shiʿism: he refused to recognize ʿAlī as caliph and fought against him; after ʿAlī's assassination, he succeeded in inducing ʿAlī's son al-Ḥasan to renounce his claim to political authority, which enabled Muʿāwiya to become caliph.

[1] The word *ʿaql* also means **"intellect"** or **"reason."** The wordplay emphasizes the connection between ethical self-discipline, cognition, and attainment of a higher ontological rank. See also note 1 to I, 5.

STREET THIRTEEN

On the human soul and how, after its passage [to the other world], it is requited for what it has acquired; on what resurrection, the Reckoning, reward, punishment, Paradise, and Gehenna are and what they mean for the soul; on the state of the pious in their final abode, on what in the soul during this lower life indicates what its afterlife will be, and on their actions; on who the hypocrites, transgressors, those who lead astray, and the arrogant and haughty who are far from the true worship of God are, on their actions and what awaits them after death; on whether the soul receives reward and punishment immediately upon its passage [to the other world], or remains as it is until the Resurrection; on when it is requited and what the inhabitants of Paradise and Gehenna have in common until that time; on whether it is a separate form like the form of its body in this lower world or not; on whether the soul after leaving its body becomes connected with another body, as the advocates of transmigration maintain, or not; on whether it remembers its life in this lower world or not; on whether its knowledge disappears or not; and on whether one who has received reward is endowed with the capacity to act upon something other than itself, as the supra-natural Intellects can, or not, and what such action is

Since we must first make clear what we intend to say concerning all these matters, we shall begin with the **necessity of requital**. We have demonstrated this in *The Luminous [Proof of the Imamate]*, as well as the fact that requital is not bestowed in this lower world. To reinforce this with further proofs, we say the following.

Since, as reason affirms, that which is potential acquires through that which is actual something it did not previously possess and through which it passes into actuality, thereby attaining its fullness and perfection—as, for example, a date-stone, which is a potential date palm, acquires through an actual being caring for it that by which its actuality as a palm is fulfilled: it receives the active lights that constitute the perfection of its actuality and bears fruit, whereas as a stone it did not receive those lights, not because they were unable to act upon it but because it was itself unable to receive the influences through which it now becomes a fully fruit-bearing palm—and since the soul is potential, while it has been established that through acquisition it passes into actuality, receiving according to its acquisition something from that realm into which it passes; and since the soul acquires from those who carry out the affair of the Most High and passes into the abode of the afterlife, the abode of the actual Intellects, it follows that in the afterlife the soul receives, according to what it has acquired, that which we call **requital**.

We may reinforce this conclusion as follows. From every existent there flows upon everything that surrounds it or comes to be within it, according to the quality of that existent, something determined by the perfection of its essence—as we demonstrated in *Signs of Religion*. Water, for example, imparts moisture and cold to everything adjoining or immersed in it according to that thing's receptivity; similarly air and the celestial spheres have their manifest effects.

Since the world of the afterlife—the abode of the Intellects, or the Kingdom—is the limit to which the soul comes and with which it becomes connected, it is established that when the soul enters that abode completely, the abode imparts to it, from what it contains and according to the soul's acquisition, that which is **reward for the pious and punishment for sinners**.

To establish this still further, consider another proof.

Since the speaking/rational soul in the world of Nature resorts to those causes that lead it toward the world of Holiness, and since it draws from that world while still burdened by everything introduced by its mixture and striving to cast this burden off, it follows that when it has escaped all the impediments imposed by the mixture, then, through homogeneity and correspondence—or through heterogeneity and lack of correspondence—and because the barriers have disappeared, it will receive from that world the grace that constitutes requital for the pious and sinners, according to their correspondence or lack of correspondence.

This is also confirmed by the equilibrium we find within creation.

We must say that in its being and acquisition, deficiency and perfection, reward and bliss, punishment and fiery torment, the soul resembles the body in every respect—the body being the initial creation and the first constitution—for the being of the sensible and the intelligible is ordered according to a single pattern.

As the Most High said:

"Your creation and your resurrection are but as that of a single soul."

You are first created corporeally—which is apprehended through sense—and are resurrected in your souls—which is the second creation, apprehended through intellect—as though a single soul, because the one resembles the other and the two correspond.

The Most High calls the operation relating to the sensible body **creation**, and that relating to soul and intellect **resurrection**. The two proceed according to the same pattern.

Thus God spoke of intelligible resurrection through sensible first creation:

"O mankind! If you are in doubt concerning resurrection…"

That is: if resurrection—the constitution of the afterlife, when spirits are created and enlivened by the Spirit of Holiness of the other world—is unknown to you and you doubt it because you possess no indication of it, then know it from how We created your bodies.

"We created you"—that is, your physical bodies before you yourselves began to reproduce—"from dust, then from semen," which is when reproduction began, as we have said; "then from a clot of blood," which is the degree attained when semen and blood mingle within the womb; "then from a piece of flesh," the degree attained by the clot, which may be "formed," meaning shaped and complete, or "unformed," meaning shapeless and deficient, as we showed in our treatise *On the Afterlife*.

All this is apprehended as the **first constitution**.

Then the Most High produces the constitution of the afterlife, concerning which He said:

“You already know the first constitution—why then do you not take heed?”

That is: you know the corporeal creation of your bodies; why do you not reflect and establish a correspondence, and thereby know that creation and resurrection follow one pattern, and that the constitution of the afterlife—the creation of spirits and their enlivening by the Spirit of Holiness—is analogous to the first constitution?

Since the being and perfection of the soul correspond to those of its body—as the Most Precious Scripture elegantly informs us—and since we find that while the body is in the womb, through the vegetative power bestowed upon it by its natural mixture, it acquires by drawing in matter and being strengthened by it, passing from the degree of semen to that of the blood-clot, then to flesh, and so forth, until it is perfected through instruments—the eye, ear, hand, foot, nose, tongue, and the others already discussed—with which it will perform actions after entering the sensible world; and since it acquires these instruments in the darkness and confinement of the womb precisely in order to emerge with them into the expanse of the world and there experience pleasure or pain according to how perfect and sound the instruments it acquired in the womb through the natural power are; and since, after acquiring these instruments prepared for acquisition, the body emerges into the sensible world and receives its benefits and pains in accordance with its previously acquired constitution—since this is so, we shall explain the state of the soul on the basis of the mutual correspondence between soul and body.

As the body is in the darkness of the womb, so the soul is within its body.

As the body does not exist for the darkness and confinement of the womb but for the sensible world into which it emerges, so the soul, while in its body, does not exist for the body, but for its own essence, which is worthy of another world into which it passes.

As the body, through its vegetative power, draws in matter and thereby strengthens and perfects its instruments so that it may encounter the existents of the sensible world with them, so the soul, through unceasing and diligent performance of the acts prescribed by the Law, draws divine grace toward itself and acquires knowledge in order to rectify its essence and prepare it for the lights of the Kingdom.

As the body, on entering the sensible world, parts from the womb, so the soul, on passing into the world of the afterlife, parts from its body.

As in this lower world the body is the instrument of the soul through which it obtains pleasures, so in the world to come the **essence of the soul is its own instrument**, through which it obtains pleasures.

As the body in this world receives the **sensory spirit** (*rūḥ ḥissī*), so in the other world the soul receives the **Spirit of Holiness**.

The pleasures and pains experienced by the body in this lower world by virtue of its nature, rather than by what is established within it, correspond to the grace and torment experienced by the soul in the afterlife through its acquisition, rather than through that which is poured upon it.

Thus the one corresponds exactly to the other. This equilibrium entails the necessity of requital, reward, and punishment for the soul.

Since all this necessarily follows, as we have shown, from mutual correspondence and equilibrium, the necessity of requital entails that there must be something **abiding** that receives that requital.

There have been people, both earlier and later, who denied the afterlife of the soul and followed the pronouncements of their own reason, according to which there appeared to be no requital. Yet despite all their assertions and doubts, the matter of requital is clear.

For if the path followed in acquiring knowledge is defective, the proofs obtained by it will always be defective, and one who follows such a path will arrive at the opposite of what he seeks.

Those who deny requital rely for knowledge solely upon their own reason and take it alone as their guide. But their reason proceeds from the world of Nature; it is initially potential and imperfect, and in its actions it is subordinate to the mixture from which its being arises. It does not take as its guides the perfected and heaven-supported—that is, the Prophets endowed with holiness and sent with revelation, peace be upon them—or those like them whose being is cared for by divine providence.

Had these self-guided intellects listened to those endowed with revelation and heavenly support, they would have been rectified. Instead, they relied upon their own judgment, just as their counterparts in our own time do among the adherents of personal opinion (*raʾy*) and syllogistic reasoning (*qiyās*).

Following their own conceptions, they first considered the souls of the various animal species. Finding that the being of such a soul proceeds from the mixture, they said, second, that it exists in the body and for the body as its perfection, and not for its own essence.

Considering what such a soul is, they found, third, that in order to perform an action it requires something else. And finding that it is actual only so long as its physical bearer persists, they asserted, fourth, that it perishes when the particles of that bearer disperse.

Consequently they supposed that human souls, being one species of animal soul, resemble the other species of their genus and attributed to human souls everything they attributed to those others.

They imagined that in this way they had reached the utmost limits of knowledge. The light of prophetic guidance did not shine upon them; their eyes remained blind; they failed to discern the difference between the essences and actions of these two kinds of soul and confused everything.

Even Galen, who surpassed his contemporaries and possessed knowledge of natural creation, was perplexed concerning the soul—what it is—and concerning the first principles—what they are.

As Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī reports in summarizing his doubts, Galen said that he did not know whether the world is eternal or originated in time, nor whether the soul is a substance or an accident.

In his book *On the Parts [of the Human Body]*, he says at one point that man's nature is a mixture arising from the four elements; at another that it is nothing but innate heat (*gharīziyya*); and elsewhere simply that it is heat.

If these intellects, relying upon their own judgment, could not discover the correct solution even to such questions, how could they find the right path in still more obscure matters—the Resurrection and what follows death—except through one supported from heaven who presents proofs and indicates correspondences, repeating his discourse so as to guide them and imprint knowledge within their souls?

They cannot.

Thus, although their reasoning concerning whether the soul is a substance or an accident may be correct in the respects already discussed, it is perfectly clear that the souls of animals exist only for their bodies, whereas this soul—the human soul—exists both for its body and for its own essence, and that its abiding, as we have said, depends upon what it has acquired and whether it adhered to the divine laws.

Those who concerning requital hold views resembling those of Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā, the extremist Shiʿites, and the adherents of transmigration of souls—believing that requital occurs in this world—believe that souls exist before their bodies.

Their view differs from that of the *dahriyya* and related doctrines, who affirm the simultaneous existence of soul and body and say that the soul is a substance that exchanges its bodily vehicles (*hayākil*), according to its acquisition, until it reaches purification and return.

In *The Gardens*, *The Scales of the Intellect*, *The Measures*—in which we answered the extremist Shiʿites and those like them—and other treatises, we have sufficiently demonstrated the falsity of such views.

Whoever asserts this joins those who deny requital altogether, basing himself solely upon his own deductions and taking only his own statements as his guide. This is the source of error.

Thus the necessity of requital connected with resurrection has been established.

Resurrection (*baʿth*) is an action performed by God, through the angels brought near, upon a natural being that is resurrected (*mabʿūth*), imparting perfection to it so that it may be resurrected through the **second resurrection**.

It is expressed as a **breathing** endowed with power: an outpouring of effusion upon a recipient that previously lacked that power but now receives eternal life.

We discussed this special manner of action in our treatise *On the Afterlife and Holiness*.

It is either **initial** or **secondary**.

The initial breathing is that which occurs in the world of Nature. It is divided into that which proceeds through one belonging to Nature and that which occurs through divine support.

The breathing through divine support is the outpouring (*isrāʾ*) of divine powers from the world of the Kingdom into the soul of the resurrected one who is in the world of Nature, and the flowing of those powers within that soul.

Then everything connected with eternal felicity and the second perfection becomes easy for it.

The Most High called this the **sending down of the spirit**:

"Exalted in degrees, Possessor of the Throne, He sends down the spirit by His command upon whomever He wills among His servants."

"Exalted in degrees" is the agent of the act that is the sending down of the spirit by the will of the Most High.

The "spirit" is the grace of Holiness and the Kingdom, effused according to His will—as we showed in *The Light-Shedding [Treatise]*—that is, from the First Created and First Existent.

"Upon whomever He wills among His servants" means His chosen servants, whose souls had been empty in natural darkness and had acquired nothing.

The Most High magnified the effusion and release of the divine powers by comparing them to breathing.

This breathing is performed in the soul of the resurrected one, by acting upon it, by those established to care for existents.

Through this breathing, like a lightning-bolt, all who are in the heavens and on earth are struck, so that they may be resurrected in perfection and thereby become actual, as we showed in the introduction to this book.

The resurrected one teaches people existing in sensible being the causes of salvation and felicity, divine unity, and worship, so that they may thereby become happy.

He teaches them the Scripture and wisdom, without knowledge of which they would possess only the knowledge dictated by mixture and nature, which is contrary to religion.

Thus the Most High said concerning Muḥammad:

"He raised up (*baʿatha*) among the unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, reciting His signs to them and teaching them the Scripture and wisdom, though before that they were in manifest error,"

following the judgments of their own reason.

And concerning all the Prophets:

“Mankind was one community”—that is, one in ignorance—“then God raised up (*baʿatha*) the Prophets as bearers of glad tidings and warners, and sent down with them the Scripture in truth.”

As for the breathing transmitted by a human being belonging to the world of Nature, it is called resurrection because he transmits knowledge from the Messenger who has been resurrected through the second resurrection and raised to the degree of perfection, and he teaches that through which resurrection is attained.

Thus the heaven-supported resurrected one overshadows people with goodness: what he teaches them, summons them to, and uses to rectify them is for them the cause of felicity in this world and the path to eternal life in the next.

Within their souls this is like the vegetative soul, the cause of the presence of the vegetative power, and through it they are resurrected.

Thus the Most High said of the Children of Israel who had abandoned the foundations of faith and sought what was absurd—and such people are counted among the dead, those walking the path of torment—when He graciously showed them the path to felicity:

“Then, after your death, We raised you up, that perhaps you might give thanks.”

The verse begins:

“When you said: Moses, we shall not believe you…”

That is, when you said: Moses, we shall not believe what you say comes from God “until we see God openly”—until, through sensible existents, you show us and teach us that by which we may recognize the truth of this, so that we may know what is from God and what is not from Him, possessing a criterion to apply to your words, to the words of others, and to what magicians and wonder-workers have said or may say, and thus truly know all this, believing and acknowledging that you are from God, besides whom there is no god.

“Then the lightning seized you”—the torment of bewilderment encompassed you, which would lead you toward torment in the afterlife, because you disobeyed him and demanded that he explain what belongs to the second worship, which He arranges through others, and not to the first worship, which pertained specifically to Moses.

“While you were looking on”—although you knew that such a demand was impossible and absurd and that Prophets do not overstep the limits of their ranks in outward governance, which consists in gathering onto the path of felicity scattered hearts, divergent wills, and souls both knowing and ignorant.

“Then We raised you up”—We sent grace down upon you, that is, We clarified the matter of the second worship through knowledge by raising among you a heaven-supported Messenger (*mabʿūth*) endowed with the powers of the Kingdom who, after Moses, teaches you inward worship.

Through this instruction you obtain the second worship you sought, adding to the first, outward worship a life—not the sensible life you already possess, but eternal life.

“After your death”—after, by demanding the impossible, you had entered the path of those dead to the afterlife.

“That perhaps you might give thanks”—will you not give thanks for this favor, which consisted first in the sending to you of the heaven-supported Moses to teach you worship through action, which brings you near the Abode of Holiness, and second in the raising up for you of one who teaches the second worship, which is knowledge, so that you might become like the angels brought near?

The final breathing is the **second breathing**.

It pertains to the resurrection of the Day of Judgment, when all the cycles are completed, knowledge becomes actual, and souls leave the bonds of instruction by the heaven-supported.

It is the conjunction of the powers of the **first limit**—that is, the First Existent through the First Creation, the First Emanated through the First Emanation (*al-inbiʿāth al-awwal*), called the Spirit of Holiness—with the **second limit**, which is the fullness of the second resurrection (*al-inbiʿāth al-thānī*) of man, whose being is connected with the completion of the seven cycles through the heaven-supported resurrected ones in the kingdom of Nature.

This is the **“new creation”** and **“other creation”** that gathers together all souls that have existed from the first to the last age, that acquired in their lower lives and in due course left their bodies, gathering together in expectation of the fulfillment of what had been ordained.

Then they rise, and divine powers flow within the souls just as sensory life begins to flow within a newborn: its flame is kindled and its effect appears.

Before sensory life there existed the vegetative soul, corresponding to what is acquired through knowledge and deeds, which gives these divine powers their being and returns the second to the first.

This is the second breathing, whose first breathing, as we have shown, is the instruction in this lower world by Prophets and Legatees.

The Most High said:

“When the trumpet is sounded, there will be no kinship between them that day, nor will they question one another.”

When the forms are fully laid bare and gathered together, the lights of the Kingdom will shine within them, and each will possess nothing except exactly in proportion to the instrument it acquired through acquisition.

Kinship has no efficacy there as it does in this lower world, where a soul may be considered noble, mighty, and powerful merely because it belongs to a noble and strong tribe and may receive benefits for that reason even when it itself possesses neither strength, good character, cultivation, nor diligence in deeds.

For that abode is the abode of justice; and how could it be such if people were not requited there according to merit?

The Most High said:

"…the day when the trumpet is blown and you will come forth in multitudes,"

meaning here the **master of the seventh cycle**, who will arise in the last of the cycles.

At first he will be sent (*baʿth*) into the world of Nature just as the masters of the other cycles were sent, and people, nation after nation, will obey him.

"The heaven will be opened and become gates"

means that the Gates will be established by him for the close examination of all forms of worship.

"The mountains will be set in motion and become like a mirage"

means that the representatives of all the regions (*aṣḥāb al-jazāʾir*), who were appointed to spread the summons to knowledge, will depart and go to the place where the master of the seventh cycle resides, and they will reveal no knowledge to anyone. To those seeking it they will become like a mirage containing nothing.

The Most High said:

"The trumpet will be sounded."

Here He meant the master of the seventh cycle, the one who completes those cycles and through whom the **new creation** is accomplished.

He opens the gates of requital first in the kingdom of Nature and afterward in the kingdom of the afterlife.

This is the **initial breathing**. He meant precisely the initial breathing, just as His breathing into the masters of the earlier cycles was initial.

"And all who are in the heavens and on the earth will be struck as by lightning"

means that bewilderment concerning his words and actions will seize the adherents of all religions, just as it seized them with every initial breathing in each cycle,

"except those whom God wills to exempt"

that is, those who know the rank of the master of the seventh cycle, had previously believed in him, and were ordered by him.

"Then it will be sounded a second time,"

and he will begin to bestow wisdom and clear proof and to explain all the sayings of the Prophets, from the first to the last.

Then no one will remain who does not shine with his light, as the Most High said:

“The earth will shine with the light of its Lord,”

that is, with knowledge of this great *ḥadd* sent by God.

And:

“The Book will be set down”

means that he will assign every Scripture its proper place.

“The Prophets and the witnesses will be brought forth”

means the adherents of every religious sect.

“And judgment will be made between them in truth,”

each concerning that to which he had been attached.

Then every form of knowledge will be properly known by the inhabitants of the earth, and all will be given only one worship to perform, abrogating all that preceded it, and this will be judged by the kindled light of heavenly support.

Then all forms will become **one form gathering all forms**, and it will become complete in the highest of the celestial registers, at the **Gate of the Veil** (*bāb al-ḥijāb*).

Then woe to the soul that neither worshipped nor acquired: it will be cast into the fire of torment.

This is the time concerning which it is said that the treasures of the earth will be revealed at the Resurrection.

Then every form, according to its acquisition, will contain within itself other forms, just as every part of the body—the hand, foot, finger, and so forth—possesses a form.

This is the **letter** (*ḥarf*) of which it is said that within it is the form of every living creature on earth.

Thus the Resurrection is fulfilled through the master of the seventh cycle in the manner we have shown.

After Resurrection comes the **Reckoning** (*ḥisāb*).

This is the action by which the soul gives itself reward—that is, pleasure and joy—and punishment—that is, suffering, torment, and grief.

This action is divided into what exists in this lower world and what exists in the world of the afterlife.

That which exists in this lower world is twofold: universal and particular.

The universal is that which the soul brings upon itself immediately at every moment; the particular is that which it brings upon itself immediately only at certain moments.

The universal requital that the soul brings upon itself at every moment is what proceeds from it whenever and wherever, while performing the rites of religion prescribed by the Prophets and Messengers of God, it seeks thereby greatness, elevated status, and honor in people's eyes, desiring to be called generous or wealthy, or clothing itself in virtuous forms so that others will regard it as such, making a display of performing the laws of the two forms of worship.

An example is one who is diligent in prayer and goes to the mosque not to draw near to God, not because he seeks His countenance and humbles his pride, and not in order to perform the obligatory rites of religion, but so that he may walk about in beautiful clothing and people may say that he is what he wishes inwardly to appear to be, or so that he may display his sorrow.

By doing so he immediately obtains what he seeks: **that is his reward**.

The same applies to one who dons the mantle of chastity and virtue, not in order to train and rectify his soul and restrain it from that toward which those immersed in vice incline—which would bring him the perfection from which eternal abiding and bliss proceed—but in order to gain someone's confidence and extract money from him, acquire a reputation, or obtain some other means of arranging his worldly affairs.

That is his reward, coming to him immediately as the result of his asceticism and virtue; but his portion in the afterlife is empty, for he is a **hypocrite**.

Or consider one who neglects the two saving forms of worship, evades the commands and laws of the Most High, and does not acknowledge His saints, Prophets, and Messengers.

Disgrace and dishonor—the foretaste of eternal torment and grievous sorrow—immediately cover him.

