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KNOWLEDGE AND FELICITY OF THE SOUL IN FAKHR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ

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Abstract

The dissertation posits that the late works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) portray knowledge as central both for the perfection of the soul and for the achievement of eternal felicity in the afterlife. To fully explore this thesis, the dissertation researches distinct topics as explored in Rāzī's later corpus with a focus on Rāzī's last work, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, including human epistemology, syllogistic reasoning, spiritual inspiration, magic and miracles, cosmology, the soul, and the afterlife. The first chapter explores the two primary paths to knowing as posited by Rāzī, namely, theoretical reasoning and spiritual striving (or, ideally, the combination of the two). Knowledge acquisition through theoretical reasoning is the subject of the second chapter, which discusses the process and importance of syllogistic reasoning in Rāzī's later works. Given that the celestial realm is fundamental for the reception of knowledge as achieved through spiritual striving, the third chapter of the dissertation explores the structure and function of Rāzī's cosmology particularly as it relates to divine inspiration, revelation, and human perfection. The topics treated in this chapter are the widest ranging of the dissertation, as the existence of celestial beings and their relation to humankind allows not only for the prophet's access to divine knowledge and his production of miracles but also for the existence and efficacy of the occult sciences. Finally, the fourth and final chapter of the dissertation brings together these strands of research into Rāzī's discursive and non-discursive epistemologies to discuss the importance of knowledge for the perfection and felicity of the human soul. The chapter first discusses Rāzī's views of the nature of the soul as presented in his later works and then addresses the nature of the afterlife and the effects of knowledge acquisition on the eternal life of the soul. Each chapter also explores other intellectual thinkers and trends as they relate to distinct concepts and arguments, locating sources of influence not only in the Islamic theological and

philosophical traditions but also in the Corpus Hermeticum, texts (pseudo and authentic) of the Greek philosophical tradition and the portrayal of these figures in Islamic works, and in the writings of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'.

Transliteration

I follow the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES) system for Arabic and Persian transliterations.

I refer to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī throughout the dissertation as Rāzī for the sake of brevity. However, I retain the definite article in the proper names of all others to whom I refer unless as it has become the convention to drop the article (as in Ibn ʿArabī).

Introduction

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) was one of the most important forces in the formation of the post-classical Islamic intellectual landscape and yet, simultaneously, is one of the most understudied. His works were critical for the incorporation of philosophical methods and concepts into theological texts, in the intertwining of the rationalist mode with mystical experience, and for continued critical engagement with the philosophical tradition after the 12th century. Rāzī spent his life reading and digesting Ibn Sīnā's corpus and producing his own creative and unique response that incorporated not only traditional Ashʿarite views in some cases, but also a variety of other philosophical, mystical, and theological traditions, including Muʿtazilite, Hermetic, Neoplatonic, and Ismāʿilī thought. It is no exaggeration to state that we cannot hope to understand the intellectual landscape that formed after the 12th century in the Islamic world without understanding Rāzī's works and the role that he played in these transformations.

Yet the current scholarship on Rāzī is surprisingly paltry, with this central figure having only gained serious attention in roughly the last two decades. In part, this is due to the dismissal of those critical of the *falsafa* movement, particularly those belonging to the Ashʿarite school of thought, as unworthy of serious study. The glorification of the *falsafa* movement in Western academia has been a two-sided sword, in no small part due to the mistaken conclusion that philosophy in Islam ceased after the 6th/12th century, partly stifled by orthodox scholars.[1] It is

[1] For a review of 19th and 20th century scholarship on this point, and the indictment of al-Ghazālī as an anti-rationalist thinker whose works led to the collapse of the *falsafa* movement, see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–7. For an early critique of the view of the Islamic world as simply receiving, preserving, and transmitting the Greek sciences to the Latin world, with science and philosophy remaining on the margins of the Islamic world itself, see A. Sabra, "The Appropriation and Subsequent

certainly true that the formative stage of the *falsafa* movement was restricted to the 9th through 12th centuries, being largely driven by the translation of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic and the digestion of those works. Yet after the 12th century, the methods, concepts, and impulses generated by the *falsafa* movement were incorporated into an increasingly syncretic and creative intellectual landscape by which Islamic philosophy became intertwined with theology and mysticism, and at which point the primary point of engagement turned from Aristotle to Ibn Sīnā.

This assumption of an end to the golden age of Islamic philosophy is contradicted by a wealth of manuscripts that comprise not only philosophical treatises but also a rich commentary tradition.[2] The conclusion further ignores a multitude of ways in which the methods and concepts of the philosophical movement were appropriated and transformed in both theological and mystical texts. Further, accepting the *falsafa* tradition as the *only* philosophical way of thinking in Islam, and bemoaning its early end, has had the unfortunate effect of neglecting or dismissing other intellectual traditions as unworthy of serious study. This is most apparent when it comes to scholarship on post-12th century Islamic intellectual history, coinciding with the end of the influence of the Islamic tradition on the Latin West given that the second translation movement

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Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement," *History of Science* 25, no. 3 (1987): 223–243.

[2] In addition to exploring the ways in which Avicenna's metaphysical views were appropriated by post-Avicennian theologians, Robert Wisnovsky is spearheading much of the research into the post-Avicennian philosophical commentary tradition. On this line of research, see Robert Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (ca. 1100-1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 47 (2004): 149–191 and Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicenna's Islamic Reception," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 190–213.

from Arabic to Latin largely focused on Arabic and Greek texts produced in and before the 12th century.

Thus, until relatively recently, those medieval thinkers who were critical of the *falāsifa* were often dismissed ipso facto as *non*-rationalist, despite their criticisms often being constructed and conveyed through the same or similar methods as those employed by the Islamic Philosophers[3] and their own works largely being driven by rationalist concerns.[4] Scholarship on Rāzī has further been influenced by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1273–4) portrayal of Rāzī as an unconstructive and unyielding critic of Ibn Sīnā, with al-Ṭūsī and subsequent Shiʿī thinkers emerging as the (self-proclaimed) defenders of Avicennism.[5] Further, while there has been

[3] Here and throughout the dissertation, I capitalize Philosophers when referring to the *falāsifa*.
[4] Of the reduced scholarly interest in Ashʿarite theology, El-Rouayheb writes "In the course of the twentieth century, the type of philosophically informed Ashʿari theology that Rāzī represented fell out of fashion in many parts of the Sunni Islamic world, and gave way to a growing interest in the supposedly more 'rationalist' perspective of Muʿtazilite theologians and Arabic Aristotelians, or in the supposedly more pristine 'Islamic' approach of scholars like the iconoclastic purist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). This has contributed to a noticeable tendency to deemphasize the importance of the later Ashʿarites in general, both by Western and Sunni historians." Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic, 900-1900* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 39–40.
[5] As we will see born out in this dissertation, Rāzī approached Ibn Sīnā in a manner that is both critical and systematic. His lifelong engagement with Avicennism bespeaks not rejection but careful critique and appropriation of the ideas of the thinker that he arguably viewed as most worthy of his time and mental effort. While certain theories of Ibn Sīnā's are rejected after careful analysis, many metaphysical commitments are ultimately integrated into Rāzī's own views. And yet, al-Ṭūsī famously relayed that Rāzī's commentary on the *Ishārāt* should be termed a *jarḥ* ("calumny") rather than a *sharḥ* ("commentary") and noted that Rāzī went so far in his refutation as to denigrate Ibn Sīnā. Disagreeing fundamentally on the role of the commentator (*taḥqīq*), al-Ṭūsī sought to defend Avicennism from such attacks. On the historical portrayal of Rāzī in narratives of post-classical Islamic philosophy as one of Ibn Sīnā's greatest opponents, see Robert Wisnovsky, "Towards a Genealogy of Avicennism," *Oriens* 42 (2014): 323–63. On the influence of this portrayal on 20th century scholarship on Arabic logic, see El-Rouayheb, *Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic, 900-1900*, 40.
We may also posit that scholarship on Rāzī has been influenced by the mischaracterization of Rāzī's will and testament (his *waṣiyya*) as conveying repentance for a life of engagement with the philosophical tradition, a misrepresentation that can be traced back to Ibn Taymiyya. See Tony Street, "Concerning the Life and Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Islam: Essays on*

significant attention paid to classical theological intellectual trends (with particular focus given to Muʿtazilite thought, long considered the rationalist strain in Islamic theology), scholars tend to differentiate between *kalām* and *falsafa* in such a way as to preclude consideration of the influence and overlap of these traditions in methodology, concepts, and metaphysical concerns. While some scholarship has been devoted to the study of the relationship between theology and philosophy in Islam, there is much ground yet to be covered, particularly when it comes to the post-classical period. Rāzī has only recently come to be recognized as one of the most intellectually complex thinkers of the medieval Islamic world**.**

1. Rāzī's Life and Influence

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was born during the month of Ramaḍān in the year 543/1149 or 544/1150 to an Ashʿarite theologian of the town of Rayy.[6] His father, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī, was well-versed in traditional Ashʿarite thought and his guidance was the first formative element for Rāzī. He was also well known for his preaching, and hence, Rāzī is called the son of the preacher, Ibn al-Khaṭīb, or, less

Scripture, thought, and society: a festschrift in honour of Anthony H. Johns, ed. Peter G. Riddell, Anthony H. Johns, and Tony Street, Islamic philosophy, theology, and science, v. 28 (Leiden ; New York: Brill, 1997), 135–46.