This is his immediate punishment, apart from the punishment still to come.

The particular requital, which does not occur at every moment but only at certain times, proceeds from the Messenger (*mabʿūth*) supported by the Spirit of Holiness—the master of the seventh cycle—when the powers of the Kingdom are reunited with him, which is designated the **second breathing**, on the Day of Resurrection when all the cycles are completed.

He then accomplishes what the other masters of the cycles were unable to accomplish, manifests what none of the pure Messengers of God before him could manifest, and fulfills the promise given by the Most High to His creation.

Concerning this He said:

"God will not leave the believers in the state in which you are until He separates the corrupt from the good."

Everything will then converge in the manner He has measured: the motions of the heavens assisting, and what lies beneath them drawing near and corresponding with them.

From this the fire of power (*qudra*) will blaze, and through it the tongue of Truth will speak: there is no god but Him, the All-Glorious, exalted above every attribute of His creatures; His alone is the command in the kingdom of His wisdom, and before Him every face bows.

The Most High said:

"That is the day when mankind will be like scattered moths, and the mountains like carded wool."

By this He means that all people will then bow before the master of the seventh cycle in obedience, while the mighty among them, who are like inaccessible mountain-peaks, will be humbled and made pliable like wool.

Then mankind will be gathered for questioning and reckoning; all will be assembled to receive requital for what they acquired through their deeds:

"People will come forth in multitudes so that their deeds may be shown to them."

And they will be questioned, as the Most High said:

"By your Lord, We shall surely question them all concerning what they used to do."

This is an oath by the Lord of Muḥammad, the One exalted in degrees, who preserves the world and supports the Messengers, as we have said, and who is thereby distinguished from all the angels brought near around the Throne.

He supports the master of the seventh cycle so that he may call mankind to account and confirm the written laws and rites of obedience imposed as obligations by the Prophets in God's name, proclaiming that these are truly so.

For He said:

"We shall question them all."

That is: We shall do so, and reproach them all concerning their actions by God's truth.

And He said:

"When they come, He will say: Did you deny My signs without encompassing them in knowledge…?"

That is: did you reject the heaven-supported, the people of the Kingdom, acquire nothing from them, and gain no benefit from their grace?

Why, then, do you suppose We created them?

Did you not know that you have a Lord who commands and prohibits you, rewards you for good, and punishes you for disobedience?

For He said:

“We shall question those to whom messengers were sent, and We shall question the messengers; and We shall relate everything to them with knowledge, for We were never absent. On that day the weighing will be true.”

Threatening and promising to fulfill the threat, He said: We shall question the followers concerning whether they fulfilled what was incumbent upon them in God’s religion, a reproaching question—did they fulfill what they were commanded, or were they occupied with something else?—so that they may affirm their own essence on the basis of knowledge of it and thereby adhere to Truth.

“And those who were sent”—that is, those whom the followers followed. The Messengers, peace be upon them, will be questioned concerning what they legislated. Let them appear again with all their laws so that their followers may acknowledge them, and We shall relate all this with knowledge and truth, for We were never absent from them, neither in times past nor in times still to come for the *ḥudūd* of the religion of the Most High.

“On that day the weighing will be true”—pure and manifest Truth will be the basis of all this, because every obstacle that had caused the heaven-supported Prophets to delay the rectification of their followers will have disappeared.

They postponed that rectification until the time when it would become possible to impose (*ilzām*) Truth and separate Truth from falsehood.

That day is the **Day of Truth**. Power supports it, and assistance comes to it from every side.

Then the master of the seventh cycle performs nothing but the Truth that is due, separating the good from the evil, as Jesus, peace be upon him, related in the parable of the farmer.

The farmer sowed his field; shoots came up, and among them were weak growths. Out of concern for his crop he could not uproot them at first and left them until full ripeness. Then he separated one from another: he kept what bore an ear of grain and consigned the rest to the fire.

May God preserve us from torment in this world and the next.

As for what exists in the world of the afterlife, it proceeds from the Created and Emanated Intellects through the instruction flowing into receptive souls from the Spirit of Holiness with the appearance in the natural world of the unstained soul of the master of the seventh cycle, and because all the causes of felicity, both natural and royal, are fulfilled for him.

Then, in accordance with what knowledge prescribes, every form receives everything due to it and fulfills everything it owes, in exact accordance with what God ordained in the abode of His wisdom.

Then the happy one rejoices, while evil is the lot of the wretched.

For in its first being in this lower world, when the soul begins to labor, it is an **acquiring substance**, and whatever that substance acquires remains within its essence, just as writing remains upon paper or another receptive material.

The essence of that substance is implanted in the essence of the soul and receives impressions.

Thus that essence is a **book recounting its acquisition**, while the soul, as we have said, is held in pledge by what it has amassed.

This is the meaning of the Most High's words:

"The book of the righteous is in the Heights,"

and:

"The book of the wicked is in Sijjīn."

That is, the souls of the righteous and wicked are in the Heights and in Sijjīn respectively, inscribed with what they acquired, as will be discussed further.

Since that essence is life, knowing within itself and completed through what it receives from the breathing of the spirit just mentioned, while the substance remains in this condition it does not yet know what among its acquisitions accords with, and what contradicts, that toward which the soul is going.

But it learns this as soon as it parts from its body, when everything corporeal that veiled its own essence from it disappears.

This is referred to in the transmitted saying of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him:

"After the deceased has been buried, he will be called to account. Then the gates of Paradise will be opened before him if he is among its inhabitants, or the gates of Gehenna if that is his abode; thus he will know whether he has attained mercy or will suffer torment."

The soul then looks into its own essence, examining what it has acquired—whether what is precious, that is, good, or what is hateful, that is, evil—and learns whether the good corresponds to the evil and whether they are equal, or whether one is greater and the other less.

It does so just as in this lower world it knows its own constitution (*khilqa*) and how far one thing within it corresponds to another.

This is the **reckoning (*ḥisāb*) of the soul looking into its own essence**.

Therefore the Most High said:

"Read your book!"

That is: look into your own soul, see how diligently you practiced the two forms of worship and what you acquired through them.

“Today your own soul is sufficient to take account of you.”

No one besides yourself is required to tell you what flowed within you. Your own essence—that is, your soul—is sufficient for you to learn from it how you fashioned it through labor and choice.

It will secure for you either eternal abiding and felicity near the Creator, or suffering, torment, and remoteness from the highest assembly.

In this way the inquiry will be determined.

This recognition itself is the arising of torment and suffering, or of pleasure and joy.

The matter is exactly analogous to a human being who, let us suppose, while still within the darkness of the womb, were already endowed with knowledge and a desire to possess crafts and arts whose existence depends upon the instruments constituting his physical being.

Suppose further that these crafts and arts constituted the perfection of that person, securing for him abiding existence, the radiance of joy, and delight.

These crafts and arts might be governance, exercise of state authority, calligraphy, the office of vizier or physician, observation of the stars and planets, piety, frequent visitation of God’s sanctuary, and other things producing pleasure and joy.

Suppose this being knew how and was capable of forming correctly the instruments necessary for those crafts and arts that would later bring him pleasure, but could also spoil them by delaying their perfection.

And suppose finally that he was required to strive and acquire all this while still in the womb, before emerging into the air.

Whatever choice he made and however he used his capacity for acquisition while still in the womb, that is what he would receive after emerging from it.

He might have acquired badly and used his capacity badly, so that the parts of the instrument needed for his chosen craft emerged defective; or he might have acquired well, so that the instruments emerged perfect and sound.

Then the Most High grants him still greater knowledge of his own essence and what his soul is.

So that this person may know that whatever is denied him is denied according to his merits, and whatever is permitted him is permitted deservedly, he is addressed with words of justice:

Look at your body, which is necessary for performing what you seek. Let it alone judge whether you deserve the craft you chose for yourself.

He then looks at himself and finds that the instruments of his body are defective and unfit for the desired craft: where a firm hand is needed, his hand is withered; where legs are needed, he is lame; where ears are needed, he is deaf; where eyes are required, he is short-sighted.

Or else he looks and finds himself perfectly formed and strong.

The defectiveness of the instruments, or their perfection and strength, then convinces him either that he is fit for his craft and deserves it, or that he is unfit and does not deserve it.

If he is found defective, unending sorrow becomes his lot and ceaseless torment takes up residence within him.

He grieves that he did not prepare his instruments properly while that was still possible, and that he did not acquire enough of the causes of his felicity by which he might have sat upon the ruler's throne and governed, performed feats of war, treated the sick, observed the stars, or become an ascetic.

Yet he will remain as he is forever.

He cannot rid himself of what prevents him from attaining his desire, nor can he ever return to the place where acquisition was possible—the womb in which he was created and from which he emerged.

Concerning this the Most High said:

"Do they await anything but its interpretation?"

That is: do they await anything beyond knowledge of the second worship, which they will desire on the Day of Resurrection, the day manifested by the master of the seventh cycle?

"Those who forgot it before"

and did not receive it, so that it became forgotten,

"will say…"

Those missionaries were the envoys of the Prophet and the Legatee, peace be upon them, and what they called us to was truth; who then will teach us now?

"Or may we be sent back, so that we may act?"

"They have lost their souls,"

having despised their religion, and now their time is gone.

"And what they invented has vanished from them,"

that is, everything they asserted has turned into falsehood against them, because the limit of instruction and enlightenment has already been reached; postponement and delay are no longer possible.

What God ordained is fulfilled.

But if that person is found complete and strong because in his former days he knew and acquired, then there will be no end to his delights and no interruption of his joy.

He will experience still other things that cannot be described through the sensible things available to us.

To this we add what our ruler al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh—may God bless and greet him—said:

"Were the soul not so occupied with the affairs of the body, using its instruments in pursuit of satisfying desires and aims, it would feel within itself the pain of the sins and acts of disobedience it commits in this lower world immediately when those acts occur. But being occupied with the interests of the body, it does not know what has happened to it until it parts from its body and remains alone with its own essence. Only then does it feel within itself the pain that has befallen it—just as a person occupied with something is distracted from his pain and does not feel it until his heart leaves that occupation, whereupon the pain returns. He will then endure forever this suffering, resembling a fire painfully burning the body. This is torment and suffering."

May God grant us obedience to Him and preserve us from transgressing His commands.

Since this is the case with sins, good deeds and virtues must be understood in the same way.

As for knowing the **quiddity of reward and punishment** and giving a clear account of it, the path to this is closed to everyone except those supported from heaven.

In this matter, as our masters, peace be upon them, have said, only comparison by way of similitude with sensible things—with what is visible and known—is possible.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, acted in the same way.

He knew that it was impossible to imprint upon people and communicate to them the summons in its complete truth—concerning the One God, the Most High exalted above attributes; the angels; Paradise; Gehenna; reward; punishment; and the rest—because these things are inaccessible to sensory apprehension.

Thus, concerning Paradise and bliss he expressed himself figuratively:

"No eye has seen it, no ear has heard it, and it has never occurred to the human heart."

This saying conceals its reality from intellects because that reality lies beyond their reach.

He therefore spoke of such things by describing them with attributes of sensible things that people can know through the instruments prepared for them, so as to bring knowledge of the higher realities closer to their understanding and enable them to conceive, desire, and yearn for them.

Likewise the Most High in His Scripture initially ascribed to Himself the attributes of knowledge, power, life, hearing, sight, satisfaction, indignation, anger, mercy, and other things known to us.

Of the angels He said that they pray, offer praise, glorify Him, and carry out what they are commanded.

Of the things of Paradise He spoke as shade, waters and rivers, trees and fruits, pomegranates and grapes, youthful attendants and wide-eyed maidens, goblets and cups, soft cushions and couches, women lowering their gaze, and other things known to us.

Of what is in Hell He spoke as flame, suffering and torment, boiling water and foul liquid, and other things accessible to sense.

For the things of which these descriptions are given resemble what is said of them, or else what is said of them approaches them in some respect.

In this way souls are brought near to those realities and instructed, so that by knowing the similitudes they may uniformly apprehend the necessity of those higher realities.

Then within them is kindled that fire of life which becomes perfect upon separation from the body.

No greater clarity than this can be attained in explaining these matters.

We should nevertheless say that the soul's torment exceeds every comparable torment and pain of this lower world, and its reward exceeds every comparable worldly bliss.

For example, it is said of the food of Paradise that its sweetness remains in the mouth of the one who tastes it for thousands of years.

This is said only to bring it closer to our understanding.

Yet the degree of those things exceeds that of the existents known to us not merely several times over, nor tenfold, nor even a hundred-thousandfold, but vastly more.

May God grant them to us through His mercy.

For comparison, imagine an embryo in its mother's womb endowed with knowledge.

If someone told it that outside this abode—the womb—there exists a vast and spacious world containing shade and light, fire, air and earth, celestial luminaries and spheres, and pure and delicious foods, the embryo could form no impression from these words, because it had never seen, heard, imagined, or known anything of the sort.

It would probably ask:

"What are these things like?"

To make them intelligible to it, we would have no path except to use for our explanation things found within the womb and its own body—blood, yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, liver, lungs, spleen, intestines, stomach, and so on.

We would say that the womb encompassing it resembles the encompassing celestial spheres; phlegm and mucus resemble water; bile warming the stomach resembles fire; the heart resembles the Sun; the brain resembles the Moon; the liver and other organs correspond to other things; and the matter nourishing its body resembles delicious food.

Thus we would compare each thing with another, and then say:

Those things outside are not really like what you see here; they surpass these many times in degree. The instruments bestowed upon you—eye, hand, foot, ear, and the others—were given to you for apprehending those things; here in the womb you have no need of them.

The embryo would then form an impression of the world hidden from it as resembling what had been said of it, while taking account of the difference between the thing compared and the similitude.

Precisely the same relation holds between the **world of Holiness and its existents** and the **world of Nature and its sensible things**.

Those realities are not identical with these sensibles; what is found there is spoken of as pleasure and torment for the sake of approximation and similitude.

The reward of souls that attain delight differs in **three respects**.

First, souls in the afterlife surpass one another according to the nobility and elevation of that through which they succeeded in acquiring their virtues.

This distinction is, as it were, **specific**—a distinction of species.

In our world it resembles the superiority of practitioners of one art over those of another: among two arts differing in kind, one may be superior to another—for example, perfumery, hemming, making *kunāfa*, dancing, jurisprudence, weaving, knitting, and so forth—and according to the superiority of the art one practitioner surpasses another.

The same applies to the Laws according to which God is worshipped and through which virtues of the soul are acquired.

These Laws are like different species.

Thus one who worships the Most High according to the Law of Muḥammad, master of the Prophets—may the Most High greet him and his family—which is the most complete Law and gathers all goods, is not like one who worships God according to an earlier Law, but is superior to him.

This is the highest degree, surpassing the degrees of preceding forms of worship.

Second, souls surpass one another in the afterlife according to whether they fulfilled **all** that was required for acquiring virtues or only part of it.

This distinction is, as it were, **quantitative**.

Practitioners of the same art similarly surpass one another according to whether they master all its details.

One person, for example, may have mastered calligraphy completely, which requires knowledge of language and grammar, epistolary art, good handwriting, and arithmetic.

Another may know epistolary art and possess good handwriting.

A third may know language, grammar, epistolary art, and good handwriting.

The one who masters all of it will surpass the others, and the same should be said of the rest according to their proper order.

So too with everything encompassed by the two forms of worship in the noble religious community.

One person worships God by pronouncing the confession of faith and performing prayer.

Another pronounces the confession, prays, pays *zakāt*, and fasts.

A third also performs the pilgrimage and everything else included within the two forms of worship.

One who worships the Most High through knowledge and action in all things, omitting nothing, surpasses one who performs only a portion of them.

Third, souls surpass one another in the afterlife according to **how well** they performed that through which virtues are acquired.

This distinction resembles the superiority of practitioners over one another in a single component of their craft.

Suppose two calligraphers in their art possess only handwriting and arithmetic. If one is stronger in these than the other because of superior instruction, skill, and practice, he surpasses him.

The people of the two forms of worship likewise differ in their performance of the components of the Law, which are the divine rites.

Whoever is more persistent and diligent than another in prayer, ablution, or another rite, or in acquiring knowledge of what these forms of worship contain, surpasses him.

Such are the degrees of superiority among those who receive reward, and their essences bear the imprint of that which determines these degrees.

No one can infer this knowledge who has not been tempered in the furnace of the two forms of worship, who has not ordered his own essence through good deeds and divine knowledge while laying up piety as provision.

Thus only those who display a high preparedness for it, whose souls are capable of this discipline, follow the heavenly summons.

Such persons are skilled in words and discourse, in teaching, and in assimilating what is hidden to the nearest thing corresponding and homogeneous with it, reproducing the hidden through what is nearest to it.

Thus, for example, we say that the visible form of a man—his corporeal frame—is closer to the true man than the image visible in a mirror or upon the surface of water.

In this they follow the ordinances and determinations of the heaven-supported one chosen from among peoples for revelation, the one best suited to fulfill the purposes of the grace flowing toward him from every side.

Scholars and missionaries differ in this ability to teach.

The one who surpasses the rest is he who can imprint a thing upon the understanding in the closest possible way and teach it.

People likewise differ in understanding what they are taught.

For one person a hint and the slightest indication suffice; another needs one similitude after another, with the result that the representation becomes increasingly remote from what it represents—not through any fault of the teacher, but because of the student's insufficient capacity to receive the impression.

Thus the more correct interpretation (*taʾwīl*) and similitude (*tamthīl*) is the one that is truer and better, possesses greater inner coherence and proportion, and deviates and contradicts its object less.

Knowledge of these hidden things belongs, as we have said, to the sent Prophets who have attained the limit of perfection. Upon this foundation they construct the edifices of their ordinances.

After them come the sages, who are the *ḥujjas*.

We said that missionaries may also possess such ability because in their summons they must first benefit themselves if others are to benefit through them.

This matter is not trivial.

May God preserve us from seeking knowledge from one who needs that knowledge more than the seeker himself.

Such a person will answer whatever comes into his head unless faith preserves him from sin and honesty compels him to remain silent concerning what he does not know.

In general, the final limit of the reward sought is described by the Most High in His Scripture:

"…in gardens and amid rivers, in an abode of truth, before an All-Powerful King."

He said:

"Everything they do is entered into books."

The books of the afterlife are the souls.

Thus He means: everything they acquire through knowledge and religious action remains inscribed in the essences of their souls.

"Everything, small and great, is written down."

All the transgressions and sins they committed through disobedience or submission to passion are within their own essences.

"The pious will be in gardens and amid rivers."

By this He says: such is the condition of the good and evil that is acquired.

Those who practice both forms of worship, do not depart from the commands of the Most High, and through acquisition and knowledge establish correspondence between themselves and the Abode of Holiness—this abode is given to them, and no impediment remains between them and the desired goal.

"In an abode of truth"

means that this place is **Truth** (*al-Ḥaqq*), reached only by those who follow the path of the two forms of worship, outward and inward.

"Before an All-Powerful King"

means before the Greatest Sovereign through whom all existents exist, around the Great Throne, praising and glorifying, drinking deeply of jubilation and bliss at what arises within their essences when they apprehend Him and apprehend that "which no eye has seen and no ear has heard."

As for **Paradise**, we say the following.

Eternity and unceasing continuance are its attributes; all of it is delight.

It is immutable, knows no adventitious states, and never changes.

This is the **first limit of existents**, which exists through the Creation of the Most High, exalted above every attribute.

This limit is beyond the highest heaven and is called the **Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary**.

It is the **First Created**, that is, the eternal first mover, the sustaining cause of all sustaining causes, the First Emanation, together with all the emanated angels brought near.

Every moving creature longs for this, and every god-seeking (*mutaʾallih*) existent yearns for it.

They—the Intellects or angels—are called by many names according to the degrees they occupy around the Throne.

Paradise itself is the kingdom of Holiness.

The **abode of Paradise**, however, is the abode and gathering-place of the resurrected intellects from the world of Nature and of imaginative, intellective souls that have received reward.

The pious are in it.

It is this Paradise of which it is said that it is at the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary, beyond corporeal limits, near the Angel Brought Near to whom the world has been entrusted, with whom souls are connected and from whom, while still in the sensible world, they seek assistance.

The Most High speaks of this in His Scripture from the words:

“No indeed! The book of the righteous is in ʿIlliyyūn”

down to:

“Its mixture is from Tasnīm, a spring from which those brought near drink.”

“No indeed!” is a particle affirming the truth of what follows.

“The book of the righteous” is the soul of the righteous person who, during his lower life, while his actions were still not separated from the body, followed the commands of the Most High and His Messenger, peace be upon him.

“In ʿIlliyyūn” means that it tastes the felicity of Prophets, Imams, and holy friends who occupy a lofty degree and are exalted in their very essences around the Throne.

Thus He says that ʿIlliyyūn is a celestial register beyond corporeal limits.

“And what will make you know what ʿIlliyyūn is?”

You would marvel if you knew what ʿIlliyyūn truly is.

“A clearly inscribed book.”

Here He explains what ʿIlliyyūn is: it is the soul resurrected through the second resurrection, upon which all divine forms of knowledge from beginning to end have been inscribed.

It acquired them by gathering all the pure forms obtained from the beginning to the end of the cycles—the Prophets, Imams, and subsequent *ḥudūd*.

It is like the highest heaven, gathering all forms.

“Those brought near witness it.”

In the preceding cycles the incorporeal Intellects, which are the angels brought near, supported this soul, joining it with holy lights and acting upon and influencing it—as they act upon the heavens—thereby accomplishing the new creation.

Thus this saying of the Most High means that for the soul Paradise is felicity drawn from the kingdom of Holiness through the heaven-supported, and that in this respect it stands beneath the Angel Brought Near.

Then He said:

“Truly, the pious are in bliss.”

He connected this with “No indeed!”