[6] Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1222) notes that he was born in 543/1149, while al-Mundhirī (d. 656/1258) relays both dates while casting doubt on his birth being in 544/1150. Ibn al-Qifṭī only reports the date of 543/1149, and Ibn al-Khallikān (d. 681/1282) relays the discrepancy. See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh = Ibn-el-Athiri chronicon, quod perfectissimum inscribitur*, ed. Carl Johan Tornberg, vol. 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1851), vol. 12, 190; ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm ibn ʿAbd al-Qawī al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala*, ed. B. ʿA. Maʿrūf (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1981), vol. 2, 187; ʿAlī Ibn-Yūsuf al-Qifṭī, *Ibn al-Qifṭī's Tā'rīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, ed. August Müller and Julius Lippert (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1903), 292; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʻAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), vol. 4, 252; Frank Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 316; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafafiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1963), 15–16.

commonly, son of the preacher of Rayy, Ibn Khaṭīb al-Rayy. Al-Makkī gained repute for his knowledge of comparative law and legal methodology (*fī ʿilm al-khilāf wa-l-uṣūl*) having studied theology under al-Anṣārī (who became the chief Ashʿarite authority in the eastern Muslim provinces after the death of his teacher, al-Juwaynī, d. 478/1085), and Shāfiʿī jurisprudence under al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd al-Farrāʾ al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122).[7] Rāzī's father, whose own intellectual lineage is traced back to both al-Ashʿarī and al-Shāfiʿī, guided his study of Islamic jurisprudence (*ʿilm al-uṣūl*).[8] Rāzī studied with his father until his death, when Rāzī was relatively young.[9]

While Rāzī's father is of utmost importance for his intellectual growth,[10] his older brother, Rukn al-Dīn, serves as only an odd side-note in the biography of Fakhr al-Dīn and as a testament to Rāzī's enviable success. According to Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, Rukn al-Dīn was also a scholar of law and jurisprudence of considerably less renown who grew frustrated with his

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[7] Rāzī's father, al-Makkī, is said to have written several works on theology, law, and religious exhortation. The second volume of al-Makkī's theological summa, *Nihāyat al-marām fī dirāyat al-kalām*, previously thought to be lost, is now available through a published facsimile. See Ḍiyā al-Dīn al-Makkī, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Father, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Makkī. Nihāyat al-Marām fī Dirāyat al-Kalām. Facsimile of the Autograph Manuscript of Vol. II*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Berlin; Tehran: Freie Universität Berlin and Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 2013).
As Shihadeh notes, Rāzī's references to his father in his *Tafsīr* indicate that al-Makkī was likely influenced by the Sufism of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), with whom al-Anṣārī studied. The Sufi tendencies in Rāzī's works may then be traced as well to his own intellectual and paternal lineage, for al-Makkī was both father and teacher to his son.
[8] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, vol. 4, 252.
[9] While earlier sources note that al-Rāzī went on to study under other teachers after his father's death, the date of his father's death is given much later by Ismāʿīl Pāshā al-Baghdādī (d. 1339/1920) as 559/1163-64 in *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn.* This would make Fakhr al-Dīn only fourteen or fifteen at the time of his father's death. See Ismāʿīl Bāshā Bābānī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn: asmāʾ al-muʾallifīn wa āthār al-muṣannifīn* (Istanbul: Wakālat al-Maʿārif, 1951), vol. 1, 784;
[10] Rāzī expresses his intellectual and spiritual indebtedness to his father at several points in his works. He notes that he was his father both in birth and in learning (*al-ifāda*). See Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Riyāḍ al-mūniqa fi ārāʾ ahl al-ʿilm*, ed. al-Asʿad Jumʿah (Tunis: Markaz al-Nashr al-Jāmiʿī, 2004), 184;

younger sibling's success. He would follow Fakhr al-Dīn wherever he went, slandering him, professing his own greater knowledge, and writing his own works that he claimed outstripped those of his brother. While Fakhr al-Dīn practiced patience, suggesting to his brother that he take up residence in Rayy and that he would provide for him, Rukn al-Dīn was unrelenting. Ultimately, at his wit's end, Fakhr al-Dīn approached his then-patron, the Sultan Khwarazmshah, and asked that he confine his brother to a certain locality and provide for him. This he did, assigning him a fief (*iqṭāʾ*) yielding one thousand dirhams per year, where Rukn al-Dīn remained until his death.[11]

Of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's mother, not uncharacteristically, nothing is written.

Regarding Rāzī's continued education, biographical sources relate that after his father's death, he studied under al-Kamāl al-Simnānī (d. 575/1179–80) then returned to Rayy and studied philosophy under al-Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī (who was also the teacher of Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, d. 587/1191), whom he followed to Marāgha after al-Jīlī was invited to teach there.[12] Rāzī's excelling in his studies, including the study of philosophy, is a common theme in the biographies. His engagement with *falsafa* also reflects the spirit of the time, during which Avicennian philosophy became, as Gutas phrases it, "the fashion of the day," and the works in particular of Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and Abū Barakāt al-Baghdādī represented central reference points for scholars of both *kalām* and *falsafa*.[13] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa relates that Muḥyi al-

[11] Aḥmad ibn al-Qāsim Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, ed. Anṭūn Ṣāliḥānī (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Wahbiyya, 1882), vol. 2, 25-26.
[12] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, vol. 4, 250; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 23; Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 318–19.
[13] On key developments in 6th/12th century kalām and the engagement of numerous thinkers with *falsafa*, see Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th / 12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy: a Historical Journal* 15, no. i (2005): 141–79. For a contextualization of Rāzī's engagement with Ibn Sīnā among other

Dīn, the Qāḍī of Marand, told him that Rāzī studied jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with his father who headed the *madrasa* in Marand, and that, at the same time, he took up the study of various branches of philosophy (*al-ʿulūm al-hikmiyya*) by himself. Rāzī distinguished himself, relates Muḥī al-Dīn, and he outshone all others.[14] Ibn al-Qifṭī relates that Rāzī studied the works of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī during his time in Khorasān—"and he learned a great deal from that."[15] Ibn Khallikān describes Rāzī as "surpassing the people of his time in theology (*ʿilm al-kālām*), [the science of] the intelligibles (*al-maʿqūlāt*), and the science of the ancients [i.e., Greek and Hellenic philosophy, *ʿilm al-awāʾil*]."[16] Rāzī's own love of learning shines through as well in these biographies, including one relayed quote in which Rāzī expresses regret at having to stop "devoting [himself] to knowledge (*ʿilm*) during meals, for time is precious."[17]

Rāzī travelled extensively throughout his life in Persian lands as well as to parts of central Asia and northern India.[18] After traveling for his studies, he went to Khwarazm, then Transoxiana, where he disputed with Muʿtazilite and Karramite scholars and was subsequently

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scholars of the 12th and 13th centuries, see Gerhard Endress, "Reading Avicenna in the Madrasa: Intellectual Genealogies and Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One. Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank.* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 371–422. See also Gutas' "Philosophy in the Twelfth Century" in which he grants further evidence for his claim that it is in fact in the centuries *after* Ibn Sīnā (namely 1000-1350 AD) that the golden age of Arabic philosophy occurred. Dimitri Gutas, "Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: One View from Baghdad, or the Repudiation of Al-Ghazālī," in *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, ed. Peter Adamson, Warburg Institute Colloquia 16 (London: Warburg Institute ; Savigliano, 2011), 9–26.

[14] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 23.

[15] al-Qifṭī, *Ibn al-Qifṭī's Tāʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, 291.

[16] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, vol. 4, 249.

[17] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 23.

[18] Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, Islamic philosophy, theology and science ; (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 4.

expelled from each region, at which point he returned to Rayy.[19] His autobiographical account of these debates, which mention one year, 582/1186, when he debated with Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī (when Rāzī would have been around 36 years old), can be read in *Munaẓarāt jarat fī bilād mā waraʾ al-nahr*.[20]

While his younger years were characterized by relative poverty,[21] his own scholarly success was met with enthusiastic and generous patronage by two warring powers, the Ghūrids and the Khwarazmshahs. He established close ties with a number of rulers, including Bahāʾ al-Dīn Sām (d. 602/1206), a minor Ghurid ruler residing in Bamiyan, as well as the Ghūrid sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn (d. 599/1203) of Ghazna and his brother and successor, Shihāb al-Dīn (also known as Muʿizz al-Dīn, d. 602/1206), then, later, the Khwarazmshah ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Tekesh (d. 596/1200).[22] This patronage changed Rāzī's fortunes completely, despite the conflicts between

[19] The chronology of these disputes on doctrine and expulsions is relayed by Ibn Khallikān. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, vol. 4, 249-50. See also Tariq Jaffer, *Razi: Master of Qur'anic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 56; al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafafiyya*, 19; Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 319–21; Street, "Concerning the Life and Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī"; P. Kraus and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, "Les 'Controverses' de Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 19 (1937): 187–214.

[20] On this period of debates as well as an edition and translation of the autobiographical *al-Munāẓarāt jarat fī bilād mā warāʾ al-nahr*, see Fathalla Kholeif, "A Study on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and his Controversies in Transoxiana" (Dar el-Machreq, 1966). On Rāzī's critiques of al-Ghazālī and his followers in the *Munāẓarāt,* see Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī," 157–62.

[21] al-Qifṭī, *Ibn al-Qiftī's Tā'rīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, 291.