Having informed us about incorporeal souls, that they enjoy felicity among their peers, and that there are souls like them who have not yet risen to them from the kingdom of Nature—not even at the time of the master of the Resurrection, that is, the master of the seventh cycle, when “the trumpet is blown”—He now speaks again of what they will be at that time.

He names them while they are still in their bodies, not yet separated from them and not yet having made the passage: they are the pious who practice the two forms of worship.

Thus He said:

“Truly, the pious”

who at that time practice both forms of worship and acquire both felicities

“are in bliss.”

That is: although they have not yet risen to those souls where the lights of Holiness will join and flow within them, they are already upon their path, practicing both forms of worship, affirming the *ḥudūd*, and obeying them.

This obedience itself is the **bliss** concerning which they will be questioned on the Day of Resurrection, as He said:

“On that day you will surely be questioned concerning bliss.”

When Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, was asked concerning this verse what the common people believed it meant, he replied:

They think that bliss is a cool drink taken by a thirsty person on a hot day, and that God will question him about this on the Day of Resurrection.

But God, the Most Merciful, will not question His servant concerning how or why he drank something that He Himself permitted.

Rather, He will question him concerning whether he fulfilled what was incumbent upon him as God commanded and whether he disobeyed.

And what bliss could be greater than fulfilling what He has made obligatory and being obedient to Him as prescribed?

This pure obedience—the affirmation of the *ḥudūd* and humble performance of the prescribed deeds—leads directly to Paradise and eternal bliss.

"Upon high couches they gaze."

That is: firmly established in the ranks of religion, they know and understand everything created by the Most High from the first to the last limit.

"You will recognize upon their faces the radiance of bliss."

Their condition, words, and intentions clearly show that the two forms of worship and a sound confession of divine unity have acted upon them.

"They are given to drink of a pure sealed wine."

This resembles the divine sciences poured upon them by the master of the seventh cycle, through which they are taught and acquire joy and exultation, just as the power of wine drunk by a person gladdens and strengthens his soul.

"Its seal is musk."

The effusion of knowledge and instruction, which is compared to wine, is completed in this lower world by the complete realization of what is desired, without deficiency, and in the world of the afterlife by attaining eternity and abiding near the Lord of the worlds, who is the Seal.

"For this let those who strive compete."

The intellective person seeking lofty degrees desires what abides eternally, not what passes away with time.

"Its mixture is from Tasnīm, a spring from which those brought near drink."

The foundation of the divine things poured upon them, through which they acquire what they desire in soul and body, is from Tasnīm, from the highest of the Heights.

This is knowledge—specifically, knowledge of the unity of God, besides whom there is no god, the Source of existents.

“As a spring from which those brought near drink”: through that knowledge—the knowledge of God’s unity—the Created Intellects and those brought near are eternal and unified.

Such is Paradise, expressed through comparison and similitude.

As for **fire**, it can lead natural existents either toward health or toward corruption.

When it gives such an existent harmony and perfection, order and health, it is likened to Holiness and right guidance, as the Most High said:

“Has the story of Moses reached you? He saw a fire and said to his family: remain here; I perceive a fire. Perhaps I can bring you a burning brand from it, or find guidance by means of the fire.”

But when fire causes dissolution and destruction, decomposition and corruption, it is likened to torment and error, as the Most High said:

“We made them leaders calling to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will have no helpers.”

This fire is different from the former.

The first is right guidance and perfection.

The second is error and torment.

It is this dissolving and destructive fire that is prepared for the wicked, the contemptible transgressors, and the hypocrites.

The Most Glorious and Most High said:

“No indeed! The book of the wicked is in Sijjīn. And what will make you know what Sijjīn is? A clearly inscribed book. Woe that day to those who deny.”

“No indeed!” affirms the truth of what follows.

“The book of the wicked” means the souls of the wicked who deny and transgress God’s commands and violate and abandon both forms of worship, or one of them.

“In Sijjīn” means at the greatest distance from the first limit—that is, from ʿIlliyyūn, as already explained.

This distance itself is torment and is called **Sijjīn**, because the wicked suffer there just as criminals in the world of Nature are imprisoned for punishment.

According to the commentators, Sijjīn is a rock situated beneath all else.

“And what will make you know what Sijjīn is?”

Do you know what Sijjīn truly is?

Then:

“A clearly inscribed book.”

That is, souls covered in inscriptions, prisoners of the deeds and forms of knowledge they acquired not for God’s pleasure and not in obedience to His vicegerents, gathered together with those like themselves.

They are like an earth covered with inscriptions because it has gathered all sensible forms.

They are overtaken by the torment of manifold pains that they must endure, just as terrestrial existents endure transformations that are the likeness of such torment.

Thus He informed us figuratively concerning these contemptible souls that have left their bodies and those who resemble them.

Woe to the inhabitants of the Fire.

Dark is their lot after passage to the other world in the age of the master of the seventh cycle: every sorrow and affliction will have to be experienced by them.

But they themselves chose this lot by turning away from the commands of the Most High and His Messenger.

Let our true brother therefore reflect upon the meaning of these words.

Let him fear finding himself at the greatest distance from the world of Holiness and its inhabitants who are near the Lord of Majesty.

Let him beware of every negligence in performing obligatory acts and acquiring felicity through knowledge of what is written.

Above all, let him beware lest, having drawn near to eternity, he at the end of his path become distant from it through being deceived by hopes and, no longer bound by the ordinances of the two forms of worship—which bestow an order comparable only to the wondrous harmony of the human being—find himself in the Fire.

That fire will torment him, tearing flesh and bones.

Then he will feel torment throughout his whole being and, losing his harmony, fall back to the lowest degrees.

May God protect us from such negligence, for it is manifest wretchedness.

In our treatise *The Unique [Treatise on the Hereafter]* we explained where the intellective person must apply his powers so that God, in His great mercy, may make the path to goodness easy for him.

As for the state of the pious in their final refuge, how happy and blessed they are and how wondrously they rejoice, this cannot be described except through an analogy.

Imagine a country with hot air and heavy water.

Suppose one inhabitant of that country suffers from fever, while all its inhabitants likewise suffer from illness.

The country is ruled by a great sovereign who always shows care, mercy, and compassion toward his subjects.

At every moment he calls all of them so that, having examined them, he may bestow good upon each according to his merits.

Seeing that there is no one to help this sick man—or the other inhabitants—the ruler sends them a physician to drive the illness away.

He wishes the patient, once restored to health, to be able at the appointed hour and day to come before him together with all the healthy and enjoy the bliss he has prepared, so that the ruler may pour upon them the wondrous benefits appropriate to them.

The physician comes to the patient, feels his pulse, examines his bodily excretions, and finds that corrupt humors (*akhlāṭ*) have accumulated within him and are ready to exert their effects.

He asks the patient what he eats and drinks.

The patient tells him and says that he cannot resist his own desires.

Since this arises from corruption of the mixture (*mizāj*), the physician realizes that the disease has already grown strong and manifested its signs.

The physician then commands the patient to abstain from his customary foods that arouse intense desire in him, explaining that even food wholesome in itself only aggravates illness in an impure body.

He orders him to restrict himself to a diet that will preserve his strength without allowing the corrupt humors to increase.

He also compounds a medicine from several drugs.

Some destroy and extinguish the power of the humors; others draw them together and drive them inward or toward the extremities of the body; others expel them from the body.

The physician orders him to take this medicine and disregard its unpleasant bitterness until it has done its work and expelled the disease-producing humors, cleansing the body.

Until then he must abstain from heavy food, especially before sleep, when its effect becomes particularly strong.

When health and well-being return, he will be able to enjoy all foods without harm, including the good things prepared for him and others like him in the ruler’s house.

The physician then warns him that if he disobeys and fails to follow the prescriptions, his condition will develop into a severe and destructive illness and all those benefits will pass him by.

But if he listens and acts as commanded, patiently taking the bitter medicine and allowing it to work—some humors being expelled through diarrhea, others through vomiting, others through sweat, and others being digested—then the fever will depart from his body after its corrupt qualities have been purged, and through the medicine he will become healthy and able to enjoy food, drink, women, and clothing.

Then comes the hour of the summons appointed by his lord.

The trumpet is blown and everyone proceeds toward the ruler's house.

He enters among them and sees that delights of every kind have been prepared for all.

Food, drink, and women delight him.

He smells beautiful perfumes; his hearing is delighted by songs sounding around the King's couch and praising the ruler.

Enjoying such bliss, he rejoices together with the others; in the chambers near the King's couch every one of his senses is delighted by everything capable of delighting it.

Looking out from these chambers, he sees that some sick people have remained behind in his country, prevented by their illness from coming with him and beholding these marvels.

Seeing them writhing from their ailments, groaning and calling for help, he understands how great his own bliss is and how precious the physician's advice was.

Then he says:

Glory be to God, who in His great mercy prepared for us this abode in which we know no weariness.

And they call out to the others, as the Most High said:

"The inhabitants of Paradise will call to the inhabitants of the Fire: we have found the promise of our Lord to be true; have you also found the threat of your Lord to be true? They will say: Yes."

The sovereign then grants him that bliss forever.

He joins those who eternally sing praise to their ruler and remains in joy and bliss, with a healthy body knowing no death.

Such is the condition of the pious in the afterlife, where through unceasing worship of God the Most High, Lord of the worlds, they attain what they desired.

As for what in this lower world indicates what the believer's afterlife will be, it is his attachment to the **two forms of worship**—outward worship through action and inward worship through knowledge—the performance of their obligatory rites, norms, and laws, and proper observance of them.

Such a believer never disobeys what God has prescribed and never does what He has forbidden.

He always associates with good people, people of worship, and all this is for him the sought goal and sole desire; he thinks and cares about nothing else.

In short, it consists in fulfilling what is incumbent and abstaining from what is forbidden, until the believer becomes like a servant capable only of carrying out what he is ordered to do, having forgotten his own will, becoming as though compelled (*mujbar*) and incapable of anything besides the work to which he has been assigned.

Then he attains likeness to the two fathers, the Prophet and the Legatee, peace be upon them—for Muḥammad said:

"You and I, ʿAlī, are the fathers of the believers"—

and beyond them likeness to the highest assembly.

Through this he attains his fullness, union and homogeneity, correspondence and isomorphism with the Intellects, for it is precisely unceasing fulfillment of this that bestows strength upon the soul, the imprinting of higher forms, conjunction, assimilation, and actuality.

Likewise in any craft, as you know, the pupil who is stronger and more skillful, closer to his teacher and more like him, is the one who devoted himself more intensely and persistently than others to the teacher's craft.

Therefore, if someone follows the divine commands in everything established by the Prophet, may God bless him, strives after them and realizes them to the extent of his ability; if until the end of his days he maintains unwavering devotion to the example of the two patriarchs and follows in all things in their footsteps, convinced that therein lie his salvation and wealth; and if he delights in performing what is prescribed and incumbent just as hypocrites and transgressors delight in their evil deeds—whoever observes all this within himself may be confident of attaining bliss and felicity in the afterlife.

But such a state can be seen in only a few: those who call themselves to account before they are called to account, who strive every day to perform all the prescribed acts, and who flee from everything capable of violating what was ordained for the religious community toward what is incumbent and prescribed.

A **hypocrite** (*munāfiq*) is one whose lying lips utter something entirely different from what is in his heart.

The hypocrite says what he thinks constitutes human merit or is regarded as a virtue distinguishing him from ignorant and foolish people.

Yet in his heart he holds concerning God a confession entirely unlike what he professes verbally, thinking that obedience means weakness and modesty means humiliation, and recognizing these as natural traits and characteristics of the sensory soul.

Thus hypocrites strive in every way to violate the commands and prohibitions of God's religion because these do not suit them.

Their souls are subordinate to their mixture and stand at the sensory degree, at its very summit, striving to impose their domination upon others, enslave people for the fulfillment of their desires, and acquire riches, pleasures, and a better life.

They are proud and arrogant, preferring pleasure and worldly abiding.

Among the people of worship they associate only with those who seek the same things and join them in this—other misguided transgressors, devils, schemers, and the like, who violate the ordinances of the community and mock its people.

All of them, obedient to passion, seek in one way or another to pluck the prematurely ripened fruits of this lower world.

But their evil deeds return upon them and act upon their souls.

As though in eclipse, they cannot see true goods.

The Most High said concerning them:

"What they have acquired has rusted over their hearts."

The more such deeds they commit under the guidance of passions, the deeper they sink into evil.

It resembles a hasty and negligent geometer whose work becomes increasingly disordered the farther he proceeds because he pays no attention to the proper proportion and correspondence of one thing to another.

Disease afflicts their souls.

They delight in what they do under the impulse of whim and caprice, just as someone afflicted by disease or fever often likes precisely what harms him.

Submitting to their nature, they crave what brings no benefit and regard what destroys them as good.

It is like a person with indigestion desiring to eat more, or someone with dropsy suffering continual thirst and regarding water as good and longing for it although it harms him, or one with an inflamed spleen who cannot restrain himself from sweets, and so forth.

The religious deeds to which they are summoned are no longer sweet to them; their hearts do not incline toward them.

Following passions and refusing to receive prophetic guidance, they have acquired something that has corrupted their faculty of imagination.

Honey likewise seems bitter rather than sweet to a patient dominated by bile, because his mixture is corrupted and he refuses to listen to physicians.

Such people are to the people of the two forms of worship what tares are to wheat or poisonous weeds to crops.

They bring corruption and weakness and therefore should be avoided.

The ruler (*sā'is*) has the right to expel them.

If that is impossible, then while awaiting an opportune time he may in one way or another conciliate them—as the Prophet, may God bless him, did—so that they cease spreading corruption.

Their souls, having rebelled against good and virtuous people, are poor and deprived of good.

They act contrary to God's commands, remain lodged within their bodies, and continue upon the same initial degree in which they began.

When the body dies they fall into the narrow places of requital and endure ceaseless torment and transformations until they reach the final limit of Gehenna and become maximally distant from pleasures.

What happens to them afterward lies within God's will.

The **transgressors** (*fāsiqūn*) are those who, after knowing God, turn away from Him.

Frivolity prevents them from understanding that the two forms of worship are the true faith.

Then they abandon the divine commands altogether and, departing from them, begin to act according to the dictates of passion.

For while the soul remains in this lower world it can, through the two forms of worship, make its own essence healthy and thereby find delight both now and later.

Or it may surrender itself to base inclinations, following passions determined by its mixture, and become ill.

Then everything connected with religion becomes unpleasant and burdensome to it, just as a sick person dislikes the taste of medicine.

It finds delight instead in whatever its passion draws it toward, just as a patient finds palatable everything harmful to him and, yielding to his inclination, is punished for his self-will.

Thus through their faith such persons first acquire one form, and afterward, when they depart from faith, another.

But the essence of the soul is one, and two contrary forms, as we have already said, tear it apart.

In this way transgressors suffer indescribable torment.

Those who **lead others astray** (*muḍillūn*) are those who themselves have departed from the path and, driven by self-interest, turn their followers away from God's people.

The torment, humiliation, punishment, and eternal suffering they endure in the afterlife cannot be described.

They may, however, be compared with the feverish patient of whom we spoke when describing the delights of the pious.

They live in the same country, breathe the same air, drink the same water, and have the same sovereign.

The sovereign, moved by compassion, sends them a physician and commands them to take from his hand medicine specially prepared for them.

But one man violates the instructions and fails to observe the diet.

The medicine therefore not only fails to help him but harms him.

As the illness grows, it breaks out externally and he develops smallpox.

Previously cheerful and rosy-cheeked, he becomes despondent and blackened; his flourishing appearance changes into a repulsive countenance.

Formerly physically strong, his skin is now cracked.

Formerly always active, he is now bound by illness.

Instead of a pleasant fragrance he emits a stench.

Formerly clean and neat, he now exudes filth.

Once loved by everyone, he is now despised by all, and even those close to him withdraw.

Formerly finding nothing difficult, he is now incapable of anything.

All this is because his skin has swollen with purulent sores and because he followed the path of the wretched destined for destruction.

The light in his eyes has gone out; his nostrils and throat are blocked; his soul is constricted.

He cannot take food.

His body has become putrid and its odor changed.

He wants to speak with those near and dear to him and complain of his illness, but cannot because disease has destroyed all his bodily instruments.

He wishes to ask for water but cannot, because his limbs no longer obey him.

Then he begins to regret and repent that he did not obey the physician and despised all his advice.

He swears to himself that if he recovers he will never again disobey him—but the time when he should have followed the advice has already passed, and he failed to do so.

Now he reaps the fruits of his deeds.

Every joint, vein, and limb torments him day and night.

When everyone else sleeps, he cannot sleep and cries out from pain.

He will endure this torment until rivers flow backward.

He can neither die and find rest nor recover and be freed of illness.

His torment becomes still more unbearable when he raises his eyes and sees healthy people looking down upon him from lofty chambers.

How bitterly he then grieves over his condition—may God preserve us from such a state.

"The inhabitants of the Fire will call to the inhabitants of Paradise…"

Can any other affliction compare with this?

No, by God.

Yet his path leads to even worse suffering—to deadly thirst and the sting of scorpions.

Nevertheless, these good and evil souls do **not** enter Paradise and the Fire immediately upon separation from their bodies.

The Most High said:

"'These are only words.' Before them is a barrier (*barzakh*) until the day on which they are resurrected."

Thus they remain in the **barzakh**, which is their place of gathering.

The barzakh is the boundary separating Paradise from Gehenna.

Because it is the highest place in the world of Nature, it is called the **Heights**.

Thus they stand upon the Heights and wait until all the cycles are completed and the religious luminaries have finished acting upon the souls that come into existence in the world of Nature age after age, down to the final promised day.

While standing there they already know within their own essences whether they have attained reward and salvation or whether destruction and death await them.

This is expressed by the Most High beginning with the words:

“Upon the Heights are men who recognize each by their marks”

down to:

“Our Lord, do not place us among the wrongdoing people.”

The men upon the Heights are the *ḥudūd* and other people who remain in the barzakh, not yet having entered Paradise but desiring it.

Likewise the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, said:

“After the dead man is buried, he will be called to account. If he held to divine unity and obeyed God and His Messenger, the gates of Paradise will be opened before him. His deeds performed in worship of the Most High will appear before him and become a good companion in the confinement of the grave, informing him that he is saved. He will remain in peace and repose until the Day of Resurrection, certain that Paradise has been prepared for him, and he will be led there after resurrection and judgment. But if he was an associator, disobedient and arrogant, and knew no proper measure in worship, the gates of Hell will be opened before him. His evil deeds will become a savage beast that tears him and fills him with terror. Thus in solitude and trembling he will remain until the Day of Resurrection, knowing that Gehenna has been prepared for him; he will be resurrected and conveyed to Hell on the Day of Judgment,”

the day of reckoning for former deeds.

A sensible analogy for the condition of these obedient and self-willed souls is the following.

Imagine a man whom a ruler has appointed to govern his lands and to whom he has entrusted an army, servants, wealth, and weapons.

He is commanded to preserve the wealth, servants, and subjects, to do nothing with them contrary to the ruler’s commands, to use them only for the benefit of the kingdom and its subjects, and to restrain oppressors and sowers of corruption for the sake of general security and greater welfare.

If he fulfills what was commanded and proves a good servant, the ruler promises to shower him with favors and bring him near.

If he disobeys and acts badly, punishment is inevitable.

Suppose this man acts as commanded, pleases the ruler in everything, obeys him in all things, and thinks of nothing else.

Then one day the ruler summons him.

While traveling to him the man reflects upon everything he has done and finds nothing that does not promise him good, console him, and warm his heart.

He knows that he performed good deeds worthy of the ruler and is confident that he will be requited with many benefits.

He can therefore rejoice and exult even though he has not yet been brought near to his ruler.

But if he failed to perform what was prescribed, disobeyed the ruler, squandered the wealth entrusted to him for purposes other than the ruler's pleasure, associated with wicked people, robbed and stole, performed deceptive marvels, or fell into evil heresies, then he proceeds to the ruler's summons with a heavy heart.

He understands everything and realizes that for all his deeds he deserves nothing but punishment and the ruler's harsh chastisement.

He is certain that torment, to the joy of his enemies, cannot be avoided.

There is nowhere for him to escape: the ruler has taken possession of him exactly as he is.

He trembles with fear and terror even though he has not yet reached his ruler and none of the threatened punishments has yet befallen him.

He remains in this condition until the day on which punishment is fulfilled and severe torment overtakes him.

Thus souls that have left their bodies—which are their external forms (*shakl*)—and left behind the actions through which they bring benefit or harm to their bodies know their own condition.

They remain in the barzakh so that the **new creation** may be completed: so that souls like them may arrive from the natural world, and the teaching, form-imprinting, eye-opening influence of the *ḥudūd* may be completed upon all of them, so that together they may be gathered at the appointed time of the known day—the day when the seventh cycle is completed and its master places his seal upon the natural world.

The Most High said concerning this:

"Say: indeed, the former and the latter will be gathered together for the appointed time of a known day."

"Say" is the command of the Most High transmitted through the angels brought near.

He means: explain and teach that both former and latter will be gathered—that is, both the first, from the preceding cycles, and the last, who will enter the cosmos in the remaining major and minor cycles.

“They will be gathered”—by those whom We support with Our Spirit and who direct the summons toward them, they will be taught that which gathers them into a single worship and confession of divine unity.

“For the appointed time of a known day”—that is, toward the master of the seventh cycle, who is the last day, the known and proclaimed day.

Then all the souls that have existed will together constitute the form of something like **one individual**, within which they are like many members.

Each soul nevertheless has its own individual essential form, and through the gathering of all souls this total form is completed.

This is the **constitution of the afterlife** and the **new creation**, just as the completeness of a bodily individual is attained through the totality of all its members.

Then, through the resurrection of the master of the seventh cycle, the Spirit of Holiness will flow within them, and together they will become capable of leaving the constrictions of bodies and rising above them, just as the spirit of sensory capacity begins to flow in the embryo when it passes beyond the confinement of the womb.

Then the seventh cycle will be completed.

Then knowledge will pass into actuality—the knowledge that is authority and power, without which corporeal limits cannot be transcended.

The Most High said:

“O company of jinn and mankind! Pass beyond, if you can, the regions of the heavens and the earth. You cannot pass beyond except with authority.”

“O people of knowledge and practitioners of both forms of worship, outward and inward—pass beyond, if you can”: leave your bodies if you are able.

“You cannot pass beyond”: you can leave them only collectively, through the power acquired by means of the *ḥudūd* and through the resurrection and actualization of the master of the seventh cycle.

For transcendence is impossible for individual souls in isolation.

It is possible only to all together and collectively, because in the other constitution and the new creation souls resemble the members through which the corporeal form—the initial constitution—exists.

For perfection they need others like themselves.

Individually they attain not universal perfection, by which everything contained in being can be encompassed, but only partial perfection.

Only through them all is the totality completed.

The scales of religion bear witness to this, and it is confirmed by the nature of the initial constitution concerning which the Lord of the worlds said:

“You already know the initial constitution.”

By this He means that the bodily individual (*shakhṣ*), which is the initial existent, is created through the composition and combination of many members.

Some are subtle and provide the soul with more sensation; others are dense and provide less.

It is not created all at once but over a period of time, so that one member precedes another in being.

The heart, for example, precedes the other members, which follow it.

Yet a member that precedes the others cannot enter the sensible world alone, because without the other members like itself through which its fullness is attained, it cannot remain in being.

Nor can the spirit flow except within what is perfect.

This is why an animal is unlike a plant, in which one member can become connected with another and become like it, for reasons already explained, so that the form of the member that came into being before another preserves its embodied existence through the plant-form it has acquired until all members achieve completion.

Creation in time, however, occurs over several months and days.

Throughout this period, day by day, God through the powers of the celestial luminaries acting upon the initial constitution, by the will of the Most High, acts upon it so that its perfection may be completed and prepares it for the arising of the sensory spirit.

Then, all at once and as a whole, it emerges into the air, sensation arises within it, and it lives and senses.

“So why do you not understand?”—do you not know this?

The same applies to souls performing deeds in every cycle.

Whatever each acquired and attained, however obedient it was, and whatever its deeds were, such will be its position.

Those who adhered more strictly than others to all prescriptions will resemble the subtle paired principal organs that sense more strongly and experience greater pleasure.

Those below them in obedience will occupy corresponding positions.

After separating from their bodies, souls remain in the barzakh, as the Most High said:

"'These are only words.' Before them is a barzakh until the day on which they are resurrected."

The barzakh is their place of gathering.

Each of the *ḥudūd* of the Most High gathers, through his summons and teaching, during his cycle everyone who follows his affair and thirsts for the wisdom he has brought.

Likewise many senses and members are gathered in the head; the body gathers many members, all corresponding to what is gathered in the head; and hands and feet are instruments, each of which contains members analogous to those of the others.

All are gathered together within a single bodily form.

This perhaps explains the joyful promise announced in the introduction to our book to one who reads it as a religious work.

This is why our masters—may God bless them—said that a man strives to be with those whom he loves.

And the Prophet, may God bless and greet him, said that on the Day of Resurrection every master of a cycle will bring all who followed him in that cycle: the Prophet, Legatees, Imams, missionaries, and good followers.

This is why the Most High said:

"There will be a day when We summon every people with their leaders."

That is: to the master of the seventh cycle—who is one of God's days, established and supported by Us—We shall summon all followers together with their teachers for reckoning and response: what did they do in fulfillment of the commands of the Most High?

He explained the same thing in speaking of Abraham, peace be upon him:

"When Abraham said: My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead."

Here, through the example of what the Most High said concerning Abraham, the Speaker teaches the Foundation how souls live and why they follow him.

"When Abraham said"—when Abraham, interpreted here as the Foundation, said:

"My Lord, show me"—that is, he said to the Speaker who had nurtured him and entrusted to him the affair of the inward summons and the teaching of worship to the people:

Teach me "how You give life to the dead"—show me how to enliven dead sensory souls for Truth, how to transfer those souls from their natural degree to the degree of the angels, where they will taste eternal life.

And he replied:

“Do you not believe?”

That is: have you not yet known the truth of that toward which I directed you?

Abraham replied:

“Indeed I do, but only so that my heart may be at rest.”

That is: no, I believe, but I ask only so that greater clarity may give rest to my soul.

He said:

“Take four birds.”

That is: rely upon the four laws I gathered for you within the two forms of worship.

These are: the teaching of divine unity, through which the soul acquires substantial life and abiding existence; action according to the legally prescribed rites of worship of God, through which it acquires moral virtues and is freed from natural vices; knowledge of the ranks of God’s *ḥudūd* and people analogous to them, which assimilates the soul to the actual Intellects—that is, the angels—and enables it to imprint their forms; and exhortation (*ʿiẓa*), which kindles in the soul yearning for the divine and for the *ḥudūd* of God’s religion, so that its religious profession becomes easy.

By patiently fulfilling all this, the soul is resurrected so as to become reunited with the kingdom of Holiness and acquire eternal life there.

“Make them familiar to yourself.”

Combine these four laws when teaching, awakening, and acting.

“Then place portions of them upon the mountains.”

Teach these laws to every missionary and *ḥujja* so that they may know and perform them.

“Then call them.”

Address these souls with exhortation so that they yearn.

For when dead sensory souls learn these laws and act according to them, so that desire awakens within them, their nature and innate disposition are transformed and they become like angels, becoming truly your followers, together with you and following after you.

“They will come swiftly to you.”

They will hasten passionately toward you because they profess what you profess and their form has become your form.

They have become homogeneous with you and therefore hasten to reunite with you.

“And know that…”

The Prophet whom God has appointed in His stead—the one who is the heart of these existents, calling them and preaching humility and worship—

“…is mighty and wise,”

that is, powerful as wisdom requires and wise in his deeds.

Thus all will gather in the barzakh and remain there until the Day of Resurrection.

This barzakh is the place in the macrocosm nearest to the kingdom of Holiness, which lies beyond it, just as the womb, within which the embryo remains until its creation is complete, is the place in the microcosm nearest to the macrocosm outside it.

Furthermore, souls after death do **not** pass into another body, as we demonstrated in the treatise *Instructions to the Teacher and the Disciple*.

It is well known that conjunction with another body and passage into it are impossible for them.

As already noted, those who maintain transmigration of souls believe that the soul possesses being prior to its body, and we have shown why.

We may summarize the matter as follows.

The soul is either a **substance** or an **accident**.

If it is an accident, then by the definition of accident it disappears when that in which it exists disappears and leaves the arena of being as soon as its substratum disintegrates.

Thus, in that case, souls are destroyed with the dissolution of their bodily forms and the dissolution of the bodies’ mixtures.

If souls are destroyed when the body through which they had being disappears, then they cannot pass into another body, since such passage would require their essence to remain, whereas that essence has been destroyed through the destruction of its receptacle.

If the soul is a substance, it is either a **potential substance** or an **actual substance**.

If it is a potential substance and the form of that of which it is the potentiality is absent, so that the substance possesses nothing through which it could be actual, then it is not actual in a way that would preserve it essentially.

Like an accident, it requires something through which it may exist and possess being.

It therefore resembles accidents, which do not exist through themselves and disappear when their bearer disappears because they possess within themselves nothing through which they might continue to exist.

If the soul resembles accidents that do not subsist through themselves and is destroyed when that through which it exists is destroyed, it cannot transmigrate into other bodies.

If it is an actual substance, then it is either an **initial substance**, existing by God's will in the kingdom of Holiness through Creation or Emanation, or a **final substance**, existing in the world of Nature through the fathers who bestow instruction and acquisition.

But it cannot be an initial substance existing by God's will in the kingdom of Holiness through Creation or Emanation.

For the existents of the kingdom of Holiness, by virtue of their primordial endowment with the self-sufficient perfection of life, power, and knowledge, cannot undergo change or transformation—through which they would lose their perfection, which consists in actuality—nor become connected with bodies.

Such connection belongs to the definition of what is potential, not to what is primordially actual and therefore self-subsistent.

Since the soul cannot, as we have shown, be an initial substance existing by God's will in the kingdom of Holiness through Creation or Emanation, it follows—since it exists through its body—that it is a **final substance of the world of Nature**, acquiring actuality through support, by God's will, from the spiritual fathers, as well as through instruction and acquisition.

If it is established that it is a final substance acquiring actuality through acquisition by means of the fathers of support, then that through which it became an actual substance will prevent it from becoming connected with another body.

For it is already connected with that through which it became actual, and that higher source draws it toward itself because it is more appropriate to the soul than natural mixtures and bodies, which are farther from it and less similar to it.

If this prevents the soul from passing into another body because it is already connected with that through which it acquired actuality and rose to the degree of perfection, then conjunction with another body is impossible.

How indeed could an actual date palm become a date-stone again, or the actual corporeality of a human being become once more his form in semen, even if we imagined it remaining unchanged without any transformation?

No, this is impossible.

The soul becomes connected with that which gave it perfection and resembles the constitution of its own essence.

And when the final constitution is completed—which is the Day of Resurrection—eternal life flows within souls.

This eternal life stands to natural life—that is, to the essence of the soul—as the sensory spirit stands to the body.

After acquiring that which gives it this life, the soul, once separated from its body, forgets those forms of knowledge and actions connected with the care of the body and belonging to the vegetative and sensory soul.

For the cause sustaining the existence of these actions and forms of knowledge—namely **desire**—has disappeared.

As we have already said, desire proceeds from need and deprivation.

Through perfection and freedom from need, desire disappears because it existed precisely on account of need.

There then remains only the desire belonging to the soul's own essence, directed toward Him who is God, besides whom there is no god, without anything connected with its body and its interests.

In this it resembles the supra-natural Intellects, which, in love of God's glory and majesty—neither of which they or the soul can encompass—offer praise and glorification, rejoice, and proclaim His holiness.

The soul then no longer performs actions whose existence depended upon the desire that disappeared with the disappearance of its bodily instruments.

Nor does it remember anything concerning its body after entering the kingdom of Eternity, the kingdom toward which it had been directed and with which it has become connected.

Only those actions remain which, as we have said, pertain to its own essence.

In this respect the soul resembles a sailor aboard a ship.

All the sailor's bodily interests are connected with the ship.

The ship he governs resembles the body that the soul guards and governs, while the sea resembles this lower world.

As long as the ship is at sea, the sailor must preserve it and do everything necessary for its safety, both externally—pitching its sides and avoiding dangerous places that are frightening to approach, together with everything else that might damage it—and internally—pumping out water or leaving it when appropriate, and laying up whatever may be needed to keep the ship sound.

While awaiting deliverance from the captivity of the sea, he takes care to preserve his own strength through food and drink.

He does all this not for the ship's sake but for his own, so that he himself may not perish.

He continues in this way until deliverance comes and he leaves the ship for dry land.

After leaving the ship, among his former actions he continues only those connected with himself and not with the ship.

He forgets what he did merely to preserve the ship—lowering and raising sails, pitching its sides, pumping out water, caring for the safety of its equipment and structures, replacing rotten boards, and making repairs.

Likewise the soul while in this lower world preserves its body and does everything necessary to sustain it both externally and internally until it parts from it.

At the same time it constantly trains itself through the two forms of worship, knowledge and action, which pertain solely to its own essence.

When it parts from the body, all actions connected with bodily interests and belonging to the vegetative and sensory soul disappear.

What remains is that which belongs to its essence: **delight in the eternal things whose forms have been imprinted within it**, in accordance with its perfection.

Since all the former things disappear, the soul no longer remembers anything concerning this lower world, because all of that was worldly and natural, whereas the soul has now risen above and transcended it.

Similarly, an infant that has left its mother's womb and now eats, drinks, and enjoys natural pleasures through instruments prepared in the darkness of the womb does not remember what nourished it within that confinement.

That former state now appears insignificant to it.

The instrument that nourished it there—the umbilical cord—has been cast aside and replaced with other instruments and senses, and it now enjoys something entirely different, that which is prepared for it here.

Likewise the soul abandons the actions and forgets the forms of knowledge through which in this lower world it guarded the body it has now left.

It performs only those actions proceeding from the perfection of its essence—praising and magnifying God, as we have said.

Unlike the supra-natural and incorporeal Intellects, the soul cannot act upon that which is "other than God"—that is, upon the existents of the world of Nature.

While it belonged to that world, such action was given to it so that it might increase its multiplicity, acquire substantiality, and be rectified.

But now, having attained salvation and, together with the other souls of the world of Nature, reached the desired limit, it is sufficient for it to be such a limit near the first limit, becoming an abiding substance and enjoying the fruits of its acquisition and its correspondence with those Intellects.

This correspondence belongs to it **in essence, but not in act**.

It is not given the power to act upon the world of Nature, as is given to the Intellects, because the **first limit**—those Intellects—is directed toward the second limit, acting upon it and giving it its second perfection.

The limit constituted by the perfected speaking/rational soul, however, is directed toward the first limit, drawing perfection from it and receiving its action.

The difference between them is that the perfected speaking/rational soul acts only upon itself, whereas the Created and Emanated Intellects act both upon themselves and upon another.

These souls are permitted to attain the rank of the Intellects only **in essence, not in act**.

All this is confirmed by the scales of religion.

Since the Prophet—may God bless him and his family—turns toward his Legatee, who is the goal of his instruction, while the Legatee turns toward the Prophet, peace be upon them both, receiving knowledge from him; and since the Legatee becomes like the Prophet in essence but cannot become like him in acting upon souls and summoning them; and since what the Legatee receives from the Prophet constitutes for him a limit at which he stands, receiving and imprinting everything proceeding from the Prophet and thereby becoming ordered—it follows that the speaking/rational soul, after leaving its body, acts only within its own essence as determined by the perfection it acquired.

Through this it becomes ordered and corresponds to the essences of the Intellects in everything except their actions.

It is not given the power to act upon another or to reach the rank of those Intellects in acting upon another, because it is the **second limit**, receiving its perfection from the first limit.

Glory be to God, who illumined our intellect with the light of His guiding *ḥudūd* and opened our eyes through the teaching of the Imams who fulfill His command—may God bless them all.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian.

Footnotes

[1] “Initial creation” is an allusion to Qurʾān 50:15; “the first constitution” is an allusion to Qurʾān 56:62.

[1] Qurʾān 31:28.

[1] Qurʾān 22:5.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 56:62.

[1] Ibid.

[1] ***Dahriyya*** (from *dahr*, “eternity”) — a general designation for adherents of doctrines that denied the creation of the world in time.

[1] Qurʾān 40:15.

[1] “…by His command…” — in the original, *min amrihi*, literally “by/from His command.” The word *amr* means “command,” but can also mean “something,” “affair,” or “thing”; accordingly, *min amrihi* may also be understood as “from that which He has brought into being,” that is, from the First Existent. On the identification of *amr* with the First Existent, see also p. 252.

[1] An allusion to the verse:

“The trumpet will be sounded, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will fall as one struck dead by lightning…”

(Qurʾān 39:68.)

“the trumpet will be sounded” literally means “it will be blown into the trumpet”; the verb used here is *nafakha*, which can also mean “to breathe [a spirit] into.” This allows al-Kirmānī to connect the verse with his discussion of “breathing.” See also notes 57 and 58 to VII, 14.

[1] Qurʾān 62:2.

[1] Qurʾān 2:213.

[1] Qurʾān 2:56.

[1] Qurʾān 2:55.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 2:55.

[1] Qurʾān 2:56.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 23:101.

[1] Qurʾān 78:18.

[1] Qurʾān 78:19.

[1] Qurʾān 78:20.

[1] Qurʾān 39:68.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 39:69.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 3:179.

[1] Qurʾān 101:4–5.

[1] Qurʾān 99:6–7.

[1] Qurʾān 15:92–93.

[1] Qurʾān 27:84.

[1] Qurʾān 7:6–8.

[1] Qurʾān 83:18.

[1] Qurʾān 83:7.

[1] The version mentioned by al-Kirmānī is absent from the nine canonical collections of the Sunni tradition. The closest version is found in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, no. 17872.

[1] Qurʾān 17:14.

[1] Qurʾān 17:14.

[1] Qurʾān 7:52.

[1] Qurʾān 7:52.

[1] Qurʾān 7:52.

[1] Qurʾān 7:52.

[1] Qurʾān 7:52.

[1] An allusion to Qurʾānic descriptions of Paradise; see Qurʾān 56:11–24; 88:15; 18:31; 36:56; 37:48, and elsewhere.

[1] Boiling water and foul liquid are described as the drink and food of sinners in Hell; see Qurʾān 6:70; 69:36, and elsewhere.

[1] The original has the dual form *shahādatān*, that is, "the two testimonies of faith." What is meant are the two parts of the single formula:

"I bear witness that there is no god but God; I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God."

[1] See note 2 to I, 2.

[1] Qurʾān 54:54–55.

[1] Qurʾān 54:52.

[1] Qurʾān 54:53.

[1] Qurʾān 54:54.

[1] Qurʾān 54:55.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ḥadīth; see note 3 to I, 5.

[1] An allusion to the verse:

“He [Muḥammad] saw him [the archangel Gabriel] another time, by the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary, near which is the Garden of Abode.”

(Qurʾān 53:13–15.)

The **Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary** is a Qurʾānic symbol of the furthest limits of divine knowledge disclosed to human beings.

[1] An allusion to Qurʾān 53:15.

[1] Qurʾān 83:18.

[1] Qurʾān 83:27–28. *Tasnīm* is the name of a spring in Paradise; literally, “elevated” or “filled.”

[1] Qurʾān 83:19.

[1] Qurʾān 83:20.

[1] Qurʾān 83:21.

[1] Qurʾān 83:22.

[1] Qurʾān 102:8. The semantic emphasis of the Qurʾānic context is rendered more precisely by Sablukov as: “On that day you will be called to account for your attachment to pleasures.” Since al-Kirmānī’s interpretation diverges from this contextual meaning, I have given a more neutral translation.

[1] See note 2 to IV, 2.

[1] Qurʾān 83:23.

[1] Qurʾān 83:24.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 83:25.

[1] Qurʾān 83:26.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 83:27–28.

[1] Qurʾān 20:9–10. The words *quds*, “holiness,” and *qabas*, “firebrand, glowing coal,” are close in sound and spelling. Moreover, the verb *qabasa* can mean “to learn” or “to acquire knowledge,” and it is precisely knowledge that leads to the world of Holiness.

[1] Qurʾān 28:41. “Leaders” is literally **“imams.”** By citing this verse, al-Kirmānī once again confirms his view that the leaders and followers of non-Ismaili doctrines are destined for Hell.

[1] Qurʾān 83:7–10.

[1] “Manifest loss” is an allusion to two Qurʾānic verses, 22:11 and 39:15, which speak of people who lose both this world and the afterlife, as well as their own souls on the Day of Resurrection.

[1] Qurʾān 7:44.

[1] Ḥadīth.

[1] “Such” refers to the weakness and abasement characteristic of the soul’s lower, sensory degree, in contrast to the power and exaltation characteristic of souls that have attained their highest degree and become supra-natural Intellects.

[1] Qurʾān 83:14.

[1] Al-Kirmānī means the ruler of the Ismaili community.

[1] “The inhabitants of the Fire will call to the inhabitants of Paradise: Pour down upon us some water, or something of that with which God has provided you! They will say: God has forbidden both to the unbelievers” (Qurʾān 7:50).

[1] Qurʾān 23:100. The verse begins:

“Only when death comes to one of them will he say: ‘My Lord! Send me back [to life].’ ‘Never! These are only words…’”

[1] An allusion to Qurʾān 7:46, 48.

[1] Qurʾān 7:46.

[1] Qurʾān 7:47. Al-Kirmānī omits the words:

“‘Peace be upon you!’ those who have not yet entered Paradise, though they greatly desire it, will call to its inhabitants. And when their eyes are turned toward the inhabitants of the Fire, they will say…”

[1] Ḥadīth.

[1] Qurʾān 56:49–50.

[1] “The constitution of the afterlife” is an allusion to Qurʾān 29:20; “new creation” is an allusion to 13:5; 14:19; 32:10; 34:7, and elsewhere.

[1] Qurʾān 55:33.

[1] “The other constitution” is an allusion to Qurʾān 53:47; “the initial constitution” is an allusion to 56:62.

[1] Qurʾān 56:62.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 23:100.

[1] “Good followers” — al-Kirmānī means ordinary believers who occupy no formal rank in the hierarchy.

[1] Qurʾān 17:71. “…with their teachers” — the original literally has **“with their imam,”** that is, the imam of each group of people.

[1] Qurʾān 2:260.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 2:260. Al-Kirmānī applies the epithets **“Mighty”** and **“Wise”** to the Prophet—the Speaker—whereas in the Qurʾān they refer directly to God.

STREET FOURTEEN

On the human soul as speaking/rational and heaven-supported; on how it becomes conjoined with the Spirit of Holiness, why not all souls are supported at all times, and for what reason; on inspired revelation (*waḥy*) by which the soul is supported and what it is; on how it becomes conjoined with resurrected souls, whether it becomes conjoined with them when they occupy the degree of sensation, imagination, or the speaking/rational soul, and into what kinds it is divided; on the miracles manifested by it, how these differ from the tricks of wonder-workers, and why wonder-working can be understood and learned whereas the aforesaid miracles cannot be understood or learned through one's own efforts; on the virtues gathered by the supported soul, its actions and what it strives toward; on the companions surrounding it, their ranks, and the rank of the one who succeeds it in preserving the community and what is bestowed upon him by the Most High; on the number of the cycles and their masters through whom the new creation is completed; on the rank of the master of the seventh cycle and his actions; on how the completion of the cycles is known; and also on the arguments of the philosophers concerning the soul's acquisition of virtue and their inadequacy

We say: everything attains its fullness when it reaches its final goal, and that goal is reached when it acquires the form of the primordial thing that serves as the sustaining cause of its being.