[22] For an in-depth account of Rāzī's sources of patronage, see Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received."

these rulers (even within the same family), and he died a wealthy man.[23] He was survived by three children: a daughter and two sons, Shams al-Dīn and Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn.[24]

While Rāzī found support amongst his direct patrons, his disputes against the Karrāmiyya in the area (which included not only much of the populous but also members of the Ghurid leadership) produced such hostility amongst the common people that his own final will and testament (*waṣiyya*) requests that his death be kept secret.[25] Ibn al-Qifṭī reports that a mock-burial was held on the nearby mountain (as per Rāzī's request in his *waṣiyya*), but that his body was in fact buried in his home for fear of his corpse being mutilated.[26] Later biographers went so far as to state that Rāzī, who died of illness in 606/1210 at the age of sixty or so, was in fact poisoned by the Karrāmīs of Herat.[27] Rāzī's own report on the beliefs of the Karrāmiyya in *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn* may give us some insight into the conflict. He writes that all sects of the Karrāmiyya "believe God to be a body and an accident and a substrate of temporal originations (*maḥall li-l-ḥawādith*), and they establish for him dimension and spatial location."[28] Rāzī's dismay at this anthropomorphism is much in line with his insistence on God's

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[23] Al-Ṣafadī writes that, upon his death, Rāzī's wealth had accumulated to eighty thousand dinars, not counting other forms of wealth such as animals and land. Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-dawla, 1931), vol. 4, 254.
[24] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa relates that when Genghis Khan conquered the Khwarazmshah, al-Rāzī's son-in-law, ʿAlā al-Mulk, the vizier of the Khwarazmshah, sought asylum from Genghis Khan for himself and Rāzī's children (namely Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, Shams al-Dīn, and their unnamed sister who had married ʿAlā al-Mulk). They were spared, but all those who sought protection in their household were slaughtered. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 26.
[25] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, vol. 2, 28.
[26] al-Qifṭī, *Ibn al-Qifṭī's Tāʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, 291.
[27] See al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, vol. 4, 257; Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl ʿalā l-Rawḍatayn [ed. under the title Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa-sābiʿ]*, ed. M. Z. al-Kawtharī (Cario: Dār al-Kutub al-Mālikiyya, 1947), 68 as cited in Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 332.
[28] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn*, ed. ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1938), 67.

non-spatiality and utter transcendence beyond creation (*tanzīh*). He dismisses the writings of the founder of the Karrāmiyya, Ibn Karrām, as "at the extreme of feebleness and baseness."[29] Given Rāzī's oratory skill and intellectual prowess, his impatience with opinions he viewed as odious, and his apparent success in converting some of the Karrāmiyya to Ashʿarism (*madhhab al-sunna*), the rift between Rāzī and the Karrāmiyya is unsurprising.[30]

An even cursory discussion of Rāzī's students will allow us additional insight into Rāzī's legacy as a teacher. While those who learned from Rāzī were numerous, with Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa relating that as many as three hundred students followed Rāzī from place to place,[31] we can narrow this number considerably to a handful of star students who are highlighted by biographers. These include Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī **(**d. 618/1221), Zayn al-Dīn al-Kashshī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Naysābūrī, Ibrahīm bin ʻAbī Bakr bin ʿAlī al-Iṣfahānī (to whom Rāzī is said to have dictated his *waṣiyya*), Shams al-Dīn al-Khusrawshāhī (d. 652/1254), Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 649/1249), Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 663/1265), Tāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī, and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d 682/1283).[32] Given the death dates of some of these students, it is immediately apparent that Bar Hebraeus's list (which extends beyond the first three students listed by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa) is not entirely reliable. These students may have studied under Rāzī's direct students;

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[29] al-Rāzī, 67.

[30] al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, vol. 4, 249.
Most traditional sources that discuss the Karrāmiyya condemn them as heretics. For a far more balanced exposition of the development and beliefs of the Karrāmiyya, see Margaret Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan: The Karramiyya in Nishapur," *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1/4 (1994): 37–51 and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karāmiyyah in Khurasan," *The Muslim World* 50, no. 1 (January 1960): 5–14.

[31] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 23; al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, vol. 4, 248.

[32] al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafafiyya*, 32–36; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 23; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Tārīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal* (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlīkiyya lil-Ābāʾ al-Yasūʿiyyīn, 1890), 445.

Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, for instance, studied Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt* under Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī. For others, Rāzī's works were formative; Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī would have been merely fifteen years old at the time of Rāzī's death, but engaged fully with Rāzī's corpus and wrote an epitome of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*.[33]

The philosophical orientation of Rāzī's students is immediately apparent. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī, a direct student of Rāzī, wrote a commentary on the *Kulliyyāt* of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb*, and taught Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūṣī in medicine and philosophy (*ḥikma*) in Nīsābūr.[34] A significant portion of the students attributed to Rāzī did not focus on Ashʿarite theology or jurisprudence, but rather became known for their works in medicine, logic, and philosophy. Some, including al-Abharī and al-Khūnajī, were central to the development of logic in the Arabic tradition.

The influence of Rāzī for the development of Arabic logical, philosophical, and theological traditions, both directly through his writings and through his influence on further generations of scholars, is immeasurable. It is in fact Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and not al-Ghazālī who first largely replaced traditional *kalām* argumentative methodology with Aristotelian logic, beginning with his work *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, and who is responsible for the increased employment of logic in *kalām.*[35] Rāzī's influence is in fact so vast, including his warranting the sustained

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[33] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, third edition, s.v. "al- Khūnajī, Afḍal al-Dīn," by Khaled El-Rouayheb.

[34] Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ṭūsī, *Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's Memoir on Astronomy = al-Tadhkira fī ʿilm al-hayʾa*, trans. Faiz Jamil Ragep (New York: Springer-Verlag, c1993), 5–6.

[35] Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī," 168. For an analysis of the specific ways in which Rāzī both employed and critiqued Aristotelian logic, as well as the influence of his works on logic on the Arabic tradition, see El-Rouayheb, *Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic, 900-1900*, 39–69.

attention and critique of Ibn Taymiyya,[36] a significant place in Ibn Khaldūn's account of the history of *kalām*, continuous influence on the Qur'anic exegetical tradition (including on al-Baiḍāwī's commentary, d. 716/1316, which is still read in the core curriculum at al-Azhar),[37] and a significant role in the history of Arabic logic, that the task of demonstrating and detailing his importance in Persian and Arabic intellectual traditions (Islamic and otherwise[38]) given the vastness of evidence at hand would necessitate a lifetime of study in its own right.

2. Rāzī's Works

Rāzī's own intellectual development is evident as his works shift from traditional Ashʿarite thought, exemplified by the *Uṣūl al-Dīn* and *al-Ishāra fī ʿilm al-kalām*, to an introduction of Aristotelian logic into *kalām* while still claiming the purpose of theological enquiry to be the defense of orthodox creed, to a final stage in which he wrote works on logic, philosophy, medicine, and the occult sciences (an interest evident early with *al-Sirr al-maktūm*, which explores the theory and practice of talismanic magic) and produced his own eclectic philosophical theology. Rāzī's philosophical engagement also exhibits significant development. The relatively early philosophical work, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, for instance, explores ideas of the *falsafa* tradition, engaging primarily with Ibn Sīna (d. 429/1037) as well as Abū l-Barakāt

[36] On Ibn Taymiyya's objections against Rāzī's *ta'wīl* methodology and his employment of reason in exegesis, see Jaffer, *Razi*, 117–30 and Nicholas Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymiya and the Mutakallimūn," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. James A. Bellamy, Mustansir Mir, and Jarl E. Fossum (Princeton, N.J: The Darwin Press, 1993), 181–95.
[37] Jaffer, *Razi*, 2.
[38] On Rāzī's influence beyond Islamic circles, see for instance Gregor Schwarb, "The 13th Century Copto-Arabic Reception of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Al-Rashīd Abū l-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib's Risālat al-Bayān al-aẓhar fī l-radd ʿalā man yaqūlu bi-l-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2014): 143–69.

al-Baghdādī (d. 560/1164–5) and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925). In his introduction to the text, Rāzī notes that the book critically examines the views of his predecessors (just as, he maintains, these thinkers critiqued the theories of those who came before them).[39] Rāzī's own ideas are not fully developed in this work, and it is often difficult to discern his own opinion on any particular issue given that the book primarily explicates and critiques philosophical views. The commentary works which address Ibn Sīnā's corpus, including on *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt, Kitāb al-Najāt*, the *Kulliyyāt* of *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb*, and *ʿUyūn fī l-ḥikma*, also primarily explore Ibn Sīnā's thought often without clearly articulating a separate opinion on given topics. Yet Rāzī's final opus of philosophical theology, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, while methodologically scholastic in that it exhaustively considers possible opinions from a wide variety of sources, represents a decidedly constructive project wherein Rāzī often articulates his own opinion on topics in a way that is systematic and well-formed.

There arise, therefore, certain limitations when it comes to studying Rāzī. The first is the simple vastness of the material. This dissertation primarily addresses *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* and discusses other works such as *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr, Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā,* and *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* when appropriate. These texts alone account for nearly ten thousand printed pages of Arabic text. Thus, it is difficult to declare with absolute certainty, for instance, that Rāzī does not address a given topic even within a particularly expansive work given the limitations of time and human capacity. This becomes all the more complicated given that certain key works, including *al-Sirr al-maktūm*, have yet to be published and are only available in manuscript form.

[39] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt*, ed. Muḥammad al-Muʿtaṣim billāh Baghdādī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990), 3–5.

The second restriction is that it is of limited utility to compare works of different periods or genres unless one is attempting to chart Rāzī's intellectual development. It is worth noting that Eşref Altaş's study of the chronology of Rāzī's works (and its graphic, which makes the relative dating of the works accessible to non-Turkish speakers) is of immense value in delineating different periods of Rāzī's intellectual production.[40] I am cautious when addressing commentary works, and avoid, for instance, discussing *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* alongside *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* because I consider the goals of the work and the development of Rāzī's ideas therein to represent a very different stage than that achieved in the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr*. *Al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* is Rāzī's last eclectic and arguably most original work of philosophical theology, while *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (also called the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*), written during roughly the same period, is a verse-by-verse exegesis of the Qur'an. The *Tafsīr* is distinctive in its approach (of Rāzī's *Tafsīr*, Ibn Tamiyya famously said that it contained everything *but* exegesis).[41] Despite being of different genres, I have found that many of the discussions of the *Maṭālib* are echoed in the *Tafsīr,* at times with greater clarity offered on Rāzī's own position.

Al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya was al-Rāzī's last work, which he wrote at the end of his lifetime between 603/1207 and 606/1209. As a whole, the work treats the existence and nature of God and God's relationship with the universe and human beings as they exist as God's creations. Rāzī's method is scholastic: he poses a particular problem within a genre of issues, states multiple approaches (often including views of both the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa* as well as non-Muslim thinkers), and more often than not, gives his own adjudication on the answer to the

[40] See especially Eşref Altaş, "Fahreddin er-Razi Eserlerinin Kronolojisi," in *İslam düşüncesinin dönüşüm çağında Fahreddin er-Razi*, ed. Ömer Türker and Osman Demir (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2013), 155.
[41] al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, vol. 4, 254.

quandary with which he agrees (if there is one) in the form "We say" (*fa-naqūl*) at the end of the discussion.[42] In placing the philosophers and theologians into conversation through an extensive consideration of possible viewpoints, Rāzī follows the methodology first produced by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 560/1164-5) in his *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar*.[43] The books of the *Maṭālib* include: 1) Proof of the existence of God, and clarification that God is the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Itself; 2) On proofs on God's unity (*tawḥīd*) and incomparability (*tanzīh*); 3) On enumerating the affirmative names; 4) On investigation of creation (*al-ḥudūth*) and pre-eternity (*qidam*), and secrets of time (*dahr*) and eternity (*azal*); 5) On time (*zamān*) and place (*makān*); 6) On matter (*hayūlā*); 7) On lofty and lowly spirits (*arwāḥ*); 8) On prophecies (*nubuwwāt*) and what relates to them; and 9) On fate (*jabr*) and predestination (*qadar*). While Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 649/1249) authored an epitome of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, the work, despite being arguably the most intellectually developed text of Rāzī's corpus, is one of the least cited. This may be due to both the difficulty and length of the work, which spans nine volumes. A large portion of each section is devoted to exploring various views on a topic and raising objections, and it is often not at all clear to the non-specialized reader what Rāzī's own position

[42] Unfortunately, this is not to say that Rāzī only expresses his own opinion when he speaks in the first person. There are points in the text at which he evidently is voicing the opinion of his interlocutors in the first person, so use of the first person is not a reliable indicator of Rāzī's agreement or disagreement with the argument (if solely relied upon without reference to other factors).

[43] Frank Griffel, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," ed. Henrik Lagerlund, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 342–43.

may be.[44] However, many of the ideas developed in the *Maṭālib* are also expressed in Rāzī's *Tafsīr*, which enjoyed a far wider reception.[45]

There is a certain degree of contention in current scholarship as to whether *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* spans eight or nine volumes. Some argue that the ninth volume of the printed edition, which treats questions of human action and predestination, is in fact a separate text entitled *al-Jabr wa-l-qadar* (referred to as such by Rāzī in the *Tafsīr* and the *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* and cited by biographers as *al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*).[46] Shihadeh additionally notes that while the text is included as the ninth volume of the published edition of the *Maṭālib*, many manuscripts of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* (including the representative manuscript referenced throughout this dissertation) do not include it.[47] Alternatively, Aḥmad Saqqā, the editor of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, cites evidence culled from manuscripts and biographical dictionaries to argue that the ninth volume is in fact part of the *Maṭālib* proper.[48] Griffel, too, holds that *al-Jabr wa-l-qadar* represents the ninth volume of the in fact unfinished *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, which was intended to

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[44] It is in fact neither of these works that engendered a commentary tradition, but rather Rāzī's late *kalām* work *al-Maʿālim fī uṣūl al-dīn*. On the commentaries on Rāzī's *Maʿālim*, see Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (ca. 1100-1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," 176–77. While no longer extant, Ibn Taymiyya wrote commentaries on the *Muḥaṣṣal* and the *Arbaʿīn.* Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 9–10.

[45] Manuscripts of the *Tafsīr*, the most abundant in manuscript form of any of Rāzī's works, are far more widespread than manuscripts of the *Maṭālib*. Brockelmann, for instance, lists over thirty manuscripts of *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, and only two of *al-Maṭalib al-ʿāliya*. See Carl Brockelmann, "18 Kapitel Enzyklopädie und Polyhistorie," *Brockelmann Online*, n.d., accessed May 17, 2018.

[46] al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafafiyya*, 65.

[47] Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 10 n. 34. Additionally, while the editor of the Bierut 1987 edition of *al-Maṭalib al-ʿāliya*, Aḥmad Saqqā, includes *al-Jabr wa-l-qadar* as the ninth volume, he also prints an "author's introduction" preceding this text. No such introduction precedes any other volume of the *Maṭālib* save the first, and this may grant evidence for this work being separate from the *Maṭālib*.

[48] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Aḥmad Saqqā, al-Ṭabʿah 1. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987), vol. 1, 15-18.

span ten volumes.[49] The printed edition of the ninth volume includes a colophon dating the completion of the work to the end of the month of Muḥarram 606/1209, coinciding with the date of Rāzī's final will and testament (*waṣiyya*).[50] Given the likely dating of the volume and its contents, which align with viewpoints on human action and knowledge expressed in other volumes of the *Maṭālib* as well as in certain excurses in the *Tafsīr*, I have chosen to treat this work as part of the *Maṭālib* proper. The distinction makes little difference for the argument of this dissertation.

Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr (alternatively *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*) was completed in the last ten years of Rāzī's life with dated sections ranging from 595/1199 for the commentaries on Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (Q:3) and Sūrat al-Nisāʾ (Q:4) to 601/1204 for Sūrat al-Māʾida (Q:5) and 603/1207 for Sūrat al-Kahf.[51] It seems likely that the commentary on the first two suras (Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and Sūrat al-Baqarah) were in fact completed last.[52] It is unsurprising therefore that certain sections of the *Tafsīr* echo the *Maṭālib*, and vice versa, given that some of them may have been written coterminously. The style of the *Tafsīr* varies by verse and by topic. Any given verse may include the report on traditional interpretations of the verse by previous exegetes, a scholastic discussion of a topic that relates to the verse, or simply the presentation of Rāzī's own views on a related matter without reference to counterpoints.

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[49] Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 326. Rāzī does sketch ten divisions of the work in the introduction to his first volume which roughly correlate to the volumes of the *Maṭālib*. The tenth part listed in the introduction (evidently not completed) treats "the spiritual and physical hereafter (*maʿād*)." al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 63-64. Further, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa notes that the *Maṭālib*, which was Rāzī's last work, was never completed. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 29.
[50] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, 390.
[51] Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 325.
[52] Griffel, 325; Michel Lagarde, *Index du Grand commentaire de Faḫr al-Dîn al-Râzî* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996), 51–55.

Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā is also a later work that was likely written during the last years of Rāzī's life. While Rāzī notes in the colophon that he began writing the text in Herat, he states that he completed the work in 604/1208 in the Sultan's residence in Khwarazm.[53] The text is addressed primarily in the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation as it pertains to the superiority of intellectual pleasure over corporeal and what Rāzī terms "imaginal" pleasures. It is instrumental in discussing Rāzī's views of human perfection as well as his misgivings regarding the efficacy of intellectual inquiry.

The *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ,* also known as *Kitāb al-Akhlāq,* is discussed (though minimally so) in the dissertation and is dated by Altaṣ to Rāzī's late career (605-606/1209).[54] The text consists of two parts that each treat different questions relating to the soul. The first part explores various metaphysical questions about the nature of the soul while the second addresses specific impediments to the soul's attainment of spiritual happiness. Again, one may note the continuity of some discussions as they are treated in *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ* and are largely repeated in the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr*.

One earlier work treated in the dissertation is the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt.* While treated minimally in this dissertation because it is primarily an exploration and critique of Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* parallels key notions of knowledge and further indicates the ways in which Rāzī's notions of the importance of knowledge and of rationalist-mystical ascent connect to Avicennian thought. The work does not necessarily represent Rāzī's own views, however, though it may indicate that the ideas of which Rāzī was aware relatively early in his

[53] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, "Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā," in *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 265.
[54] Altaṣ, "Fahreddin er-Razi Eserlerinin Kronolojisi," 153.

career came to influence his mature thought. Shihadeh notes that the text appears to have been written around 580/1184, and is referred to in the *Muḥaṣṣal*.[55] Altaṣ dates the composition of *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* after the *Mulakhkhaṣ* (which was revised in 579/1183) but before the *Muḥaṣṣal*.[56]

The texts discussed above are those treated directly in this dissertation. While representative of Rāzī's engagement with philosophy, the list is by no means exhaustive. For a far more thorough account of Rāzī's works, the reader may consult Muḥammad al-Zarkān's *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa al-falsafafiyya*. Al-Zarkān discusses ninety-three works attributed to Rāzī as well as seventy-two of dubious attribution and twenty-nine that he believes to be apocryphal.[57] Additionally, a report of the most important works by Rāzī is given by both Shihadeh and Anawati.[58] According to Shihadeh, thirty-eight works written by Rāzī are published in modern editions, and an additional dozen works are extant only in manuscript form (bringing the total number of works accessible today to fifty).[59]

3. Literature Review

While there is much yet to be done in the study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, this is not to say that robust and in-depth scholarship has not yet been produced. While renewed interest in Rāzī has been particularly notable in the last decades, that he is a figure worthy of such serious study was first signaled by early and mid-20th century scholarship which noted the thoroughly creative

[55] Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 9, n. 29.
[56] Altaṣ, "Fahreddin er-Razi Eserlerinin Kronolojisi," 155.
[57] al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafafiyya*, 56–164.
[58] Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 7–11; *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* second edition*,* s.v. "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," by G.C. Anawati.
[59] Shihadeh, 267–68.

and rationalist nature of Rāzī's thought.[60] In the last decades, research on Rāzī has gained sustained and increasing attention by a growing contingent of scholars. Ayman Shihadeh has been at the forefront of Rāzī studies, producing an in-depth and wide-ranging 2006 monograph entitled *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* that discusses Rāzī's theories of human action, divine predestination, and morality. Crucially, Shihadeh pays careful attention to the evolution of Rāzī's thought, not only in this monograph but also in his articles (such as, most notably, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology," 2005), and discusses the influence of the philosophical tradition on Rāzī's increasingly independent views as well as Rāzī's critique of, and digression from, both Avicennian and Ashʿarite positions. Shihadeh's articles are largely devoted both to the evolution of topics in *kalām* with a focus on Ashʿarite thought as well as the engagement of Rāzī and other thinkers with Ibn Sīnā; as such, Shihadeh represents a crucial voice who puts the theological and philosophical traditions into conversation, as merited particularly by Rāzī and al-Ghazālī's engagement with Ibn Sīnā.