For every existent has two limits in being: an initial limit and a final limit; and whatever the form of the first, initial limit was, such too will be the form of the second. This is evident from sensible existents.

If, for example, the first limit of a plant's shoot was wheat, its second limit will likewise be wheat; if it was barley, its second limit will likewise be barley. Among animals, if the first limit is man, the second limit will also be man; if the first limit is a horse, the second will also be a horse.

And if we take the corporeal form of man, its first limit should be called dust, and its second limit is likewise dust, for to dust it returns.

So it is with every existent without exception.

Since the being of human souls proceeds from that which precedes them in being, and since they are at the same time the final limit of existents, so that after them there is nothing for which they themselves would serve as the proximate cause of being—as is the case with the existents preceding them, which are the proximate cause of their being—it follows that their limit among the causes of their being and sustaining causes is that to which all existents ascend, namely the **First Existent**.

If the First Existent is their initial limit and in its perfection and createdness is Intellect—an Intellect that is life possessing knowledge, power, and essential actuality that excludes any

need for another in order for its act to be complete—then those human souls that become like that limit are likewise Intellect, although of a different rank.

The former is Created, whereas the latter is brought forth from Nature by the **second resurrection** and thereby constitutes the second limit.

For limits become conjoined and correspond both in essence and through those meanings by virtue of which, as we have shown, they are limits of that which has limits, and they pass into one another.

If the second limit were not like the first, so that the first could become conjoined and correspond with it and thereby the essence of the existent be completed, then it would not be a limit at all, nor would the first limit become conjoined with it.

The heaven-supported soul—as life possessing power, knowledge, and actuality—is endowed with the same virtues as the First Existent, which is perfect and complete.

That through which its essence became substantial resurrected it by the second resurrection.

It is self-sufficient through the effusions it has received, perfect and actual, needing no natural assistant in order to perform its actions, and complete, having after itself nothing of which it would be the cause of being.

It is the **second final goal**, the limit beyond which there is no other limit except the First.

Being the completion of the existent and its second limit, it reaches the first limit and becomes conjoined with it.

The conjunction of these two limits proceeds from both, not from one alone.

The actions that constitute the soul of the existent exist through the first limit, and the second limit belongs among them, even though its being is mediated.

For the first limit, being initial, acts; while the second limit, being the final goal, receives.

By receiving the action of the first limit, the second becomes correlated and conjoined with it.

Thus the second limit becomes conjoined with the first because it receives its actions essentially.

These actions are lights that shine within the second limit in such a way that it comes into correspondence and conjunction with the first.

Were it not for this providence—were the powers and lights of the world of Holiness not to shine throughout natural existence, selecting from it what is most worthy and becoming conjoined with it so as to improve and rectify the rest—the soul would not become the second limit, endowed, upon reaching the limit of its perfection, with independent substantial existence, for in itself it is potential.

The soul is therefore incapable of this union unless it comes to it from above.

For, as we have said, the soul exists through many different things and can consequently attain actuality only through the assistance of another.

This very cause—its potentiality and its need for an assistant in order to become self-subsistent, the basis of which we have already explained—is why not all souls in the world of Nature are heaven-supported.

Those souls that receive support and are resurrected come into being because the motion of the celestial bodies becomes joined with the radiant lights of the world of Holiness—which are the sustaining cause of all existents—in accordance with what has been predetermined for natural and divine effusions.

Concerning this the Most High said:

"Then We opened the gates of heaven with pouring rain … and the waters met according to a matter already decreed."

Through this a noble soul comes into being.

Although it belongs to the kingdom of Nature and exists within it, it is felicitous in its own essence.

No natural inclination or impulse shakes it or bends it aside; rather, by its very nature it is directed toward the good, because its being arose from that which came from the kingdom of Holiness, becoming conjoined with it in the proper order and for the sake of assistance.

This happens only exceedingly rarely, once over a long interval of time, in accordance with what the All-Knowing and Wise Most High has predetermined.

Likewise a wise and skillful geometer may arrange matters so that from the many motions of different bodies there arises one motion of a single body, capable of moving a weight that the many bodies individually could not move.

But when their motions are combined, they move this body that receives them all, and through them it moves that enormous weight.

The more numerous and varied those motions are, and the more numerous the bodies producing them, the more powerful the motion that gathers them together, and the longer the time required for its formation.

Nature itself assists these noble souls in receiving the influences of the principle of their being.

They become so excellent and well-proportioned that the divine lights—which are the **Spirit of Holiness**—become conjoined with them, for these souls have been freed from everything that would hinder or prevent such reception.

Yet when these souls receive the divine lights in this state of being, they are not at the degree of the speaking/rational soul, as the philosophers suppose when they assert that only the

speaking/rational soul—that is, the acquired intellect (*ʿaql mustafād*)—is capable of receiving the effusion of the Active Intellect (*ʿaql faʿʿāl*).

No: at that time they are at the degree of **sensation and imagination**.

The soul of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, as is known, received support from an early age, before it had been strengthened by exercises and knowledge.

The divine power became conjoined with Jesus, peace be upon him, in infancy.

There are other examples as well.

In general, the divine powers were initially conjoined with the soul of Adam while it occupied the degree of the sensory soul.

All this is well known, so there is scarcely any need to continue enumerating examples.

The reason is that the sensory soul is a **potential intellect**.

Its nobility—that is, its perfection—consists in imprinting and knowing the sensible and in intellecting and thinking the intelligible.

It acquires this nobility when it imagines something, that is, when it thinks forms abstracted from sensibles apprehended by sense.

Imagination assists it both in sensible matters, when it performs deeds and adheres to the ordinances of the Law, and in intelligible matters, when it reflects and draws inferences by balancing these limited things in acquisition and finding their correspondences.

The light and effusion of the supra-natural Intellect entrusted with our world shines throughout all existents.

It encompasses souls as well, guiding them and giving them primordial forms of knowledge, as already discussed.

If its light is diffused throughout existents so that even souls incapable of imprinting intelligible forms and preserving them essentially nevertheless receive knowledge, then souls possessing the power of reception and imprinting are all the more capable of receiving this effusion.

Thus the sensory soul standing at the degree of imagining sensible existents can receive the lights of this effusion.

The supra-natural Intellect entrusted with souls then acts upon it and becomes conjoined with it—as occurred with Adam's soul, to which the Most High alone imparted knowledge—and conveys to it complete, or sometimes partial, intelligible knowledge without any reflection or reasoning on its part.

This is the **highest degree of inspired revelation**, which comes both in true dreams and while awake, as we shall shortly explain.

Thus the lights of the supra-natural Intellects permeate the world of Nature just as the heat arising from the motion of the celestial spheres and the radiation of the luminaries permeate sublunary bodies and dry up the moisture contained within them, or as the Sun's rays, diffused through the air, fill and penetrate it.

The world is filled with these lights, like sparks of fire or melodious sounds.

The pure soul is prepared by Nature—possessing the most balanced constitution of the mixture from which its being arises—to receive them, just as tinder purified of every useless admixture is prepared to receive fire and allows no spark to be lost, or as hearing cured of every disease is prepared to receive sound.

These lights therefore become attached to the pure existent soul just as sparks attach themselves to prepared tinder.

They reach it just as a directed sound reaches hearing, and the soul receives them completely because its very being has prepared it for this.

Inspired revelation comes to the soul in a manner analogous to these lights—which are the Spirit of Holiness—penetrating and flowing within it, as we compared them to sparks entering tinder and sounds entering hearing.

Visiting the soul again and again, revelation repeatedly kindles within it the lights of knowledge.

Revelation comes not only while the soul sleeps and does not employ its senses, but also while it is awake.

Then the soul forgets everything else and apprehends and imprints only what is sent down from the divine world.

Everything that had been hidden suddenly shines within its essence, and it imprints within itself the knowledge it receives just as a mirror receives the forms of every existent placed before it.

Through these acquired powers it grows and becomes stronger, increasing universally, and becomes universal through knowledge received in a non-sensible manner.

The forms of knowledge sent down to it are **universal knowledge**, abstracted from matter, because they proceed from the kingdom of Unity.

They are like that from which bodies composed of prime matter and form proceed, bodies that potentially contain within themselves a multiplicity of sensible things.

Thus within its essence there first shone what God commanded universally when He said:

"Perform the prayer and give the purifying alms,"

and:

“O believers! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you.”

Since this command is given in universal form and therefore requires explanation as to **how, how much, and when** it is to be performed, it compels his followers to reflect upon it and attempt to encompass it.

Then imagination arises.

Imagination undergoes action and itself acts, striving truly to know this.

It becomes sensible and acts upon what exists in the sphere of air—just as previously it had undergone action within the soul through the sphere of air, which carries the forms of diverse existents when the senses, through their surfaces, came into contact with the surface of the air.

It becomes a form abstracted from matter.

The soul preserves it as a form appearing (*mutamaththila*) externally before it, and the form addresses it in speech.

Thus the Most High said in recounting the story of Mary:

“She withdrew from them behind a veil; then We sent to her Our Spirit, and he appeared before her as a perfect man.”

No one except Mary saw him, because he was sent specifically to her; she alone, and no one else, was reflecting and seeking knowledge beyond what she already possessed.

Existents obedient to wisdom—the moving and harmonious heavens, the luminous and varied stars, the air whose parts undulate and move, water and earth with their parts, generated beings in all their forms and species with their voices and actions, and people speaking to one another—address the soul and, by showing to what all limits ascend, speak through their very essences of the firmness of this production.

In this way they explain to the soul what was given universally in inspired revelation and unfold what was closed up within those universals.

Then nothing escapes it, and it knows everything that can be known—**how much, how, and when**.

Thus, even if the other aspect of inspired revelation remains unknown to it, the forms that appear before it (*tamaththul*), together with the forms of knowledge communicated by sensible existents through their speech—even though those existents themselves remain silent—explain what it saw, abstracted from matter, in the revealed vision at the highest degree of inspired revelation while awake.

Anything different from this is either madness or satanic delusion, as is related in the report.

When the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, was terrified by the first inspired revelation to visit him, he rushed in fear to Khadīja, peace be upon her, and told her that a form he had never seen before had appeared before him and commanded:

“Recite!”

The Prophet replied:

“I cannot recite.”

The figure again commanded:

“Recite!”

Again he said:

“I cannot recite.”

Then the figure struck him and said a third time:

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created…”

down to the words:

“…and taught man what he did not know.”

And the Prophet recited it.

Khadīja saw that Muḥammad’s face had turned pale and that he was trembling with fear.

After wrapping him warmly, she went to her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who was known among the Arabs as a diviner, and told him everything.

He replied:

“If matters are truly as you say, then this is prophecy, and the time for a Prophet to appear has come.

Take the matter seriously. If this happens to him again, hold him tightly against your breast and ask whether the vision has disappeared.

If he says no, seat him on your right knee and ask whether he still sees it.

If he answers yes, seat him on your left knee and ask whether it has gone.

If he says no, uncover your head and ask whether he still sees it.

If at that point it disappears, then it is prophecy; but if it remains, it is a satanic delusion.”

Khadīja returned home with this advice.

Soon afterward the vision again visited the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, and in terror he called out to her:

“He has come to me again!”

She then did as Waraqa ibn Nawfal had instructed.

Each time he replied that he could still see the form appearing before him, except on the final occasion, when she removed the covering from her head and wrapped him.

Then the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, stood up and, having understood what had become known to him, proclaimed:

“O you who are wrapped up! Arise and warn!”

He addressed his summons to Khadīja:

“There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is His Messenger.”

And she accepted the summons.

This occurred on a Monday.

On Tuesday he summoned ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib to obedience and acknowledgment.

Muḥammad said to him:

“Say: there is no god but God.”

And he repeated:

“There is no god but God.”

“Now say: Muḥammad is His Messenger.”

ʿAlī replied:

“Very well, but allow me to consult my father.”

Muḥammad said:

“You have already done what was required. Such is your faith.”

ʿAlī replied:

“If this is my faith, then I should have said: Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; I believe in him.”

Therefore, if there exists some form that communicates concerning immaterial powers—so that the situation is the reverse of what occurred when the soul apprehended a form within an

existent by acting upon itself, receiving forms abstracted from their matters, renewing and preserving them within its own essence, and afterward obtaining knowledge by imagining bodies existing outside itself and acting upon them—and if this is an essential form whose speech can be imagined and apprehended, so that the soul can then act essentially through imagination upon the essences of those bodies, derive a form from that action, and imprint it within itself, then this proves the correctness of what is imagined and imprinted.

The matter is exactly analogous to definition.

When one who forms a conception wishes to know something through a definition, he must convert the definition completely.

If the meaning changes upon conversion, the definition is false.

If it admits conversion without the meaning changing, it is correct.

For example, the definition of body is:

“A body is that which possesses length, breadth, and height.”

If converted, it becomes:

“Everything possessing length, breadth, and height is a body.”

The original meaning has not changed and nothing has been lost from it; it is therefore true, and this is indeed the definition of body.

But if we define man by saying:

“Man is a living being,”

then conversion gives:

“Every living being is a man.”

This definition is false, since not every living being is a man: a dog too is living, but is not a man.

If, however, we say:

“Man is a living, speaking/rational, resurrecting being,”

then upon conversion we obtain:

“Every resurrecting, speaking/rational, living being is man.”

This statement is true, because it excludes everything not falling under the definition of man while retaining everything that must belong to it.

And man is speaking/rational because this comes from the Lord of the worlds and from no one else.

For the soul may, under the influence of its mixture, imagine something wholly devoid of truth, as happens with the insane or those possessed by a demon.

It may also, as already explained, imagine something that is true of what has arisen within its essence not from its mixture or from sensible existence, but as a pure meaning apprehended at the highest degree of inspired revelation.

On this basis the heaven-supported Prophet can be distinguished from the madman.

Those who do not understand this and refuse to acknowledge the Prophets, peace be upon them, claim that they are mad.

Having perceived such a universal at the highest degree of inspired revelation, the soul waits for it to be explained in another revelation of a lower degree.

Therefore the Most High said:

“Do not hasten with the Qurʾān before its revelation to you is completed.”

By this He instructed and taught that inspired revelation is given not in one form but in many.

Do not hasten to explain what has been universally sent down to you at the highest degree of inspired revelation

“before its revelation to you is completed,”

that is, until in another of its forms you receive Our command giving you the power to explain and interpret it.

“And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge,”

that is, ask your Lord, to whom all things are subject, to increase your divine knowledge.

Perhaps Muḥammad therefore paused, obeying the instruction and teaching sent down in this verse and waiting until another command came to him, so that he might possess complete certainty.

The Most High said concerning this:

“O Messenger! Convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not, you will not have conveyed His message. God will protect you from the people.”

This demonstrates that inspired revelation had already been sent down to him before he was commanded to communicate it and before protection in doing so was promised.

For He said:

“O Messenger!”—that is, you whom We perfected before the Resurrection, with whom We reunited the Spirit of Holiness, and whom We made a Messenger resurrected at his appointed time—

“Convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord,”

that is, explain to your followers the obligation of obedience to the masters who will come after you, an obligation We sent down to you universally in inspired revelation when We said:

“O believers! Obey God, obey this Messenger, and those vested with authority among you.”

Explain it just as you explained and interpreted the other obligations.

“If you do not, you will not have conveyed His message.”

That is, if you do not explain to your followers who will succeed you after your death—for your successor will preserve the established Order (*amr*), and people will show obedience to him in worship—then this Order will be disrupted, the bonds of the laws of worship through action that you founded and established will disintegrate, and diseases of the soul will spread among the people.

“God will protect you from the people.”

If you fear that people will depart and turn away, do not fear: divine providence will grant you success and preserve your community after you, and no one will be able to hinder you or Us.

Thus the soul supported by inspired revelation, possessing the universal matters (*umūr kulliyya*) sent down to it at the highest degree of revelation, needs—in order to encompass all the “how” and “when” connected with them, and also to know its followers—to see their traces (*āthār*) in existents.

Those traces determine “how many,” “how,” and “when,” and the existents in which they occur are other than what was apprehended in inspired revelation.

These traces illuminate the soul’s path toward that knowledge.

Likewise, when apprehending the intelligible, it needs the light of external intelligible things—which are other than sensibles—to illuminate for it the apprehension of the concrete reality of sensible things, as already explained.

Here it begins with the sensible and ends with the sensible.

In this respect the soul exactly resembles tinder.

Although a spark falling upon tinder possesses both fire and light in itself, the tinder still requires something additional—sulfur, for example, or something similar—if the fire is to become luminous, illuminate its surroundings, and reveal to the eye the true colors and forms of surrounding things.

Likewise sensible existence, containing the traces of action and the manifest traces of prophetic production, when illuminated by the fire of inspired revelation clarifies for the soul the truth of universal forms of knowledge—exactly as sulfur does.

This concerns conjunction with the world of Unity and reception of its influence.

As for **inspired revelation** (*waḥy*), this term denotes that which is known universally, without explanation (*tafsīr*) or detailed articulation (*tafṣīl*).

It is of two kinds:

that which is known directly, and that which is known through a sensible intermediary.

Revelation without a sensible intermediary is the greatest treasure.

It is bestowed upon the soul through a light of the world of Holiness that comes to it through the Angel and that we have compared to a spark of fire.

This is the highest of all degrees of knowledge.

Revelation known through a sensible intermediary is of two kinds.

The first is particular: it is known through a form bestowed exclusively upon the resurrected soul.

That soul alone, and no one else, apprehends the form sensibly.

For example, the Angel may appear to it as a particular form when universal meanings abstracted from matter have been inspired (*waḥy*) into its essence from outside, as we have explained.

The soul then sees the form and speaks with it, while others neither see nor sense it.

This is **imagination** (*khayāl*).

The second kind is known through something apprehended sensibly by the supported, resurrected soul together with other people, although that soul alone—and its followers—apprehends all the knowledge contained within it.

In this way are known the traces of wisdom and prophetic production, together with everything necessarily belonging or accidentally attached to them, existing within the sensible.

The sensible thus speaks through its own essence even while silent, announces those traces without opening its mouth, and makes them known though it does not itself know them.

This is **opening revelation** (*fatḥ*).

This kind of revelation is divided into many kinds—**forty-six in all**, according to what is transmitted from the Prophet, may God bless and greet him.

Among them are indication (*ishāra*), symbol (*ramz*), similitude (*ḍarb al-amthāl*), determination of lot or destiny (*ḥaẓẓ*), inspiration (*ilhām*), vision (*ruʾyā*), augury from the flight of birds, figure, color, composition, speech, number, motion, and in general all the essential states of every existent, living or dead, subject (*ḥāmil*) or predicate (*maḥmūl*), and so forth.

All these kinds of revelation are inspirations (*īḥāʾ*) to the supported, resurrected one from their Creator, the Lord of the worlds, Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them, concerning whom we have spoken only in passing without touching upon His essence, presenting, as it were, a vision (*ruʾyā*) and its likeness.

In this respect the *ḥudūd* who have attained this degree, together with their helper, the pure soul, differ among themselves: some are richer, others poorer, according to each one's capacity for reception, devotion, and bestowed felicity.

All these individual kinds of revelation, together with the definition already mentioned that embraces them, are universal forms of knowledge—most excellent forms of information containing meanings that are hidden and not manifest.

Among natural existents this may be compared to an egg.

An egg is potentially a bird, with wings, legs, beak, and feathers.

All of these are known to exist within the egg, but they are hidden and can be made manifest to sense only through something resembling the interpretation of visions and similitudes that possess meanings manifest to sense.

Or suppose someone sees from afar the gleam of a sword or the folds of a garment fluttering and thereby knows universally that behind their movement there is a human being.

This knowledge is true, but the essential thing remains hidden.

One does not know who is waving the sword or walking in the garment: whether a black man, a Turk, or someone else; whether male or female; on foot or mounted; intelligent or ignorant; alone or accompanied; and so forth.

All this can be known only through something else resembling interpretation, which reveals the meaning of similitudes and visions—namely by approaching that person and apprehending these things through the senses, or by hearing them from someone else who transmits the knowledge.

All these different kinds of revelation, among whose degrees people are distributed, can be completely encompassed and comprehended only by the one whom the Most High has specially distinguished and supported with the highest degree of inspired revelation.

We compared this degree to a spark illuminating the noble soul with the light of Holiness coming from outside and becoming conjoined with it.

For the soul this light is like light for the eyes, through which they apprehend true colors and forms.

It is the limit of every power.

No one shares with that noble soul in its encompassing of all kinds of revelation.

It embraces them one after another until nothing remains outside its grasp.

All this is like clear speech divided into three parts.

The Most High spoke of these parts in His Scripture:

“It is not for any human being that God should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger who reveals, by His permission, whatever He wills.”

“Any human being” means one chosen in the kingdom of Nature and resurrected in order to teach the other children of his genus and faith—human beings who receive existence through instruments established for that purpose according to a known measure—the unity of God, the oneness of the All-Glorious Lord of the worlds, and worship of Him.

“God should speak to him”: speech (*kalām*) here is **intellect**.

The one whom God chooses to address and through speech to make a resurrected and perfected intellect does not receive the speech that human beings openly and explicitly exchange among themselves regarding particulars (*juzʾiyyāt*), from which one ascends to knowledge of universals (*kulliyyāt*).

This is denied by the words “does not speak.”

“Except by revelation”

is then an affirmation following the negation: the affirmation of inspired revelation, the **first of the three parts**.

It is known by the name **great election** (*jadd*).

By this He says:

We teach him by illuminating the substance of his soul with the light of Holiness, so that forms constituting universal knowledge sparkle within his essence while awake, like what he sees in dreams concerning beings and events whose times have passed or have not yet come, and which still require something else through which their particulars may be disclosed and their explanation become manifest.

“Or”—the disjunctive particle—“from behind a veil”:

that is, through similitudes and things established for known purposes, which are like written characters directing one who knows their script toward the meanings contained within them—meanings that call to him though silent and speak to him though they do not open their mouths.

“Or”—again a disjunctive—“He sends a messenger”:

this is the **third part**, known as imagination.