A few scholars focus primarily on Rāzī's views on a given delimited topic. Much of Shihadeh's work fits into this category, as it is devoted to exploring and explicating Rāzī's theories on such topics as human action, prophecy, and ethics while paying careful attention to genre and chronology of works. ʿAdī Setia (2006; 2008; 2012) discusses Rāzī's views on certain topics within physics, including on atomism and hylomorphism as well as time, distance, and

[60] See M. Horten, *Die philosophischen Ansichten von Rázi und Tusi (1209 und 1273) mit einem Anhang; Die griechischen Philosophen in der Vorstellungswelt von Rázi und Tusi* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1910); I. Goldziher, "Aus der Theologie des Fachr al-dīn al-Rāzī," *Der Islam* 3, no. 1 (2009): 213–247; Kraus and Rāzī, "Les 'Controverses' de Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī"; Josef van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des 'Adudaddin al-Ici: Übersetzung und Kommentar des 1. Buches seiner Mawaqif* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966); Kholeif, "Controversies in Transoxiana"; al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa arāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafafiyya*.

change, primarily focusing on *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*. Bilal Ibrahim's article, "Faḫr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Ibn al-Hayṯam and Aristotelian Science: Essentialism versus Phenomenalism in Post-Classical Islamic Thought" (2013), which draws from his work in his dissertation, explores Rāzī's early critiques of Avicennian epistemology and ontology and his own attempts at constructing a theory of epistemology. Yasin Celan's *Theology and Tafsir in the Major Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, in addition to treating Rāzī's approach to the Qur'an, also explores delimited theological topics, including creation *ex nihilo*, God's existence and divine attributes, free will and predestination, prophethood, and resurrection. He presents dense summaries of Rāzī's arguments and objections with reference to the whole breadth of Rāzī's corpus, though often fails to differentiate between genre and period (and hence, the work must be approached critically). Generally such topic-oriented scholarship explores influences on Rāzī's points when appropriate and as they arise, primarily engaging the works of his intellectual predecessors from both the *falsafa* and *kalām* traditions.

One complicating factor in certain conceptually oriented scholarship on Rāzī is the failure of some to differentiate between stages or genres of Rāzī's corpus, comparing, for instance, the *Mabāḥith*, the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, and the *Maṭālib* without qualifying the different ways in which these texts operate or the periods of Rāzī's development that they represent. As noted previously, given how significantly Rāzī's views shifted over the course of his career, works of different periods and genres must be compared carefully and with Rāzī's progression as a thinker in mind. This shortcoming may account for some contradictory findings, such as the disagreement

between Shihadeh (2007) and Janos (2015) on the function and efficacy of the intellect in mystical experience.[61]

Notable scholars that address topics in Rāzī's *tafsīr* include Arnaldez, Lagarde, and Jaffer. Arnaldez's *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Commentateur du Coran et philosophe* (2002) considers various topics as they arise in Rāzī's *Tafsīr* and in the *Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, summarizing Rāzī's views as he presents them and with cursory references to such influences as the Muʿtazilites, Ashʿarites, and Ibn Sīnā. Similarly, Lagarde's 2008 monograph devoted to the *Tafsīr*, *Les secrets de l'invisible: essai sur le Grand commentaire de Fahr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149-1209),* considers various topics as they relate to Rāzī's exegetical methodology. Lagarde asserts that Rāzī believes the Qur'an to reveal itself through key themes, including secrets (*al-asrār*), allusions (*al-ishārāt*), subtleties (*al-daqāʾiq*), nuances (*al-laṭāʾif*), and structure (*al-naẓm*). Rāzī thus employs numerous approaches to mine revelation for truths, including stylistics, grammar and lexicography, and logic, and Lagarde's discussion of distinct topics is delineated by what he perceives to be Rāzī's approach, contributing to an overall discussion of Rāzī's understanding of the meaningfulness, beauty, and potency of the Qur'an. Jaffer's monograph, *Rāzī: Master of Qurʾanic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (2015), is similarly method-driven and focuses on specifying points of influence in Rāzī's methodology with particular focus on Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and the Muʿtazilite school (which, he posits, significantly influenced Rāzī's exegetical method).

[61]See Ayman Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 108–18 and Damien Janos, "Intuition, Intellection, and Mystical Knowledge: Delineating Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Cognitive Theories," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazali: Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary* (Boston: Brill, 2015).

Other scholarship focuses primarily on specifying the influences upon Rāzī's thoughts and texts, often with a focus on Ibn Sīnā. These include Janssens' "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Soul: A Critical Approach to Ibn Sīnā" (2012) and "Ibn Sīnā's Impact on Faḫr al-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Mabāḥiṯ al-Mašriqiyya" (2010) as well as Dhanani's "The Impact of Ibn Sīnā's Critique of Atomism on Subsequent Kalām Discussions of Atomism" (2015). Articles by Shihadeh (2012) and Griffel (2004) both explore the influence of Avicennian notions of prophecy upon Islamic theology and include Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in their analysis. Eichner's approach (exhibited in both "Dissolving the Unity of Metaphysics," 2007, and her *Habilitationsschrift, The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological summae in Context*, 2009, both of which focus on Rāzī's *Mulakhkhaṣ* and *Mabāḥith*) similarly grants attention to the development of philosophical categories stemming from Ibn Sīnā's works and the shifting structures of texts rather than conceptual views of a single author. With such approaches, influences and methodologies are clarified, but Rāzī's overarching conceptual framework, even as developed within a particular period or genre, is largely unexplored.

Finally, Rāzī's importance within a history of philosophy and logic has been researched through an examination of his texts on logic and their reception, as well as his place in the philosophical commentary tradition. Street's "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Critique of Avicennan Logic" (2005) and El-Rouayheb's chapter on Rāzī's critiques of Avicennian logic and his innovations in *Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic, 900-1900* (2010) are key studies of Rāzī's importance for the development of logic in the Arabic tradition. Finally, Wisnovsky's research (2004; 2013; 2014) culling and charting the post-classical philosophical commentary tradition incorporates analysis of Rāzī's works and reception. His work is crucial

for historicizing the nature of Rāzī's intellectual relationship with Ibn Sīnā and contextualizing Rāzī in the development of the philosophical commentary tradition.

While the influences therefore of Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and, in some cases, Muʿtazilite thought have been well documented, other reference points for Rāzī have been left entirely unnoted. From my reading, these primarily relate to Rāzī's engagement with the occult sciences and his incorporation of a Neoplatonic structure of reality into his theories of cosmology. The engagement with the occult begins early in his career with *al-Sirr al-maktūm* and continues through the late *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya,* which also includes discussions of a systematic and well-developed cosmology. Both topics are explored in-depth in the third chapter of this dissertation. Notable influences upon his theory of a hierarchy of celestial forces include the Hermetic corpus, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and the views of pseudo-Empedocles as conveyed in the Islamic tradition. Such an eclectic set of sources, including not only the *falsafa* tradition, Ashʿarite predecessors, and Muʿtazilite thinkers but also Ismāʿilī thought and non-Islamic or even non-monotheistic traditions, illustrates all the more the creativeness and openness of Rāzī as a thinker as well as the remarkable syncretism manifest in the intellectual landscape of the medieval Islamic world.

4. Key Terms

Key to this study are the terms *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa*. *ʿIlm* is translated throughout the dissertation as knowledge, and corresponds most closely with *episteme*. Though admittedly awkward, I have chosen to translate the plural of the word faithfully; thus, *ʿilm* is rendered knowledge, while *ʿulūm* is translated as knowledges. *Maʿrifa*, on the other hand, is a notoriously difficult to term to translate. The mystical and spiritual connotation of gnosis comes closest to the meaning of this term for Rāzī, for *maʿrifa* particularly in the later Sufi tradition is associated

with a kind of experiential knowing that is derived not through theoretical reasoning but from the cognition of truth, particularly of God or of that which relates to the divine. There are, however, good reasons for refraining from translating *maʿrifa* as gnosis. The term has become generalized in its usage (whether pertaining to Christian, Jewish, or Muslim groups or individuals as well as other traditions) to the point of obfuscation. When employed as a translation of *maʿrifa* in Sufi texts, it implies an unsubstantiated connection between Sufism and ancient Gnosticism, or, alternatively, a perennial and universal religious experience of transcendent and esoteric knowledge.[62] Both of these considerations are beyond the bounds of this dissertation.

Yet in Rāzī's texts, *maʿrifa* is often employed to denote a different kind of knowing than is *ʿilm*. One who is an *ʿārif* is engrossed in the cognition of God, a kind of understanding termed *ʿirfān* that is necessarily related to the divine rather than any earthly discipline. *Maʿrifa* in this sense only occurs after spiritual and physical regimentation. For Rāzī, this knowledge may be said to transcend the intellect and therefore language. An *ʿālim*, on the other hand, is most often employed by Rāzī as in Sufi texts to describe one who is knowledgeable or learned in a traditional sense. The differentiation between *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa* for Rāzī may also align with the distinction noted in *kalām* by which *ʿilm* is the knowledge of that which is composite and universal, and *maʿrifa* is knowledge of that which is simple (including, notably for Rāzī in his later texts, both of souls and of God).[63] While in my reading I have not found an explicit attempt to provide the reader with definitions of the terms or to differentiate their usage, the difference

[62] For a full critique of the employment of "gnostic" and "Gnosticism" as employed by scholars of the history of religion and particularly in scholarship on Islam, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, third edition, s.v. "Gnosticism," by Kevin van Bladel.
[63] For a review of the descriptions of both lexicographers and Sufis regarding *maʿrifa*, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, s.v. "Maʿrifa," by R. Arnaldez.

between the two as Rāzī employs them generally aligns with the two paths to knowledge that he posits, namely the intellectual and the spiritual.

I have therefore decided to translate *maʿrifa* throughout the dissertation as "cognition." This is not a perfect solution, as it also conveys the sense of the achievement of knowledge through intellectual processes. This is not what is meant by the term. However, it also connotes knowledge that is itself in process and which may in some way change the knower, rather than knowledge as information that is achieved, stored, and retrieved. In this sense, the term "cognition" works well as a translation for the term.

It should also be noted that, just as these terms shift in al-Ghazālī's usage, Rāzī is not always consistent in his use of *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa*. Sometimes *maʿrifa* is employed to simply mean knowledge in the sense of *ʿilm*, in which cases I have chosen to translate it as "knowledge" while indicating the term used through transliteration. As in the earlier tradition, *maʿrifa* and *ʿilm* are at times employed interchangeably.[64] More often than not, however, Rāzī refers to knowledge achieved through syllogistic reasoning solely as *ʿilm*, and that which is experienced through revelation and inspiration as *maʿrifa*.

Other key terms that are limited to the topics of certain chapters or sections are explained as they arise. These include *al-badīhiyyāt* or *al-ʿilm al-badīhī*, which I translate as "axiomatic knowledge(s)" or "axiomatic truth(s)" when employed by Rāzī because this best expresses the spirit and meaning of the term in his works. This term is explored fully in the second chapter. I also detail his usage of *al-rūḥāniyyāt*, which I translate as "spiritual beings." This term has a specific connotation in his understanding of cosmology and is explored fully in the third chapter.

[64] On *maʿrifa* and *ʿilm* in the Sufi tradition, see Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 165–76.

For all other technical terms, I have included the transliteration of the Arabic or Persian to clarify my translations.

5. Methodology

One particularly prominent challenge in reading Rāzī's philosophical theology is that the sections devoted to exploring an issue are so long and winding that it becomes difficult to ascertain when exactly Rāzī is presenting his own view rather than the position of an interlocutor. Accounts of arguments regarding a certain question split into sub-issues, and these shift abruptly back to the main topic with no indication of what is being discussed save for the enumeration of the argument. The task is complicated by the fact that, while Rāzī certainly always uses the first or third person when giving his own opinion, he also employs these tenses at times when speaking in the voices of others. This is not at all to say that it is impossible to know when Rāzī is speaking in his own voice or giving his own opinion. Rather, what is required is an exceedingly careful reading in which one keeps careful track of which points are being discussed and whose views are being presented. Further, while it undeniably takes time and practice to become accustomed to Rāzī's style (which punishes cursory readings), his methodology is so uniform that one may eventually ascertain Rāzī's own position with relative ease.

Among his later works, Rāzī's *Maṭālib* and many sections of his *Tafsīr* are devoted to explicating the views of various groups and individuals on a given topic. While Rāzī raises objections to these positions (sometimes in the third person, and sometimes in the first), he either refrains from giving his own opinion on a topic (in which case he may acknowledge the difficulty of the question) or he grants his own opinion at the end of a section or a sub-section.

The points at which Rāzī speaks in his own voice are always expressed in the first person, and are sometimes signaled by such phrases as "my preferred position" (*al-mukhtār ʿindī*). Other phrases throughout a section certainly signal that it is Rāzī's own opinion that is being presented, such as the dismissal of a certain point as weak or false (*bāṭil*). At times, such indications may signal that while a viewpoint is attributed to another thinker or school of thought, Rāzī considers an opinion to be viable or alternatively rejects it as entirely untenable.

Secondly, it is often through cross-reference to other works that Rāzī's own opinions can not only be ascertained but also confirmed. While it may appear likely in one work that a point is his own position, it may be stated as explicitly so in another. Through a careful reading of a number of works of the same period and, in some cases, the same genre, one can begin to paint a picture, so to speak, of Rāzī's own systematic views. His theories are naturally interrelated; his understanding of the existence and function of the angels is connected to his views on magic, his understanding of the soul is relevant to his views of the afterlife, and so forth. With time, careful reading, and reflection on the connections between one viewpoint and another, Rāzī's own voice emerges from these exceedingly difficult texts with striking clarity.

Finally, one may also note that certain signifiers often indicate Rāzī's view of a position based on his respect for or dismissal of a certain group of interlocutors. While individual theologians may be given credence, Rāzī is often disgruntled with the theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) as a whole. Thus, when an opinion is attributed to the *mutakallimūn* rather than to an individual school of thought or thinker, it often becomes apparent that Rāzī is not in agreement with that view. Similarly, when Rāzī mentions the *falāsifa* rather than an individual philosopher, it is often with regards to a position that he personally dismisses as false at some point in the text. The phrase "the sages" (*al-ḥukamāʾ*), alternatively, most often denotes a greatly

respected contingent of philosophers who have been incorporated into the tradition. While Rāzī never clarifies exactly who these sages are, we may posit that such thinkers as Plato and Aristotle—in many ways unrecognizable in the opinions and texts attributed to them at that time in medieval Islam—belonged to this group. The term naturalizes philosophy, for even linguistically it is not derived from a foreign word but is rather entirely Arabic, stemming from the root *ḥ k m*. Rather than representing a distinct contingent of Islamic thinkers who were influenced by Hellenic thought, these sages are, in general terms, those who have achieved wisdom. In this sense, their own knowledge may not only be theoretical but also spiritual, and they are not limited by time period, religion, or native tongue. As we will see, "the sages" are often linked with the prophets, for they also have gained access to divine knowledge. Though not always the case, more often than not Rāzī will agree with opinions presented as belonging to this group unless otherwise explicitly noted.

This method of reading Rāzī in order to understand his own views in the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr* has emerged after much careful study. I would however be cautious in assuming that I could easily ascertain Rāzī's opinion in commentary works or, potentially, in such a work as *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*. The purpose of such works is largely to critically explore the viewpoints of Ibn Sīnā. As such, they are not, on the whole, constructive works. Even the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr*, both works that offer many of Rāzī's own views at the end of the career, refrain from presenting a constructive opinion on particularly difficult questions and in such cases restrict themselves to cataloguing and explicating the views of predecessors. In any case, it is perhaps due to the difficulty of understanding Rāzī's own opinion in any given work of philosophy or philosophical theology that scholarship devoted to explicating Rāzī's personal views and theories is so scant. In my opinion, however, it is certainly possible to posit Rāzī's

own theories on any given topic within a given period through an exceedingly careful reading and cross-reference to other works of the same period. Throughout the dissertation, I employ such phrases as "Rāzī believes," "Rāzī affirms," and "Rāzī maintains" to refer to views he holds in his later works (primarily his *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr, al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, and shorter treatises of his late career).

6. Objectives of the Study

As I have read Rāzī in the past years, I have often been struck by the importance of knowledge (*ʿilm*) in his works. One should note, however, that the gravity granted to learning and the achievement of knowledge is by no means an aberration for his times. For instance, al-Ghazālī's first book of the *Iḥyāʾ al-ʿulūm* details the virtue of knowledge (*ʿilm*), kinds of knowledge, and the virtue and parts of the intellect (*al-ʿaql*). While influential no doubt for Rāzī, this represents only one example of the focus on knowledge as a key virtue—a theme so significant in medieval Islam that Franz Rosenthal said of knowledge (*ʿilm*) in his monograph devoted to the topic that "*ʿilm* is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion. In fact, there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as *ʿilm*."[65] The importance that Rāzī grants to knowledge is thus not unusual and is perhaps more indicative of the spirit of learning in medieval Islam than it is of his own theoretical orientation.

While the significance of knowledge is not unique in Rāzī's corpus (though it is more central for him than most), the specific processes of knowledge acquisition and the role that knowledge plays in spiritual perfection are explored in-depth in his later works. The theories

[65] Rosenthal, 2.

developed regarding knowledge and its teleological importance are certainly remarkable in their creativity and syncreticity. Thus, it is the taxonomies of knowledge, the paths by which one gains knowledge, and the relationship between knowledge and eternal felicity as explored in Rāzī's late works that are the focuses of this dissertation.

The objectives of the study have therefore arisen from the central thesis that Rāzī believes knowledge to be at the heart of the perfection of the soul and the achievement of eternal felicity in the afterlife. In order to explore and support this thesis, I begin by exploring the ways to knowledge as posited by Rāzī. That there are two paths to knowledge is the subject of the first chapter, which explores passages of later works in which Rāzī writes that knowledge is acquired in two ways, namely, through theoretical reasoning, through spiritual striving, or, ideally, through the combination of the two. Knowledge acquisition through theoretical reasoning is the subject of the second chapter, in which I explore the process and importance of syllogistic reasoning in Rāzī's later works. Given that the celestial realm is fundamental for the reception of knowledge as achieved through spiritual striving, I devote the third chapter of the dissertation to researching the structure and function of Rāzī's cosmology particularly as it relates to divine inspiration, revelation, and human perfection. The topics treated in this chapter are the widest ranging of the dissertation, as the existence of celestial beings and their relation to humankind allows not only for the prophet's access to divine knowledge and his production of miracles but also for the existence and efficacy of the occult sciences (a topic largely ignored in secondary scholarship on Rāzī). Finally, the fourth and final chapter of the dissertation brings together these strands of research on the processes and function of knowing to discuss the importance of knowledge for the perfection and felicity of the human soul. First, however, I explore Rāzī's views of the nature of the soul as presented in his later works, and then address the nature of the

afterlife and the effects of knowledge acquisition on the eternal life of the soul. In each of these chapters, I explore the influences upon distinct concepts and arguments as they arise, finding points of reference not only in the Islamic theological and philosophical traditions but also in the Corpus Hermeticum, texts (pseudo and authentic) of the Greek philosophical tradition and the portrayal of these figures in Islamic works, and in the writings of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ. Finally, the appendices of this dissertation provide translations of key sections of the *Maṭālib* related to metaphysical inquiry, knowledge acquisition, cosmology, the nature of the soul, and prophecy.