That is, He teaches him through an imagined thing that appears before him in the form of an ordinary human being by means of the power reaching him from the kingdom of Holiness—the imagined thing being an Angel—or through speech heard by the ear, or embodied before the eyes.

These, then, are the three kinds that gather all forms of divine instruction: sometimes through the first, sometimes through the second or third, sometimes through several together, and sometimes through some aspect of one of them, according to the strength of the recipient.

As for the first part—inspired revelation giving knowledge of the principles (*uṣūl*), which we compared to a spark of fire and which is known as the **great election**—it comes to the heaven-supported one both while awake and in sleep.

He may see within his essence some being addressing him in speech, or he may hear a single discourse, like the whispering voice of some spirit.

Then he apprehends everything contained in the souls of people and knows their beliefs and convictions.

This is given to him universally.

Thus, for example, the obligation of prayer and purifying alms is established universally by the decree of the Most High:

“Perform the prayer and give the purifying alms.”

This is an unexplained universal.

Likewise someone may see in a dream that he has acquired wheat or a pair of shoes.

This means that he will soon become wealthy or meet a beautiful woman.

But exactly how the wealth will come to him, how great it will be, who the woman is, how beautiful she is, and what her character is can be known only through other things—for example, by knowing the color of the shoes, their quality, whether worn or new.

The same applies to wealth: whether it will be earned or bestowed by someone else, how great it will be, whether it is a definite amount or unlimited.

Through such things everything becomes clarified.

In this first part no one shares with the resurrected, supported one of his age.

The second part—speech from behind a veil, that is, **opening revelation**—proceeds from the traces of the divine ordering within existents.

It is like divine speech imprinted in similitudes and examples, as was inspired to Muḥammad:

“The likeness of a good word is a good tree,”

and as the Most High said:

“God is the light of the heavens and the earth,”

and so forth.

It is like divine speech flowing from the essences of existents and revealing the traces of divine production.

When the Most High said:

“Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day … preserve us from the torment of the Fire,”

He indicated that the heavens, the earth, and what is between them speak to one who reflects upon the traces of the wisdom of the Most High contained within them.

One who reflects upon them knows their essential speech and knows that through it they affirm the Most High and that He did not create them in vain.

For the existent upon which the thinker reflects—an existent permeated by the traces of divine ordering—is as though it speaks with him, and through it he receives knowledge of everything according to the strength with which he receives the light shining upon him in this reflection.

The first thing established through this knowledge is **divine unity**.

By speaking essentially through the traces of divine production and ordering present within it, the existent testifies that it has a single Maker.

Next comes the affirmation of the angels that precede this existent in being.

By speaking through its own essence—which is a body—the existent testifies that it itself is not the Created, for if it were, it would be first in being, and that what was Created by the Most High is something else preceding it and serving as the proximate cause of its being: namely the **Angel Brought Near**.

Next it establishes that it is not the true final goal, since it is not final in being; if it were, it would resemble that which was created primordially by the Most High.

Then it establishes the rank of the Prophets and Messengers sent by God Most High, because human beings arising from it require, for the ordering of their interests, a teacher who transmits to them knowledge from the Most High, as already explained, and teaches them the rest.

By learning these things, people would observe what is incumbent through obedience to the Most High and understand that all of this was not created in vain or without purpose, but according to truth and wisdom.

The interpretation of this verse bears witness to the same point.

“Truly”

begins the verse and affirms the necessity of everything that follows.

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth”

means in the establishment of the Prophets and Legatees, with the *ḥudūd* between them, who in religion are like the heavens and earth.

“And in the alternation of night and day”

means in the abiding establishment of the rites of the two forms of worship, outward and inward, which in religion are like night and day and through which the believer acquires support and eternal abiding in Paradise.

“There are signs for those endowed with understanding”

means that within these things are all that through which the possessors of divine grace and their followers know what is good for the soul and what is evil, wherein lies its perfection and wherein its deficiency in religious and worldly matters.

“Those who remember God”

are those endowed with understanding, following God’s command and guarding against sin and prohibition: namely the Speaker and the others.

“Standing and sitting”

means in the state of the two forms of worship: outward worship through action and inward worship through knowledge.

“And lying down”

means in all their states, all of which are worship itself: they do not abandon the ordinances of the Most High, but in everything take God’s command as their guide, remember Him, and follow Him.

“And reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth”

means that they reflect upon the manifest traces of divine production and upon their “how,” so as to acquire firm certainty that their “when” are the ranks of the teaching and guiding *ḥudūd*, and so that they may follow them.

“Our Lord! You did not create this in vain”

means that after reflecting upon why and for what purpose the heavens and the earth were created, human beings brought into being, and supported Messengers established among them to teach, guide, and summon, they apprehend the truth of this and exclaim:

“Our Lord! You did not establish these *ḥudūd* and Messengers in vain, nor send them without purpose, but in truth and by right; reward and punishment, Paradise and Fire, have been prepared for us.

Glory be to You! Preserve us from the torment of the Fire.”

This is their supplication: illuminate and guide us so that we may acquire that which will save our souls from destruction.

There is no power and no might for us except through You.

The interpretation of another saying of the Most High speaks of the same matter:

“Have they not traveled through the earth so that they might have hearts with which to understand?”

“Have they not traveled through the earth” means: did they not know of the summons to worship through knowledge and of its sciences, the refuge of intellects; did they not seek the guardianship of those who receive support and preserve this summons?

“And hearts with which to understand”

means: were there not among them heaven-supported ones who stand to people as the heart stands to the body, so that they might learn from them worship and the sciences of divine unity?

“Or ears with which to hear”

means: or successors to the heaven-supported, such as the *ḥujjas*, who could teach them and from whom they might receive knowledge of their religions if they did not reach the supported ones themselves?

“For it is not the eyes that are blind”

refers to the heaven-supported, who are like the eyes of humanity bringing knowledge to them.

Thus the Most High said:

“Remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, possessors of hands and eyes,”

thereby distinguishing them from all people as possessors of hands and eyes even though, as is evident, all people possess hands and eyes.

It also refers to their successors beneath them in religion, namely the *ḥudūd*: their eyes, which guide to truth in religion, are not blind.

“But blind are the hearts within their breasts”

means that the “eyes” of the arrogant, who have departed from the heaven-supported and arrogated supremacy in religion to themselves, are disordered.

They destroy themselves and others and cannot essentially perceive where the good of their religion lies.

This is confirmed by the saying of the Most High:

“…that is because God is the protector of those who believe, whereas the unbelievers have no protector.”

The believer has a protector from God because of his faith and because he has sought the guardianship of the heaven-supported one established to guide him.

The unbeliever has no teacher or protector in the true religion of God because he does not believe and denies the station (*maqām*) of the heaven-supported one appointed to teach.

All these and similar kinds of revelation are a form of **speech that imparts knowledge and teaches**.

Just as knowledge is extracted through celestial bodies from the traces of divine production, so too is it received through generated beings.

For example, in a plant or tree, its outward appearance and fruit, color and scent, whether its stem is hard or flexible, whether it possesses qualities of heat, moisture, cold, or dryness, whether sweet or bitter—all indicate its nature.

By the degree of its greenness a plant indicates whether it drinks little or much water, and by its freshness and strength it indicates the quality of the soil in which it grows.

All of this is known from the plant itself.

Or a person may, through his words or actions, indicate something without knowing that he does so.

For example, someone wishes to recall a Qurʾānic verse but cannot, and no matter how hard he tries nothing comes to mind.

Suddenly he hears someone recite the verse and takes it from him, although the reciter does not know that he recited it for that particular person.

Hence the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, said:

“Blessed is the one who hears something from me, preserves it, and transmits it to one who did not hear it; perhaps the one to whom he transmits my words will understand them better than he himself.”

Or someone may be speaking or reflecting to himself about something, or making a supplication, and suddenly hear in another person’s words an answer to what he was

thinking—either a direct answer or an indirect one, if what is said provides a principle from which the desired answer can be reached.

Likewise, by seeing eagles gathering in a particular place, one can know that dead bodies are there without seeing the bodies themselves.

The heaven-supported one, upon whom the light of the kingdom of Holiness shines, possesses all such forms of knowledge.

No one besides him knows them.

As for the third part—the sending of a messenger who appears, for example, in the form of an ordinary human being and is apprehended through imagination—there is nothing obscure or unexplained about it.

No one except the heaven-supported one sees this good spirit called **Gabriel**.

In short, the heaven-supported one apprehends all things according to the degree of religious knowledge and what pertains to it that has been bestowed upon him.

Nothing escapes him, not even the buzzing of a mosquito or anything still more insignificant.

He sees things while awake just as sleeping souls, left alone with their own essence, see them in dreams.

Directing his thought wherever he wishes, he sees it return within his own essence.

He illuminates those who resort to him with the light of the kingdom of Holiness.

Forms arise and appear before him, addressing him in speech.

In this way inspired revelation comes to him.

Then he speaks with the angels brought near, and they speak with him, because in essence he resembles them through his perfection, resurrection (*inbiʿāth*), and illumination by the light of Holiness.

And when one who has attained this degree speaks, he speaks with the Highest *Ḥadd*.

This is the condition that may follow his return before the revealed Law (*tanzīl*) is abrogated by inspired revelation.

The state of inspired revelation can be interrupted only through the intrusion of natural impediments.

For example, if a soul existing in the world of Nature has not been freed from the influence of the body and the mixture impresses its mark upon it, then the true reality of the matter may become hidden from such a person.

Therefore the Most High said:

“We never sent before you any Messenger or Prophet without Satan casting something into his desire when he desired; but God effaces what Satan casts, and then God confirms His signs. God is Knowing, Wise.”

The Most High says:

“We never sent before you any Messenger or Prophet”

—that is, every Prophet or Messenger whom We supported with the light of Holiness, because of his mixture through which his soul exists, imagined something under the influence of his nature and entertained a desire—

“and Satan cast something into his desire”

—that is, this caused him to deviate from what was correct, because the mixture in accordance with Nature produces what is conditioned by the sensory degree of the soul.

But the Most High destroys this error through the light of inspired revelation by which He supports the supported one, and the latter apprehends it.

“And He confirms His signs”

means that God corrects through inspiration the sayings of His saints, who are His signs and tokens, and establishes them.

For example, the Most High said:

“They ask you concerning the spoils. Say: the spoils belong to God and His Messenger,”

meaning that everything belongs to God and the Messenger.

This saying was abrogated by His words:

“Know that whatever you take as spoils, one fifth belongs to God, the Messenger, his relatives, the orphans…”

For in this latter saying, which closes the way to the words of obstinate opponents, lies the exact truth, rather than in the former, which left an opening for the discourse of transgressors.

When the substance of the soul is illuminated by these divine matters, then in its majesty it is able to present to sense everything that exists in abstract thought (*wahm*) and whose necessity follows from divine wisdom as something apprehensible to sense.

It can perform actions that astonish and bewilder people because they exceed ordinary human powers.

Yet this soul is capable of such things because all the gates of knowledge have been opened before it and it has encompassed what no one else has encompassed.

All bodies then become obedient to it, for it succeeds in gathering them together, drawing upon everything contained within them, in order to realize what it seeks.

They then become instruments of this soul.

The heaven-supported one performs through them whatever he judges necessary for a governance that unites felicity in religious and worldly life.

He stands to these bodies as the soul stands to the body that gathers diverse instruments through which manifest actions are performed and which cannot disobey it.

The hand, for example, cannot resist when the soul wishes to take or give something.

The eye cannot refuse to see and apprehend the sensible when the soul wishes it.

The same applies to the ear—even though among the external instruments it is least capable of obeying a command to move—and to the foot, which moves without resistance when the soul wishes to move it, even down to the toes.

This soul acts upon bodies and employs them in such a way that, when it wishes to undertake something, it finds the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them assisting it in accomplishing the action.

It is like the way summer air assists cloth-bleachers, launderers, and papermakers in the chief thing by which their work is accomplished, rapidly drying the moisture that obstructs their activity, and likewise assists bathhouse attendants by enabling them to heat their baths easily and with the least expenditure of fuel.

This occurs through the grace bestowed upon the soul by the Most High and through His **Greatest Name**, upon which the pole (*quṭb*) of prophecy is established, and through His light that places the crown of power upon the heaven-supported one.

Such a soul is then capable of performing irresistible miraculous actions.

These occur through the penetration into existents of the powers belonging to those matters that become conjoined from every direction with the supported soul, coming from the kingdom of Holiness.

Existents then obey it just as a heavy, unliftable body obeys a person who knows which instruments to employ in order to raise and move it easily; as heavy iron obeys the attractive power of the magnet, moving of itself without a mover; as pains subside in obedience to an incantation; as bedbugs, flies, rats, and similar creatures obediently flee when images of them are made from mineral bodies and placed in a known configuration; as chicks emerge from eggs in obedience to one who knows what can replace a brooding hen; as bodily instruments, the soul's external extensions, obey the soul; and as the recalcitrant submit to wisdom and obey words and discourse.

There are many other examples of this among natural existents, well known to people and by their very existence demonstrating the necessity of things higher and greater than themselves, which are far more difficult for intellects to apprehend.

In all these examples, natural existence resembles what the supported soul can accomplish through divine power when its light is diffused through existents.

It may, for example, bring about clouds, thunder, torrential rain, lightning, and fire.

Thus the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, when dispersing a disputation by means of a thundercloud, said:

“If they dispute my words, God will drown them in fire.”

For he agreed to the disputation not so that the opponent who challenged him might remain in his position with no manifest proof of who was right and who was wrong.

He went forth in order to manifest a sign clearly testifying that he was right and the others wrong.

That sign was the fire poured out by God upon his opponents, as the Prophet himself said.

Otherwise there would have been no point in entering the disputation if it did not become known that his words were true.

Likewise, for example, there was the fire that descended from heaven to the adherents of earlier religious communities in order to accept their sacrificial offerings.

All these are hidden things that can be revealed to the inner eye (*baṣīra*) of the intellect only by the light of support proceeding from the kingdom of Holiness and becoming conjoined with the resurrected one in accordance with what has been ordained.

Therefore no one reaches this degree through his own efforts, but only through a gift corresponding to predetermined wisdom.

For the same reason wonder-working, magic, and all similar actions and forms of knowledge existing within natural things—all of which are exact sciences hidden from the uninitiated—can be learned through one’s own effort and exertion.

In general, even if the wonder-worker (*musha*ʿ*widh*) belongs to the highest class of souls, his knowledge remains natural.

It can be taught and acquired.

Both he and the magician may perform astonishing things, but they do not become conjoined with the kingdom of Holiness, that kingdom does not illuminate them, and they do not follow the path of the two forms of worship.

Using techniques known to them, they may, for example, transform lotus leaves into ringing coinage, or kill an animal and immediately restore it to life before people’s eyes without any deception of the senses.

But none of this is astonishing to the resurrected one who has been given the light through which all forms of knowledge shine.

Endowed with wondrous power, he can produce things far greater and more exalted, for among the degrees of souls he too occupies the highest and noblest.

Indeed, one cannot fail to see—for it is clear and necessary—that his beginnings and ends are true.

All this knowledge is preserved by the heaven-supported.

They possess it exclusively and admit no one to it except an Angel Brought Near, a Prophet, a Messenger, or a believer whose heart God has tested.

The difference between the deeds of the heaven-supported one and those of a wonder-worker claiming prophecy is this:

A **miracle**, that is, the deed of the resurrected one, cannot be reproduced by anyone except through the divine light that becomes conjoined with him from the kingdom of Holiness.

It is connected with something **other than his own essence**.

Wonder-working, by contrast, can be reproduced by anyone because it is connected with the practitioner's own essence, his effort, and his striving to learn and acquire the necessary knowledge.

Take, for example, the arts of Ibn al-ʿUmayda and others like him.

Moreover, we consider the greatest miracle manifested by the Messengers, peace be upon them, to be the fact that the Laws they brought from the Most High, together with their religious rites, correspond to the creation of the All-Glorious and balance it in equilibrium.

This is the greatest testimony.

This is the indisputable miracle that no diviner claiming prophecy can produce, however hard he tries.

If a miracle does not establish the truth of the manifested deeds in such a way that their effects remain visible even some time after they were shown, then it cannot be considered genuine, nor can one believe that the performer of such deeds truly brought from the Most High laws, rites, ordinances, and divine scriptures commanding and prohibiting, compelling and restraining.

But if all this is in equilibrium with the creation of the Most High, corresponds and agrees with it, omitting nothing within it that calls toward the rectification of the soul and the acquisition of virtues and perfection, then his actions are true and proceed from divine power, and he himself is truly **resurrected**.

The pretender to prophecy, however much he tries to lead people astray and conceal his severance from the cord of God and from purity—and for this purpose produces, as we have said, natural phenomena exceeding ordinary human powers—cannot succeed.

It nevertheless becomes clear that he is incapable of imitating the Most High and All-Glorious God, His words and deeds and His summons.

Such things are known only to those whom God has acquainted with them through His support.

This deficiency exposes the pretender's actual capacity.

For example, Daysān and Ibn al-Muqniʿ manifested such things in Khurāsān, causing a moon to rise into the sky and shine at particular intervals.

They performed other things as well.

Yet neither of them could present anything standing in equilibrium and mutual correspondence with what they claimed and thereby prove that they truly belonged among the heaven-supported.

Thus it became clear that they were liars who led others astray.

For in general such actions really do proceed from knowledge possessed by the soul, but in this case the soul is **impelled** (*munbaʿitha*) by its mixture: it acts and strives for the sake of the mixture.

Such a thing can indeed occur.

But the possessor of such a soul is far from conjunction with the world of Holiness and does not in any way occupy the degree of the soul resurrected by the kingdom of Holiness.

That soul acts essentially and guards its perfection not for the sake of satisfying the caprices and whims arising from its mixture.

This constitutes felicity, which, as we have said, is divided into:

worldly felicity, whose possessor obtains what he seeks in this lower world, as did Muʿāwiya, Yazīd, and others;

religious felicity of the afterlife, whose possessor acquires what he seeks for his soul in its afterlife, as did, for example, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir and Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, peace be upon them both;

and **comprehensive felicity**, whose possessor God grants felicity both in this lower world and in the afterlife, as in the case of the resurrected, heaven-supported one whom God endows with His grace.

For he is the limit of perfection, the summit of virtues, and the foundation of every felicity.

Yet the virtues of the angels—the supra-natural Intellects in the kingdom of Holiness, namely the First Created, the First Emanation, and the other primordial angels who glorify and praise—are by no means the same as those regarded as virtues for the resurrected within the kingdom of Nature and acquisition.

One cannot say of these angels that they are courageous, chaste, honest, generous, truthful, just, or possessed of the other virtues belonging to the natural soul.

All such qualities give the natural soul the kind of virtue that those Intellects possess by virtue of their primordiality and abiding existence: because they have been granted proximity, there is no intermediary between them and the All-Glorious God, and in this they rejoice and exult.

They are sustaining causes of all that exists from them and know no corruption, transformation, or change.

These Intellects were never in the kingdom of Nature and never possessed such acquired qualities—otherwise it would be through those qualities that they attained what they alone possess.

Nor do they exist through such things—otherwise these Intellects would themselves belong among things preceded in being by something else.

However, such things are counted as virtues because they are causes of the attainment of felicity—which felicity is itself the virtue of those noble and primordial beings—and because they make the soul proud and unassailable, so that it resists in every way destruction, descent, and immersion in vices, and strives toward the heights of greatness, seeking and obtaining the mantle of power, namely the divine sciences, acquiring in the manner we demonstrated in *The Crown of Intellects*.

The resurrected, heaven-supported one gathers within himself all the natural virtues that are the causes of attaining eternal felicity. He is at the same time the limit of all these virtues.

He is quick to understand and receptive to the slightest prompt or indication—and all the more to what is said or taught explicitly. He remembers well everything distinguished by eye and heart or heard by the ear, showing the greatest penetration and keenness of mind, since the smallest and slightest thing is enough for him to apprehend.

He is skillful and exact in choosing words and can convey the most subtle meaning to the ear in only a few expressions. He is eloquent and expressive and capable of directing others toward felicity and toward the deeds through which perfection is attained.

He possesses a beautiful physical constitution, is hardy, and is skilled in warfare.

By nature he is capable of drawing knowledge from everywhere and from everything—from living beings whether knowing or unknowing, or from inanimate things—by observing their motion and rest, what they are like, or by attending to their speech and words.

In him you find innate soundness and inclination toward the good. He is free of vices: greed and insatiability, excess in food and drink and intercourse with women, inclination toward frivolous amusements and diversions—in short, there is nothing in him that prevents the soul from attaining felicity.

He is magnanimous, noble, and just; cruelty and arbitrariness are hateful to him. He devotes himself wholly to worship and to everything beneficial for the soul, and by nature accepts nothing base or vicious.

He is courageous and bold, and nothing frightens him in struggle for what is right.

For the Holy Fire has illumined the substance of his soul. From the empyreans of Holiness it looks down upon the world of religion below, and with it are connected the being and felicity of the ordinary soul.

Gold is analogous to him: having received an abundant share of the Sun's light, it is the noblest of mineral bodies, and through it alone the worldly life of people proceeds and their affairs are set in motion.

Wheat is analogous as well: being endowed with balance (*iʿtidāl*), it is more nourishing than the other grains, and upon it depends the sustenance of bodily life.

For this reason the heaven-supported one advances before all people and all people follow him.

In all his deeds, in everything to which he summons and which he tirelessly and flawlessly carries out, he manifests the perfection bestowed upon him by the kingdom of Holiness, so that by measuring and ordering everything he may bring the affair successfully to its desired goal.

For this reason he is **infallible/pure**: nothing evil is found in him.

Such a one cannot but be complete, supported, and virtuous.

Only the virtuous attach themselves to him and follow him; only the corrupt and base adulterers turn away from him and oppose him.

For if someone has correspondence with him, he is in that respect similar and close to him; if he differs, then in that respect he is distant from and at variance with him.