With the fundamental goal of illustrating the importance of knowledge through the specification of the role, functions, and ways of knowing in Rāzī's later works, the dissertation has organically carried me to research a host of other aspects of Rāzī's corpus involving the human being, the divine, and the cosmos. I have also therefore explored Rāzī's views on the perception and acquisition of essences, cosmology, human anthropology, prophecy, and the occult sciences, and researched points of influence upon these theories as they have arisen in the dissertation and as they pertain to the central thesis. It is also in positing influences beyond the traditional Islamic theological schools of thought and the classical *falsafa* tradition that this dissertation contributes to the field of Rāzī studies in a novel way, for these forces on Rāzī's thought have, at this point, been largely unexplored in secondary scholarship. As such, this dissertation represents not only a significant addition to Rāzī studies insofar as it explores the meaning, function, and role of knowledge in Rāzī's later corpus, but also as it details Rāzī's later views on related topics that have not yet been substantially explored and notes influences that have gone unnoticed in secondary scholarship.

Chapter I: The Mystical and the Rationalist Paths: *Miʿrāj* of the Soul in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Introduction

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī expresses in the *Maṭālib* and in other key works that knowledge of the greatest metaphysical matters related to the divine ensures spiritual felicity for the human soul. He postulates two paths to the divine, namely: the rationalist (the way of the companions of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning) and the mystical (that of the companions of spiritual exercise and striving). The first path of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning (*al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*) requires a perfection of syllogistic reasoning, the basis of which is axiomatic truth. These axiomatic truths, which Rāzī terms "immediate" (*al-badīhiyyāt*), are God-granted in that they occur through innate senses and psychological processes. By emphasizing the divine nature of these fundamental truths, Rāzī sanctifies syllogistic reasoning—a conclusion which he makes explicit in the *Maṭālib*. We will explore Rāzī's understanding of axiomatic truths, syllogistic reasoning, and the sanctity of this path to knowledge in the second chapter of the dissertation. The alternative path, which is most successful when combined with the first, is that of spiritual exercise (*al-riyāḍa wa-l-mujāhada*). It is accessible through the mediation of the angels, which correlate with the celestial intellects and souls of the philosophical tradition. We will examine this mystical path to knowledge through an elaboration on Rāzī's understanding of cosmology in the third chapter of this dissertation. In the final chapter, we will discuss the role of knowledge in the soul's attainment of eternal felicity in Rāzī's later writings.

I begin this first chapter on the two paths by exploring the term *al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya* (the lofty pursuits) as well as the limits of human capacity as considered by Rāzī in engaging in such

pursuits. I secondly clarify the concept of the two paths, and argue that Rāzī advocates for a combination of the intellectual path with the mystical path. Thirdly, I explore the mystical path as exemplified in Rāzī's exegesis of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa. Fourthly, I isolate what I term *miʿrāj* passages in which Rāzī joins the mystical with the intellectual to give an account of the ascent of the human intellect to the presence of the divine. I then examine Rāzī's relationship with Sufis of his time, and lastly explore the influences that al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā likely held on Rāzī in this area of development with a focus on Ibn Sīnā's *Miʿrāj nāmeh*.

1. On *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*

In his later texts, Rāzī posits a rational universe through which a logical and comprehensible order runs. Just as the universe stems from God's creative will, so too might the soul ascend the hierarchy towards the divine in an effort to return to its Creator. One should attempt to comprehend the "truth of things," including the reality of the unfolding of the universe into celestial spheres of intellects and souls, the human soul, and the rest of creation, in an attempt to occupy one's soul with that which approaches the divine.

Rāzī terms the attempt to gain the noblest knowledge – that is, knowledge of God and God's attributes, as well as matters that closely relate to the divine— "the lofty pursuits" (*al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya*).[1] His final book is not an undertaking of the science of *kalām*, nor is it explicitly a philosophical work insofar as it would be considered *falsafa*. He writes that the book

[1] The title may be in reference to Ibn Sīnā's requirement that those who may access knowledge revealed from the celestial beings be grounded in "lofty wisdom" (*al-ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya*) as stated in the ninth section of the tenth class of *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt.* See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1960), vol. 4, 122; Griffel alternatively posits a more this-worldly explanation for the title, namely that it may be in reference to Rāzī's patron, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, under whose reign all parts of the work were completed. Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 333.

is part of the "most noble of science," that is, the science that inquires into God and God's attributes, and in which he incorporates methods and discussions drawn from a variety of sources, including both *falsafa* and *kalām*.[2]

Rāzī expresses the same conception of elevated and immutable metaphysical pursuits as unvarying according to time and place, law and religion, in his introduction to his commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*. He writes:

> Know that intellects are in accord and minds in agreement that knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) is the most excellent of felicities, the most perfect of perfections and ranks, and that its possessors are the most excellent people in repute and the most handsomely clothed, the best of them in strength and stock, the highest of them in dignity and glory, most notably [the possessors of] the true knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-ḥaqīqiyya*) and certain pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-yaqīniyya*) which do not differ with variances in time and place, and do not change with the shifting of religious codes and religions. The most excellent of [these knowledges] is knowledge of existences abstracted from materials (*al-ʿilm bi-l-mawjūdāt al-mujarrada ʿan al-mawādd*) which are far from faculty and preparedness (*al-quwwa wa-l-istiʿdād*). For the difference of the knowledges in ranks is due to the variation of those objects of knowledge. The more elevated the object of knowledge, the more beneficial is knowledge attained of it in the two abodes (*fī l-dārayn*). There is no doubt that the Self of God exalted, and His attributes, is the most perfect of existing things…[3]

Here, as is developed in the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī views the science of metaphysics as pursuing knowledge of non-corporeal entities. As God's essence and attributes are the most noble of these, knowledge of them represents the most valuable knowledge. This, broadly, is the focus of the *Maṭālib*: pursuit of knowledge of incorporeal matters, at the heart of which is knowledge of the divine. The possessors of such knowledge are blessed with the highest degree of felicity.

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[2] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 37.

[3] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. ʿAlī Riẓā Najafʾzādah (Tehran: Amjuman-i Āṯār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 2005), vol. 1, 1-2. Any awkwardness in translation is absent in the original Arabic, which focuses on stylistics more than literal meaning. The phrases rhyme in the Arabic and form a kind of loose panegyric to those possessors of this highest form of knowledge.

Much in line with these sentiments, Rāzī begins *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* by stating that spiritual pleasure is better and more virtuous than physical pleasure, and the chief spiritual pleasure, and the most pure, is knowledge of the First Principle (*maʿrifat al-mabdaʾ al-awwal*) and Its attributes.[4] This lofty inquiry about metaphysical matters leads to knowledge of the divine, and through that knowledge, to everlasting spiritual felicity. Rāzī states:

> Ignorance [of the knowledge of the First Principle and of Its attributes] leads to requisite continual affliction (*al-ʿidhāb al-dāʾim*) and absolute loss (*al-khasār al-muṭlaq*), while achievement of this cognition (*al-maʿrifa*) leads to requisite eternal felicity (*al-saʿāda al-abadiyya*) and perpetual reign (*al-siyāda al-sarmadiyya*).[5]

Knowledge and ignorance are the bases for either eternal salvation or damnation. Rāzī's *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* simultaneously seeks to persuade the reader of the importance of this highest pursuit of knowledge, and represents the attempt to achieve knowledge of the divine. As such, Rāzī is both teacher and follower, leading his students towards the realization of the importance of intellectual pursuit of metaphysical truths (and as such, embodying the spiritually significant role of the guide in mystical exercises), and employing axiomatic truths in apodictic demonstrations to further his own knowledge of God.

The task at hand is far from simple, and Rāzī both summons the intellectually equipped reader to make the attempt, and cautions that those of limited intellectual capacity will become lost in specious arguments (*al-shubahāt*). In a section of the *Maṭālib* entitled "On the ranks of souls in cognitions and knowledges," Rāzī writes that human beings are of a range of intellectual capabilities, specifically when it comes to the synthesis of axiomatic knowledges (*tarkīb al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*) employed to reach conclusions (*al-ʿulūm bi-l-natāʾij*).[6] Just as some people

[4] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 39.
[5] Ibid., vol. 1, 39-40.
[6] For a full translation of this section, see Appendix VII.

are truly incapable of combining premises to produce conclusions, others are able to effortlessly reach a degree of true perfection in their intellectual capacities. These intellectually perfect individuals are the venerated prophets (*al-anbiyāʾ al-muʿaẓẓamūn*) and the perfect sages (*al-ḥukamāʾ al-kāmilūn*).[7] Some Sufis, he notes, call this kind of knowledge divine (*al-ʿilm al-ladunī*).[8] For the most perfect of human beings, for whom "those knowledges are present in actuality—brilliant, complete, perfect, exact… If the human soul reaches this limit, then it has entered the last of the human ranks, and the first of the stations of the angels."[9] To reach this degree of knowledge, whether through perfection of one's intellect in rational demonstration or of one's soul in spiritual exercise, is to achieve the greatest degree of perfection possible for the human being.