Since the one who is followed is good, those followers who agree with him are likewise good, while the opposite must be said of his opponents.

Likewise, those who attach themselves to the felicitous resurrected one and are chosen as his companions are the **vessels of his goodness and the gates of his wisdom**.

The number of those whom such a resurrected one requires in order to establish the affair of God does not exceed **twelve**, because they stand to him as the number twelve stands to the existents of the macrocosm and microcosm.

Thus every sent Prophet had this number.

Moses, peace be upon him, had twelve chiefs (*naqībs*); Jesus, peace be upon him, had twelve chiefs and apostles; and Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, had twelve companions.

Before them Adam, Noah, and Abraham each had twelve men who bore their knowledge, carried out their affair, and received the light of their wisdom.

Each of these possesses a lofty degree, a prominent position, and a right.

But among them the highest degree, and the rank closest to him, belongs to the one who more than the others resembles and corresponds to him in those virtues by which the Most High distinguished him; who receives his commands and prohibitions better than the others; who responds most fully to his misfortunes and joys; who is granted more than the others of that with which he himself is endowed; who is more worthy than the others to become his successor; and whom the possessor of that station himself appoints as such.

Through his guidance and instruction, this successor gathers everything necessary for governing his people after him and tempering them in the furnace of religion.

Being most wise, he knows all the ordinances that the former brought to his people and preserves all the diverse laws thereof.

In everything he acts as the former commanded and departs from none of these commands.

He is discerning and sound-minded, skilled and dexterous in battle, patiently endures adversity, summons through righteous guidance to the primordial Law, explains its universal utterances, reveals the wisdom hidden in its deeds and actions, discloses the knowledge concealed in the ordinances and rites of his community and teaches it to those seeking knowledge, establishes truth among his people, does not withdraw from his task, and remains equally composed in joy and grief.

In all this he resembles the **Moon**, which in the corporeal world stands one rank below the Sun.

None of the other luminaries—although all are luminaries like it—receives the Sun's light as the Moon does, nor substitutes for the Sun when it leaves the sky in everything connected with bringing natural generated beings into existence.

None resembles the Sun so closely, and to none is given such a share in illuminating the world and acting upon it.

Or he resembles **silver**, which stands below gold and plays the first role after it in human life.

In nobility and value it is closer to gold than the other minerals, and in gold's absence it substitutes for it because it resembles it and approaches it in its nature.

For this reason Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, chose ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may God bless him, and appointed him to his place after himself, entrusting his community to him.

For ʿAlī surpassed the others in every respect, and his rank after him, peace be upon him, is the rank of the **successor**.

This means that he occupied his place in everything connected with the summons to worship through action and was to complete the entrusted task of the summons to worship through knowledge.

Concerning this summons the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, said:

"I am the city of knowledge, and ʿAlī is its gate; whoever desires knowledge, let him come to the gate."

After these two come those who substitute for them in preserving their two summonses—the summons to worship through action and the summons to worship through knowledge—namely the **Imams**, peace be upon them.

Each of them is heaven-supported.

Every seventh among them, corresponding to this noble number seven, is endowed with unmistakable power and with abundant and considerable heavenly support.

He completes a minor cycle within the major cycle, which is the cycle of the resurrected Speakers—may God bless them.

In his rank—which consists in preserving outward and inward worship and inheriting the *maqām* of the Prophet, may God bless him, and of the Foundation—he resembles the Foundation, although he does not attain the highest revelation belonging to the rank of the resurrected.

The Foundation occupies the *maqām* of the heaven-supported resurrected one and is abundantly endowed with holy grace.

The Most High spoke of this in His Scripture:

"God is the light of the heavens and the earth…"

"God is the light of the heavens and the earth" means: the Most High is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, illuminating them with the traces of His production and irresistible wisdom so that, through their influence and action, all natural generated beings whose existence wisdom has ordained may come into being.

He also supports His Messengers and *ḥudūd*, whom He established in His religion in the place of the heavens and earth and richly endowed with the effusion of His grace so that, through their instruction and guidance, spiritual generated beings may arise.

"The likeness of His light is…"

Just as God supported the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, with the light of His Word and poured upon him the grace of His Unity, being the source of his knowledge and the foundation of revelation—

"…a lamp in a niche"

and a niche is a small opening—

God says, teaching by similitude and making the matter accessible to you: in the same way the Speaker made his Legatee the **source** (*mādda*) and repository of divine knowledge—the Scripture, the Law, and the ordinances—which are as repositories of meanings and knowledge.

Thus He says that within these repositories is

“a lamp,”

meaning that they contain divine meanings and forms of knowledge belonging to the lights of the Kingdom, even though these are not apprehended in themselves.

“The lamp is in a glass vessel.”

The lamp is the image of divine knowledge, while the glass vessel symbolizes the Imams and the perfected ones.

These meanings and forms of knowledge—the lights of Holiness—are encompassed by the Imams and the perfected ones, who inseparably support, gather, and preserve them, so that these lights illuminate their essences and the essences of the followers who seek them, just as a vessel encloses a lamp: the lamp is contained within it, its light is diffused throughout all parts of the vessel, and from it streams outward.

“The glass vessel shines like a brilliant star.”

The brilliant star symbolizes the Legatee.

The Imams and perfected ones, peace be upon them, who reflect and reason concerning these holy matters, extract religious knowledge and prophetic wisdom, encompass them, and return to the source whenever they encounter anything obscure.

They resemble the Foundation, to whom in both summonses—the outward and the inward—all wisdoms, images, and ordinances represented everywhere from heaven to earth obediently open themselves, as the Most High said:

“Then He turned toward the heaven when it was smoke…”

Thus the Scripture speaks with them and the ordinances address them, though themselves silent and uttering no sound.

Nothing is hidden from them; rather, everything becomes disclosed to them.

They apprehend the “knowledge of the first and the last” that was sent down to Muḥammad, peace be upon him.

“It is kindled from a blessed tree…”

The blessed tree symbolizes the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, an epithet of the brilliant star whose face is radiant.

The Imams and perfected ones, having encompassed knowledge, resemble the Foundation, who learned and kindled the light of his knowledge from the knowledge of the blessed tree—that is, from the Speaker—who was given blessing and the fire of support in whose light all knowledge appears before him.

In this respect, although they do not possess the rank of the Foundation, they do not lag behind him.

"…an olive tree"

because they resemble the fruit of that tree, the olive,

"neither of the East nor of the West."

They do not occupy the rank of the Legatee, to whom belongs the inward summons, such that they would be western like him alone.

Rather, they are both western and eastern, because they occupy the *maqām* of both and substitute for both before their followers.

Thus both ranks, designated as East and West, are given to them.

"Its oil almost gives light even though no fire touches it."

The oil is the juice of the olive flowing from it and symbolizes the discourses and instruction received from the Imams, may God bless them.

Their knowledge and words, clothed in sound and issuing from their mouths when they teach and guide, resemble the knowledge and words of those who possess inspired revelation, although they do not proceed from the Legatee, who is likened to fire.

"Light upon light."

He pours forth ever-new lights and forms of knowledge.

"God guides to His light whomever He wills."

Each of them in his own time occupies the place of God, because he substitutes for the Prophet, who himself occupies the *maqām* of God, and guides toward God's grace, knowledge of His unity, and the salvation of those whose thoughts concerning God are pure and whose worship is sincere.

This is what he wills and chooses, and for this reason he occupies His place.

"God sets forth similitudes for mankind."

This substitute for God and the Prophet, peace be upon him, appoints his own deputies in the regions (*jazāʾir*), summoning people to worship the All-Glorious and to knowledge of what the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, proclaimed.

“God is knowing of all things.”

That is, knowing and experienced in matters of religion, the religious community, and its ordinances leading to salvation, without uncertainty in anything.

Thus in their minor cycles they guide and teach, preserving the community, Scripture, and Law at all times—as He said:

“You are only a warner, and for every people there is a guide”—

according to their powers, the heavenly support reaching them, and the assistance afforded them by their time, until the sevenfold series completing seven cycles is fulfilled and thereby, as we have said, the great cycle is completed.

And so it is in all seven great cycles.

The Most High said with supreme wisdom:

“Someone asked concerning a punishment destined to befall the unbelievers, which none can avert … but We see it as near.”

The unbelievers in the *ḥudūd* of the Most High and His signs are astonished when He warns them, through the master of the seventh cycle—the Last Day when the cycles are completed—of the punishment that will befall all who do not adhere to sound faith in the one God and do not worship Him properly, thereby rejecting the commands of the Most High and refusing belief in His *ḥudūd*.

That punishment will overtake all of them and place its seal upon them, as upon the “first and the last.”

“There is none to avert it from God.”

Nothing constitutes an obstacle to the master of the seventh cycle in carrying out God’s decree by God’s command.

“Lord of the ascending degrees.”

God possesses *ḥudūd* who guide and teach, who stand to their followers like steps leading into His Kingdom and aids in attaining His mercy.

These are the Prophets, heaven-supported and filled with virtues and lights, the first and the last whom God created.

“By which the angels and the Spirit ascend.”

You ascend, Muḥammad, together with the *ḥudūd* of your cycle and the master of the seventh cycle who gathers all the cycles.

“In a day”

that is, in a cycle in which the number of the *ḥudūd* from first to last—whom He called “the Spirit” in saying, “On the day when the Spirit and the angels stand in ranks,” that day being the master of the seventh cycle—

“is fifty”

namely the masters of the sevenfold series in the seven cycles, seven times seven, plus the one who gathers them all,

“as you reckon them,”

that is, those whom you count as the completers of their minor cycles within the major cycles.

“So be patient with beautiful patience.”

Do not forget the goal divine wisdom seeks to attain.

Be patient in your affair and steadfast in establishing the pillars of worship and preparing the conditions for felicity.

“They see it as far away.”

Those people and those like them, who do not know for themselves and do not attach themselves to teachers in order to learn, imagine that what you announce is distant or will never occur.

“But We see it as near.”

We, knowing that it is real, see that it is near and does not delay.

Each of them, through correspondence with noble numbers, possesses a *maqām* at which noble deeds become manifest.

For example, the fourth, who completes the fourth cycle, corresponds among the Prophets who are masters of the major cycles to Moses, peace be upon him; among the celestial bodies, to the Sun; and among days of illness, to the fourth day, that is, the day of the minor crisis.

In his time a divine power was manifested that no one else possessed.

Or consider the seventh, who completes a minor cycle and after whom begins the sixth major cycle: he performs in the world what was promised for a time when the foundations of the Law become shaken, the bonds of religion, prohibition, and permission are disrupted, and corruption encompasses numerous apostates and schismatics.

Concerning this the Most High said in His most precious Scripture:

“On the day when the heaven will be like molten copper, and the mountains like carded wool.”

The heaven symbolizes the outward summons and its followers, while the mountains symbolize the inward summons and its followers.

Thus He says: the affairs of the outward summons, connected with Law and action, will decline because of the abundance of disagreements and self-appointed leaders, and will become tarnished as copper is tarnished by admixture with oil.

The affairs of the inward summons, connected with knowledge, will be disordered by the darkness of apostates and frivolous people, just as pure wool is spoiled by admixture with dyed wool.

But at the end everything will change.

The domination of the devils will be crushed.

By killing them, driving them away, taking them captive, and binding them in irons, they will no longer be allowed to dominate.

Everything will be restored to the primordial laws, purified of the innovations of misguided impostors.

Thus ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said in one of his sermons:

“If only one day remained in this lower world…”

These words confirm what we have said: if all the Imams and perfected ones of the cycles disappeared except one,

“God would send them someone who would fill their cup of patience, so that they would wish that I were among them and interceded for them before Him, so that one of Quraysh would say: had he been a Qurayshite, he would have shown us mercy.”

And elsewhere:

“I look and see in your religion a ruler wagging his tail, from whom you will receive nothing until God restores it to you through a man from me.”

That will be the known time when the domination and supremacy of the misleading devils comes to an end and they are swept away.

For the Most High said concerning Satan, may he be accursed:

“My Lord, grant me respite until the day when they are resurrected. He said: you are among those granted respite until the day of the known time.”

By “Lord” He meant the Speaker whom God established as lord over all in his cycle and over his followers.

By Satan He meant the adversaries and usurpers who lead people astray and turn them away from following God’s holy friends.

The first of these is the one who occupied the place of the calf that, in the cycle of Moses, peace be upon him, the Children of Israel preferred to know and before whose lowing they trembled, together with his followers.

Satan’s words,

“My Lord, grant me respite…”

show that when he understood that he would not succeed, as he had wished, in becoming the lawful master by occupying the place of the vizier and fulfilling the function of the Legatee—for the Speaker had declared that this rank must be given to the Legatee—he resolved upon another course.

He realized that he could conceal nothing from the Speaker, who had reproached him.

His companion then encouraged him to take the affair into his own hands after the Speaker, as we know happened.

God informed him of this in His saying:

“When the Prophet secretly confided a matter to one of his wives … and the angels thereafter are his helpers.”

He therefore feared that the Prophet might disclose everything about him, forbid people to follow him and believe his words, and thereby disgrace him.

For the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, as was known, whenever he prescribed something for believers, simultaneously prohibited its opposite.

Yet this man had already hastened to announce to his people and relatives that the Prophet would choose him alone.

Hope then arose within him that, if matters remained as they were, he would not be deprived of that rank, although he was not worthy to occupy it.

So he asked the Prophet to postpone carrying out what had already been proclaimed.

This was one of the faults forgiven to the Prophet so that it might serve as a reminder until the Day of Resurrection.

This postponement was to compensate for the prohibition against his occupying the office of vizier so that his service would not come to nothing.

Concerning this He said:

"…until the day when they are resurrected."

The Prophet, may God bless and greet him and his family, knew that what was destined to occur would occur, that nothing would happen except what had been inscribed by the pen of wisdom, and that others would come after him to carry out God's affair and transmit God's reports until the known term—the term of the pure (*zakiyya*) soul, the term of the completion of the cycles.

He therefore acted as the other Prophets did, showing mercy and commanding the performance of good, carrying out what was easy to accomplish and leaving to those who would come after him everything difficult to realize.

For he knew that, in any case, the one destined to appear would appear, and that disagreement and dissension were unavoidable because time itself would assist them.

He then informed him that his remembrance would continue until the day of the known time, so that it might endure until the days in which the **Resurrector** (*Qāʾim*) appears, peace be upon him.

The word "day" occurs in the indefinite state: it means the completer of the sixth major cycle.

It is as though He says:

Your days and the days of your followers, who will impose their dominion and oppose the truth, will continue until the appearance of the first *ḥadd* of the seventh major cycle.

That day is the "known time" in which the *ḥudūd* will be filled with heavenly support and true instruction will prevail.

It can be compared to a crisis in illness, the known time when the psychic power of the patient becomes manifest and begins to act upon and change his condition.

Then this master manifests his power.

He acts upon each of those who carry out God's command, kindling his own lamp within him.

He exerts influence upon all people, spreads the foundations and norms of the Law, exalts the word of divine unity, and closes access to all hearts against the misguided devils, their teachings, and their written instructions—just as for long days and years they had closed the hearts of the people against God's friends, His vicegerents, taking advantage of the fact that time did not assist God's friends even in remaining steadfast, much less in bringing about change and compulsion.

This is the day promised by God in His saying:

"On the day when We shall roll up the heaven as a scribe rolls up a written scroll."

By this He says: this *ḥadd*, one of the days of God, is unlike those concerning whom He said:

“Remind him of the days of God.”

He will restore everything to its primordial condition as it was in the time of the Speaker.

He will close to the misguided Imams—who are like the highest heaven—access to everything beneath them, just as they had forcibly closed the true Imams’ access to the hearts of the people.

The Most High said:

“On the day when they see the angels, there will be no glad tidings for them that day … [their deeds will be made] scattered dust.”

“On the day when they see the angels” means, by way of allusion, what will occur in the seventh cycle.

The angels—that is, the adherents of the summons who practice both forms of worship and who in the afterlife are like angels—will reproach the negligent and those who forgot God’s command for having abandoned their religion and turned toward another.

They will inform them that they will not be among the inhabitants of Paradise who joyfully bear the burden of obedience.

“They will say to them: a ban, utterly forbidden!”

They will tell them that they will not be among the believers, because the gates of repentance have already been closed.

“Then We shall turn to the deeds they performed and make them scattered dust.”

They will reduce to dust and scatter all their deeds and teachings built upon passion and self-interest, for they will be unable to support them with any proof.

This will continue until the number by which the cycle is completed is fulfilled.

Then the Most High will manifest the **pure soul**, the completer of all cycles, major and minor, bearer of the lights of the first and the last.

This is the Last Day that was announced and in whose coming people were commanded to believe and wait.

This Last Day is the most felicitous of all the felicitous, because the whole of the outward and inward is given to him together.

Through him God completes all His creation, accomplishing what no believer before him accomplished, because he gathers the lights flowing from the kingdom of Holiness, and the decree of the All-Knowing Wise ordained that he should be.

For his sake the celestial bodies moved and acted upon what lies beneath them.

His coming was awaited; the supported souls cherished and nurtured it.

Then the Spirit of Holiness will flow through souls as knowledge: among the pure, in the empyreans; among the stained, below.

Then the **new creation** will be completed, as we said in the chapter on Resurrection.

Then he will manifest the divine power of **dominion** (*tamakkun*) over the world and the beings inhabiting it and will perform his deeds.

All existents will become obedient to him.

If it were permissible for there to be among natural things a divine likeness, then he—may the Most High greet him—would be God, majestically exalted above every relation to His creatures, God besides whom there is no god, for he has dominion over religious communities and the souls and desires of people are disclosed to him.

Then all creation, from East to West, submits to him.

Thus the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, said:

"On the Night of Destiny the gates of heaven will open all at once, the world will be filled with lights, and stone and tree, sea-monsters and mountains will prostrate themselves before the Most High."

Everything without exception will obey him.

For the wicked it will be an hour of severe trial; for the good, a heart-gladdening gift.

The Most High said:

"On the day when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will be terrified, except whom God wills to exempt … and you will see the mountains, which you suppose to be motionless, passing like clouds…"

This speaks of the master of the Day of Resurrection, the one who seals all cycles by divine power and through whom God gathers together all forms.

"All who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will be terrified"

means that all the people of the outward and inward will be seized by terror, fear, and trembling because they will be unable to understand what is happening.

"Except whom God wills to exempt"

means those to whom God disclosed His plan and gave knowledge, those who attached themselves to His friends and followers, whom He willed to count among the believers—and His will cannot be resisted.

"Then all will come before Him humbled."

Friends and enemies, strong and weak, everyone upon the earth, willingly or unwillingly, will bow before him in obedience.

“You will see the mountains, which you suppose to be motionless, passing like clouds.”

All the giants who imagine themselves inaccessible and bow before no one will submit to him just as the deputies of the regions and the masters of support and the divine summons submit,

“by the workmanship of God, who perfected all things,”

in accordance with the wisdom of the Most High, which ordained the gathering of such a soul that the heavens and all above them would obey it and assist it in manifesting astonishing power.

“He knows well what you do,”

for he knows what will happen and how it will happen.

When all creation beholds him, it trembles in bewilderment and fear.

The Most High said:

“O mankind! Fear your Lord; truly, the convulsion of the Hour is a tremendous thing … but God’s punishment is terrible.”

“O mankind!” means that the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, warns in the name of the Most High the people of his own time and all who will see the light up to the Day of Resurrection:

O you whom the Most High has granted natural existence, appointing me as Messenger to you so that you may follow me as I proclaim worship of Him and His unity,

“Fear your Lord.”

The God-fearing are those who gather the two forms of worship.

Join worship through action with worship through knowledge, whose ordinances I brought to you and both of which I prescribed as worship of your Lord who created you.

“Truly, the convulsion of the Hour is a tremendous thing.”

Be humble, for the power, sovereignty, might, and force that the master of the Day of Resurrection will manifest toward those then in existence and toward those who lived before them and ascended to the barzakh will indeed be tremendous.

By his power the earth beneath the feet of the living will quake and tremble.

“On the day when you see it, every nursing mother will abandon the child she nurses.”

When he appears in being to complete the cycle, all missionaries and *ḥudūd*, occupied only with themselves, will cease teaching and admonishing, just as a person terrified and bewildered forgets everything when the ground moves beneath his feet, and as a nursing woman forgets her infant.

“Every pregnant woman will miscarry her burden.”

They will abandon and forget all followers of the summons and cease training and teaching, just as pregnant women in terror miscarry their offspring whether full-term or not.

“You will see people as though drunk.”

At that time no one will know what is required of him, just as drunken people do not understand what is happening to them.

“Yet they will not be drunk.”

But those who gather both forms of worship and thereby worship the Most High do not belong among the ignorant.

In earlier times, by attaching themselves to God’s holy friends, they became knowing and aware.

“But God’s punishment is terrible.”

His awe-inspiring majesty, penetrating the flesh and blood of creation, will cast everyone into the greatest bewilderment, announcing the power of the Most High and the inevitability of His promise and threat.

Then the natural earth will quake and reveal, as has been said, the treasures and hoards hidden within its depths and abundant riches.

The religious earth will reveal the knowledge preserved within it, as is stated in the Laws.

Then knowledge and felicity will flow without limit.

Knowledge, through the multiplicity of those possessing it, will pass into actuality; ignorance, through the small number of the ignorant, will become potential, as we discussed in *The Gardens and the Arena of the Intellect*.

Then those who came later will join the first, as late sowings join the early ones in a farmer’s field, and all will become knowing.

The Most High said:

“…on a day that will make children gray-haired.”

Those who were children in the sciences will on that day become elders mature in experience and knowledge.

He will gather all creation, call them to account for their convictions and religious professions, and bitterly reproach them because, possessing the books and sayings of the Prophets, they despised their instructions and prohibitions.

Then everything will be disclosed.

As the Most High said:

“You will be brought before the Knower of the unseen and the visible, and He will inform you of what you used to do.”

The faces of the people of the two forms of worship will become radiant, as the Most High said:

“On that day some faces will be radiant, looking toward their Lord…”

while torment will be decreed for the inhabitants of the Fire and swift reward for the inhabitants of Paradise.

Then the Knower will depart, taking with him all the “first and the last.”

For God has created the **new creation**: glorifying and magnifying, self-subsistent and spiritual; prime-material in essence, holy in act.

It is now in the kingdom of Holiness, free from the confinement of bodies, having brought all who were with it to the True Goal:

“The pious will be in gardens and amid rivers, in an abode of truth, before an All-Powerful King.”

Then the gates will be shut.

Jesus, peace be upon him, spoke of this in a parable in the Gospel.

One who possessed oil and a lamp sat by the road awaiting the bridegroom so that he might enter with him into a house richly adorned and filled with good things.

Those who had no oil asked some from the one who possessed it and, giving him nothing in return, told him:

Go back to your house and bring oil.

He went away.

Then the bridegroom came, entered the house with his companions who had been provident, and shut the gates in the faces of those who had no oil.

Then grief and remorse overcame them, but what they desired was no longer granted.

Thus the Most High said:

"'Look toward us so that we may take some of your light.' It will be said: Go back and seek light for yourselves … outside it, on every side, is torment."

Then there will remain neither earth nor heaven, nor stars, nor air, nor water, nor children of religion, but only His most precious Face abiding eternally.

The Most High said:

"When the heaven is split apart"

and this word is interpreted as "rent asunder"—

the ordinances of the Law will become inoperative.

"When the stars are scattered"

the *maqāms* of the *ḥudūd* of God's religion will disappear.

"When the seas burst forth"

the ordinances of earlier religions will be brought to light, and remembrance of the *ḥudūd* of God's religion and of their sciences extracted from the Laws will become firmly established.

"When the graves are overturned"

all wisdom and all knowledge will become manifest in the world and goods will multiply.

"Then every soul will know what it sent ahead and what it left behind."

When this occurs and the ordinances of the religious communities are truly fulfilled, the soul will know what good and evil it did and will feel the harm caused by having regarded the best as last and the worst as first.

The Most High likewise said:

"When the Sun is wrapped in darkness"

the influence of the Laws brought by the Prophets—which are like the Sun's light—will disappear.

"When the stars are dimmed"

this passage is interpreted to mean that the stars fall to the earth so that all the celestial stars are upon the earth—

the ranks of the *ḥudūd* will disappear, their action upon those under their care will cease, and the delineation itself will disappear, for this is the Resurrection.

"When the mountains are set in motion"

the great ones of this world will be subdued and will as one submit to the master of the Resurrection.

“When ten-month pregnant she-camels are neglected”

with the abolition of the ranks of the *ḥudūd*, instruction will cease.

“When the wild beasts are gathered”

all living beings upon the earth will become subject to that one will.

“When the seas are set ablaze”

the *ḥudūd* of the outward Law will be established, and everything removed by the servants of satanic innovations will be restored.

This will occur at the “known time” and at similar times in the seventh cycle.

“When souls are paired”

each hypocrite and adulterer will find a fitting companion.

“When the girl buried alive is asked: for what sin was she killed?”

they will be asked: by what right did you prevent God’s *ḥudūd* from occupying the rank worthy of them and prefer others over them?

“When the scrolls are unfolded”

the vices and defects of the various beliefs will be laid bare.

“When the heaven is stripped away like a covering”

the memory of misguided leaders will be erased from hearts, for their role has ended, everything has reached the Day of Resurrection, the cycles are completed, and all is in the hands of the One, the All-Subduing.

“When Hell is kindled”

the master of the Day of Resurrection will manifest to the recalcitrant the sign of God’s threat.

“And when Paradise is brought near”

God’s promises will be realized for the God-fearing in both this lower world and the afterlife.

“Then every soul will know what it has prepared for itself.”

Then souls will know the true reality of everything announced by the Messengers.

Then the adherents of divine unity will remain as long as the heavens and earth endure, and day by day the signs of religiosity will diminish until they disappear altogether.

Knowledge will again become potential because it will have no bearers, while ignorance will become manifest because the ignorant are numerous.

Then the world will fall under the savage dominion of ignorance.

As the Most High said:

“They will remain therein for known ages … [drinking] foul liquid.”

After that God will create what He wills and judge as He wills, in accordance with His wisdom.

All this belongs to Him, because this is the **second limit of existents**, whose first limit is Creation—that is, the Created, that is, the First Existent, as we have already said.

The two will become conjoined, creation will be completed, the final goal and limit of all things will be realized, and the universal form will be fulfilled.

Having now reached what we promised at the beginning of this book, we say:

Those who attempt to know what lies beyond without relying upon the delineations of the Most High, rejecting truth while remaining under the dominion of their mixture and imprisoned by the impulses of their own essence, are in error.

The philosophers are in error when they teach concerning the soul, its ranks, and how it rises from the degree of the sensory soul to that of the speaking/rational soul.

Completely under the domination of their theories, they imagine that all this is truth.

Skilled in obtaining premises by which they disclose what is hidden, they confine themselves to the knowledge set out in their five books—logic, physics, and topics—and forget the disciplining of the soul through religious action and everything that makes it morally sound and well-ordered.

The Muʿtazilites and those like them are likewise in error.

What felicity can such people attain, and what deed can they accomplish?

Yet this alone is the hope of those who wish the soul to rise from the sensory degree to the angelic degree and attain felicity, and only in this way can vices be transformed into virtues, as we wrote in *The Crown of Intellects*.

But they neither believe this nor practice it.

The Most High clearly said concerning those who believe in one part of Scripture while rejecting another:

“Do you believe in one part of the Scripture and reject another? The recompense of those among you who do this is only disgrace in the present life.”

“Do you believe in one part of the Scripture and reject another?”

Here He speaks both of what is connected with outward worship, for that is a “part,” and of what is connected with inward worship, for that too is a “part.”

He asks reproachfully:

Do you believe in the two forms of worship prescribed by the Scripture of the Most High, through which the perfection and felicity of the soul are attained?

Or do you practice only one part—outward worship through action or inward worship through knowledge—observing and preserving it while despising and rejecting the other, that is, forgetting the ordinances of the other form of worship, whether inward worship through knowledge or outward worship through action?

“The recompense of those among you who do this is only disgrace in the present life.”

By acting in this way, accepting one part of worship and rejecting another, you attain nothing.

You only diminish your piety, deprive the soul of felicity, and cast it into suffering.

“And on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most severe punishment.”

After all the cycles have passed, its condition will be worst of all.

On the Day of Resurrection, when

“the trumpet is sounded,”

the soul will be overtaken by the most severe grief and remorse because it failed to worship the Most High as it ought, and it will long for intercession, but this will not be granted, because the ordinances of the religious community have already passed into actuality.

“God is not heedless of what you do.”

For the *ḥudūd* who substitute for the Most High in the new creation have never neglected what was incumbent, teaching and urging worship as prescribed.

“Those who purchase the present life at the price of the life to come…”

This refers to those who restrict themselves to only one form of worship instead of joining both together and adhering to the ordinances of both.

These are those already described as partly believing and partly unbelieving:

the tricksters and deceivers within our community who believe in outward worship through action but reject inward worship through knowledge;

the philosophers and extremist Shiʿites who believe in inward worship through knowledge but reject outward worship through action;

and all those like them who despise the sayings of God's holy friends and His *ḥudūd*.

They have sold their afterlife for what seemed to them valuable in this lower life, surrendering themselves wholly to the delineations of their own reason, rejecting the guidance of the vicegerents of the Most High along the true path to salvation, failing to devote themselves to inward worship as they devote themselves to outward worship, or to outward worship as they devote themselves to inward worship.

"Their punishment will not be lightened, nor will they be helped."

Their torment and sorrow will not leave them, nor will they be able to free themselves from those malignant beliefs that have taken root in their souls and entered their flesh and blood.

Can the soul indeed be felicitous if it does not gather together **knowledge and action**, if it is not adorned by one or the other—or by both together—if it rejects the conditions required for them and does not submit to the one who guides toward the Manifest Truth?

Can one who confines himself to outward worship alone—which rectifies the soul by restraining it from passions and purifying it from everything that through its mixture makes it resemble beasts—by his own intellect, without learning or reading anything, encompass knowledge of divine unity and the principles of existents, the beginning of the created world, and the limit in which the soul's perfection and fullness consist?

And is one who knows that generosity is the mean between stinginess and prodigality, and courage the mean between cowardice and recklessness, thereby already generous and courageous if he has not yet performed a single generous or courageous act?

No.

Potential intellects cannot attain actuality without the assistance of the divinely appointed **resurrecting guide** (*bāʿith*), the supported and perfected one, complete and actual, such as our Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and his family, and his successors in guidance and instruction.

The felicity of the soul is attained only when it receives from them guidance in both **deeds and knowledge**.

And in professing divine unity, let the soul know that He with whom all existents are connected is a **Name** for which, among existents, no form, attribute, or anything whatsoever resembling it can be found by means of which intellects might encompass or imprint Him.

For every form imprinted or every statement made concerning Him is itself produced by Him, the Most High, and is one of His acts.

If anyone wishes to speak concerning Him, imagining that through speculation, thought, and imagination he has attained what he seeks, then immediately that which he regards as a

complete and sufficient statement concerning the Most High turns into some attribute of an existent produced by Him.

It is exactly like trying to express the **hamza**, which possesses no form of its own in the language: it turns into an *alif*, *wāw*, or *yāʾ*, which do belong to and form part of the language.

Such is the universal whole whose particulars are known to one who is truly our brother.

Glory be to Him concerning whom intellects, whenever they ascribe an attribute, immediately negate it.

There is no god but Him, Lord of the Mighty Throne. With this we conclude this book, praising God, Lord of the worlds.

May His blessing rest upon His Messenger, the master of the Messengers, and upon his pure family.

God is sufficient for us; He is an excellent Guardian. Excellent is this Protector, excellent is this Helper.

The copying of this blessed book of our master Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, **ḥujja of the Two Iraqs**, the great shaykh and most wise philosopher—may his grave be sanctified and may God grant us of his grace—was completed on the fifteenth of Shaʿbān in the year 1093 of the Hijra of our Prophet and master Muḥammad, may God bless and greet him and his family.

It was copied by the poor servant and great sinner before God Most High, the obedient servant of Muḥammad and ʿAlī, their family, and all the pure Imams:

ʿ**Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Shaykh Maḥmūd**, a native of Yemen, originally from Najrān, residing in India at Hyderabad.

Strength and power come only from God, the Great and Most High, the Merciful, the All-Forgiving Guardian.

May God grant us the grace of the Imam of our age.

Footnotes

[1] Qurʾān 54:11–12. Al-Kirmānī omits the words “and We caused the earth to gush forth with springs” (the cited passage concerns the beginning of the Flood).

[1] Qurʾān 2:43; 2:83; 2:100, and elsewhere.

[1] Qurʾān 2:183.

[1] Qurʾān 19:16.

[1] Qurʾān 96:1.

[1] Qurʾān 96:5.

[1] See al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ*, no. 3141. Parallels: al-Bukhārī nos. 3, 2999, 4541–4545, 4572–4575, 5746, 6467; Muslim nos. 231, 233; al-Tirmidhī no. 3565; Ibn Ḥanbal nos. 14502, 24046, 24681, 24768.

[1] Qurʾān 74:1–2.

[1] Qurʾān 20:114.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Qurʾān 5:70.

[1] Qurʾān 4:59.

[1] Qurʾān 42:51.

[1] An allusion to the appearance of the archangel Gabriel to Mary:

"We sent to her Our Spirit, and he appeared before her in the form of an ordinary man."

(Qurʾān 19:17.)

[1] Qurʾān 4:77.

[1] Qurʾān 14:24.

[1] Qurʾān 24:35.

[1] "Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day are signs for those endowed with understanding, those who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect upon 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'" (Qurʾān 3:190–191).

[1] "…and lying down" — in the original, *ʿalā junūbihim*, literally "[lying] on their sides," or "on their various sides." Al-Kirmānī interprets these different "sides" as different states.

[1] "Have they not traveled through the earth so that they might have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the breasts that are blind" (Qurʾān 22:46).

[1] Qurʾān 38:45.

[1] Qurʾān 47:11. The preceding verse reads: "Have they not traveled through the earth and seen what was the end of those before them? God destroyed them; and the same will befall these unbelievers" (47:10).

[1] Ḥadīth.

[1] See note 13 to the present chapter.

[1] This expression is borrowed from Qurʾān 2:26: "God is not ashamed to set forth as a parable a mosquito or something even more insignificant than it."

[1] Qurʾān 22:52.

[1] Qurʾān 8:1.

[1] Qurʾān 8:41.

[1] In other words, all the missing links in the complete picture of the cosmos that must exist for that picture to attain completion, but which do not exist at the present moment.

[1] Ḥadīth.

[1] See notes 2 and 3 to VII, 11. Below, al-Kirmānī maintains that wonder-working can occur without any deception of the senses, although Ibn Khaldūn holds the opposite view. At the same time, Ibn Khaldūn likewise believes in the extraordinary powers of magicians and wonder-workers:

"Their actions really do take place. I have encountered many of them and witnessed them without the slightest shadow of doubt. This is what may be said concerning magicians and wonder-workers and their influence upon the world."

(Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, p. 501.)

[1] The original contains a wordplay: **miracle** (*muʿjiz*) literally means "something that renders [another] incapable," hence something impossible to reproduce.

[1] See note 4 to IV, 6.

[1] "Receptive" — in the original, *jawdatu al-taṣawwur*, that is, "possessing a good capacity for imprinting forms."

[1] Three classes of beings are enumerated: human beings, animals, and minerals.

[1] "…to him" — to the corresponding Speaker, from Adam through Muḥammad.

[1] "God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is as a lamp in a niche: the lamp is in a glass vessel; the glass vessel shines like a brilliant star. It is kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West; its oil almost gives light even though no fire touches it. Light upon light! God guides to His light whomever He wills. God sets forth similitudes for mankind. God knows all things" (Qurʾān 24:35).

[1] "Then He turned toward the heaven when it was smoke and said to it and to the earth: Come to Me willingly or unwillingly! They both said: We come willingly!" (Qurʾān 41:11).

[1] An allusion to the ḥadīth: "When God struck me between the shoulder blades, I received knowledge [of all people], from the first to the last."

[1] "Both of them" — the Speaker and the Legatee.

[1] As in Russian, in Arabic the words for **olive** and **oil** are etymologically related.

[1] In al-Kirmānī's view, these deputies are likenesses of "the one who substitutes for God."

[1] Qurʾān 13:8.

[1] "Someone asked concerning a punishment destined to befall the unbelievers, which none can avert, from God, Lord of the ascending degrees, by which the angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day whose length is fifty thousand years. So be patient with beautiful patience. They see it as far away, but We see it as near" (Qurʾān 70:1–7).

In interpreting this passage below, al-Kirmānī omits its opening words ("Someone asked concerning a punishment destined to befall the unbelievers"). He then takes the pronoun "it/he" not as referring to the punishment but to the **master of the seventh cycle**, and joins the words "from God" to this part of the verse, whereas according to the normal Qurʾānic division they begin another phrase and are connected with the verb "asked." As a result, when removed from their Qurʾānic context, the words *laysa lahu dāfiʿun min Allāh*, although not themselves altered, are understood by al-Kirmānī not as "a punishment which none can avert, from God," but as **"there is no obstacle to him from God."** This is the translation used below in his interpretation of the quotation.

[1] Qurʾān 78:38.

[1] An allusion to the verses: "They ask you to hasten the punishment, but God will never break His promise; truly, one day with your Lord is as a thousand years by your reckoning" (22:47); and "He directs the affair from heaven to earth, then it ascends to Him in a day whose measure is a thousand years according to your reckoning" (32:5).

[1] Qurʾān 70:8–9.

[1] Qurʾān 15:38–39.

[1] An allusion to the well-known episode of the golden calf fashioned by the people of Moses. See Qurʾān 7:148; 20:77–99; Bible, Exodus 32.

[1] "When the Prophet secretly confided a matter to one of his wives, and she disclosed it [to another of his wives], God made it known to him; he acknowledged part of it and passed over part. When he told her of it, she said: Who informed you of this? He said: the Knowing, the Aware informed me. If you two repent before God, your hearts have indeed inclined; but if you support one another against him [the Prophet], then God is his Protector, together with Gabriel and every righteous believer, and the angels thereafter are his helpers" (Qurʾān 66:3–4).

[1] Probably an allusion to the verses: "Truly, We have granted you a manifest victory, so that God may forgive you your former and later sins and complete His favor upon you" (Qurʾān 48:1–2).

[1] Al-Kirmānī has in mind the phrase from the verse under discussion: "[grant me respite] until [a certain] day on which they are resurrected." The word "day" here appears without the definite article: *ilā yawmin yubʿathūna* — "until a day on which they are raised up."

[1] In the original there is a metaphor: **"they rolled hearts into a scroll inaccessible to God's friends."** The literal sense of this expression is used below in the interpretation of the verse concerning the rolling up of the heavenly scroll.

[1] Qurʾān 21:104.

[1] "We sent Moses with Our signs: Bring your people out of darkness into light, and remind them of the days of God; truly, in this are signs for every patient and grateful person" (Qurʾān 14:5). This sūra recounts peoples who disobeyed their Prophets. Apparently al-Kirmānī contrasts Moses with the future Ismaili hierarch precisely because the former was unable to establish the true faith completely.

[1] "On the day when they see the angels, there will be no glad tidings that day for the wicked; they will say to them: 'A ban, utterly forbidden!' Then We shall turn to the deeds they performed and make them scattered dust" (Qurʾān 25:22–23).

[1] The **Night of Destiny** (*laylat al-qadr*) — the 27th of Ramaḍān, the night on which the revelation of the Qurʾān to Muḥammad began.

[1] "On the day when the trumpet is blown, all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will be terrified, except whom God wills to exempt; then all will come before Him humbled. You will see the mountains, which you suppose to be motionless, passing like clouds—the workmanship of God, who perfected all things. He knows well what you do" (Qurʾān 27:87–88).

[1] In the cited verse al-Kirmānī reads the word *ṣūr* ("trumpet") as *ṣuwar* ("forms")—the two are written identically in the unvocalized consonantal script—and reads the verb *yunfakhu* ("it will be blown") not in the passive but as the active *yanfakhu* ("he breathes [spirit] into"). The opening words of the verse consequently become: **"The day that breathes [spirit] into the forms."** Recall that, for al-Kirmānī, the "day" is the Resurrector, the completer of all cycles.

[1] "Before him" — before the Resurrector. Arabic does not distinguish uppercase and lowercase letters, so formally al-Kirmānī, in using the third-person pronoun, does not contradict the wording of the verse, in which the pronoun refers to God.

[1] "O mankind! Fear your Lord; truly, the convulsion of the Hour is a tremendous thing. On the day when you see it, every nursing mother will abandon what she nurses, and every pregnant woman will miscarry her burden; you will see people as though drunk, though they are not drunk. But God's punishment is terrible" (Qurʾān 22:1–2).

[1] Possibly an allusion to the sūra *The Earthquake*: "When the earth is shaken with its shaking, and the earth casts forth its burdens, and man says, 'What is the matter with it?'—on that day it will recount what befell it, because your Lord will have revealed it to it…" (Qurʾān 99:1–5).

[1] Qurʾān 73:17.

[1] Qurʾān 9:93.

[1] "On that day some faces will be radiant, looking toward their Lord. On that day some faces will be gloomy, as are the faces of people expecting a crushing calamity to befall them" (Qurʾān 75:22–23).

[1] Qurʾān 54:54–55.

[1] The parable cited by al-Kirmānī is probably apocryphal. Its content resembles the parable of those invited and chosen; cf. Bible, Luke 14:16–24.

[1] "You will one day see the light of believing men and believing women streaming before them and on their right: 'Glad tidings for you today of gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein you will abide forever!' This is the great felicity. Then the hypocritical men and women will say to those who believe: 'Look toward us so that we may take some of your light.' It will be said: 'Go back and seek light for yourselves.' A wall will be set between them, with a gate in it: within it is mercy; outside it, on every side, is torment" (Qurʾān 57:12–13).

[1] Qurʾān 82:1.

[1] Qurʾān 82:2.

[1] Qurʾān 82:3.

[1] Qurʾān 82:4.

[1] Qurʾān 82:5.

[1] Qurʾān 81:1.

[1] Qurʾān 81:2.

[1] Qurʾān 81:3.

[1] Qurʾān 81:4.

[1] Qurʾān 81:5.

[1] Qurʾān 81:6.

[1] Qurʾān 81:7.

[1] Qurʾān 81:8–9.

[1] Qurʾān 81:10.

[1] Qurʾān 81:11.

[1] Qurʾān 81:12.

[1] Qurʾān 81:13.

[1] Qurʾān 81:14.

[1] “Gehenna will lie in wait, a refuge for those who deviate from the truth. There they will remain for known ages. There they will taste no coolness, nor will they have any drink except boiling water and foul liquid” (Qurʾān 78:21–25).

[1] “The philosophers” — the Arabic-speaking Peripatetics.

[1] “Do you believe in one part of the Scripture and reject another? The recompense of those among you who do this is only disgrace in the present life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the severest punishment. God is not heedless of what you do. For those who purchase the present life at the price of the life to come, the punishment will not be lightened, nor will they receive help” (Qurʾān 2:85–86).

[1] See notes 57 and 58 to the present chapter.

[1] “The Manifest Truth” — this expression is borrowed from two Qurʾānic verses, 24:25 and 27:79.

[1] The *hamza* represents the glottal stop and is not counted as one of the letters of the alphabet. According to Arabic orthographic rules, the *hamza* is usually written upon one of the letters mentioned here.

[1] This corresponds to **20 August 1682 CE**. The Hijra is Muḥammad’s migration with his companions from Mecca to Medina, which took place in 622 CE. The Muslim calendar is reckoned from that year.