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[7] While the words "wisdom" (*ḥikma*) or "sage/sages" (*ḥakīm/ḥukamāʾ*) are often translated as philosophy and philosopher(s), I have translated the word literally as "sage" to convey Rāzī's arguments with utmost clarity. As we see here, and as will be a pattern throughout the *Maṭālib*, "the sages" (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) represent those philosophers whom Rāzī views as the true perfectors of intellectual pursuits. When he refers to these, it is likely that he agrees with the sentiments expressed if not stated otherwise. This is in sharp contradistinction with his reference to opinions of the *falāsifa* or when he refers to (primarily Arabic) philosophers by name, in which case he tends to disagree with the interlocutor(s). His low opinion of the *falāsifa* is expressed in his *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn*, in which he characterizes the group as beyond the boundaries of Islam and details a clear set of beliefs adhered to by the group. These include the belief that the world is eternal, and that its Cause is one that acts out of necessity rather than free choice. Further, most of them deny that God knows [particulars] as well as bodily resurrection. al-Rāzī, *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn*, 91.

[8] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 280.
Al-Ghazālī's *al-Risāla al-laduniyyā* bears striking similarities to the first introductory section of Rāzī's *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*. In this treatise, al-Ghazālī argues for the nobility of knowledge, particularly knowledge of metaphysics and issues related to the divine, the division of the human being into the noble spirit and base body, and the importance of cognition of the divine for the attainment of spiritual felicity. Sufism, interestingly, is described as a composite science born of intellectual science.
See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīa, 1994), 239–53.

[9] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 280.

Rāzī writes that only a select few are naturally perfect in their intellectual capacities. Here, Rāzī's warning comes in the form of a metaphor. The light of the intellect (*nūr al-ʿaql*) has defects (*ʿuyūb*) just as fire has defects, and can be darkened with the smoke of specious arguments (*al-shubahāt*). While it shines when it encounters proofs (*al-dalāʾil*), it burns when it faces specious arguments, and may be extinguished by even the most insignificant specious argument. Finally, Rāzī writes:

> While the lamp shines when placed in a small room, when it is placed in a vast desert, its light lessens, and it becomes as if it is dark. Just so is the lamp of the intellect; whereas its light is evident if it is used in inferior pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-ḥaqīra*), like arithmetic and geometry, if it is employed in the lofty pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya*), it is extinguished.[10]

Rāzī's pessimism here is in one sense puzzling. In an eight-volume opus that is an ode to the lofty pursuit of divine truth through the theoretical explorations of the most intensely perplexing questions, Rāzī writes that the presumably inferior intellect runs the risk of being extinguished due to difficulties related to these inquiries.

Here, we are privy to Rāzī's deep longing for knowledge of the divine combined with epistemological pessimism characteristic of Rāzī. While the first introductory section of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* is entitled "On the demonstration that this science (*al-ʿilm*) is the most noble of sciences, without exception," the second section raises major doubts as to whether knowledge about God is truly attainable, and explores the question of whether human beings actually have a way to attain certainty on such lofty questions.[11] Indeed, Rāzī asserts that it has been passed down from the great philosophers that "the utmost goal in this matter is accepting the more suitable and appropriate, and holding fast to the better and more perfect side, and that judgment

[10] Ibid., vol. 7, 283-84.
[11] For a full translation of both sections, see appendices I and II.

that precludes opposition cannot be achieved in some investigations."[12] That is, in some questions, certainty cannot be attained and the inquirer must settle for the most likely truth. Rāzī presents a number of arguments against the ability of the human being to achieve certainty in questions about the divine. The arguments themselves are wonderfully intriguing, and despite the fact that Rāzī is contending that there are real limits to human comprehension, the line of reasoning can only strike the reader as creative, extraordinarily introspective, and remarkably thought-invoking.

Firstly, Rāzī writes that the human being's knowledge of himself as a particular being is the most evident of any knowable thing. He echoes al-Ghazālī's sentiment from the first chapter of *Kīmīyā-yi saʿādat* entitled "On Knowledge of Self." Here, al-Ghazālī writes that "the key to knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God is knowledge of the self."[13] He remarks that "one who is unknowing of himself, but claims to know something else, is like a pauper who cannot feed himself but claims to give food to all of the *darvīsh* of the town."[14] Rāzī writes however that aspects of this most apparent knowledge of self reach points of extraordinary complexity such that they baffle the human intellect. If this is the case with what one would assume to be the most evident knowledge, then what of things that are furthest from us, that should be most difficult for creatures to comprehend? Indeed, the knowledge of the self as a particular knowing being must precede any other knowledge; to say that I know something, I must know that I am a knowing being. Further, when I say "I", am "I" this visible frame (*al-haykal al-mushāhad*), a certain body (*jism*) of those within this frame, an attribute accorded to this frame, or an essence abstracted

[12] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 41.
[13] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kīmiyā-yi saʿādat*, ed. Ḥusayn Khadīvjam (Tehran: Markaz-i Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1985), vol. 1, 13.
[14] al-Ghazālī, vol. 1, 44.

from this body and its relations? How difficult indeed is knowledge of the self! God's self (*dhāt*) is utterly different from the realities of God's creations and the potentialities of their existence. If the knowledge of the most apparent of any known thing—my own self—is so difficult, how can I know God? If the knowledge of the soul and body, time, and place—all things that can be enumerated—still cause enormous confusion (*ḥayra*)[15] in the human intellect, how indeed can one know the Exalted, that which is the most hidden of all?[16]

The final argument of the section is most telling, however, of both the depths and limits of Rāzī's epistemological pessimism. Rāzī notes that there are three ways for one to move from that which is known to that which is unknown: 1) inference (*al-istidlāl*) regarding the caused (*al-maʿlūl*) from the cause (*al-ʿilla*); 2) inference about an equal thing from an equal thing; and 3) inference regarding the cause from the caused. The first two, with regards to the True (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*), are invalid. The third remains – "that is, one ascends from the effect to that which produces the effect, moving from creation to the Creator."[17] The human soul, which is the last

[15] Prior to beginning a discussion of the various viewpoints of ancient Greek philosophers on the concepts of time and place, Rāzī writes, "As for the intellectuals, their heads whirred and their minds were bewildered in the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the reality of place and time." It is interesting to note Rāzī's use of the term *ḥayra* (confusion) in this section on the debate of a topic of theoretical inquiry, a term also signifying a key stage of Sufi transcendental experience. The term's dual function, both to express the confusion resulting from encountering the incomprehensible and ineffable, and the inability to move forward when confronting two equally valid but opposing premises, is one instance of possibly inadvertent terminological overlap between Sufi thought and Islamic philosophy.
al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 43.

[16] Rāzī offers additional arguments that indicate the inability of the human intellect to comprehend God, most of which elaborate on the difficulties that human beings encounter when attempting to understand concepts that are closer to human experience than the divine, such as place and time, the body, and shortcomings of perception. He cites arguments of Plato and Aristotle on the question of place, and Euclid on the body. See Appendix II for a full translation of this section.
Ibid., vol. 1, 41-43.

[17] Ibid., vol. 1, 51.

rank of separate holy existents, rises from knowledge of itself, to knowledge of the cause of itself, then to the cause of that cause, and so forth; it rises rank by rank till it arrives at the last degree, the presence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi*).[18]

While previous passages of this chapter of Rāzī's work have expressed unequivocal doubt through the mouths of interlocutors about the human being's capacity to attain certain knowledge of the divine, here, Rāzī offers in his own voice the qualification that only a select few can rise through the ranks of the intelligibles to reach the presence of the divine. Most human beings remain attached to the sensory realm, and others are unable to move from the realm of imagination to that of the intelligibles. For those elite who are able to reach a higher realm, this intellectual and spiritual ability to ascend represents an extraordinary realization of the *telos* of human existence.

A number of passages indicate that the lofty pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya*) consist of metaphysical inquiries related to God (including God's attributes, the celestial spheres, the human soul, etc.), and that human beings must achieve knowledge of these pursuits through a variety of means. In a chapter that argues that the celestial spheres and planets are alive and intelligent, Rāzī affirms, "These are the lofty, noble, exquisite pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya al-sharīfa al-rafīʿa*) about which the human being must reach cognition (*maʿrifa*) in any way,

[18] Ibid., vol. 1, 51-52. While Rāzī certainly echoes Ibn Sīnā when employing the term "Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence" for God, the epithet and its meaning were already incorporated into Ashʿarite thought by his time. Already with al-Juwāynī, the expression "the necessarily existent" (*wājibu l-wujūd*) had become common, and variations of the phrase were used by Ibn Fūrak and al-Qushayrī as well as al-Ghazālī. Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992), 16–17.

whether it be by demonstration (*burhāniyyan*) or by persuasion (*iqnāʿiyyan*)."[19] Rāzī might be understood to be issuing a warning to those for whom these proofs and inquiries of utmost theological and metaphysical importance are difficult to comprehend and who struggle with Rāzī's method. For these, it is not their lot to attempt these proofs on their own; rather, they should be persuaded by rhetoric rather than demonstration to become convinced of the truths attained by those who have gone before them and who have been blessed with greater intellectual and spiritual capabilities. Yet for those souls who approach spiritual perfection, and for whom the composition of logical proofs presents no significant difficulty, these lofty pursuits are the key to eternal felicity.

2. The Two Paths: The Mystical and the Rationalist

In the previously mentioned nineteenth section of the seventh volume of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, which treats the ranks of souls, Rāzī alludes to two paths to the attainment of knowledge of God. The ranks of human beings, he writes, are of two kinds. The brilliance and power of the first kind occur because of the refinement (*taṣfiya*) and purification (*taṭhīr*) of the soul (*nafs*) of all else but God. These are the prophets and the saints. As for the second kind, their brilliance and power occur because of the synthesis of apodictic proofs (*tarkīb al-barāhīn al-yaqīniyya*).[20]

That there are two paths to divine truth is a conviction stated at numerous points in Rāzī's works. In the third introductory section of the *Maṭālib,* Rāzī treats the question of multiple paths to these holy cognitions (*hadhihi al-maʿārif al-qudsiyya*), that is, knowledge of God and God's attributes.[21] "Know that it was revealed to the lords of sight (*arbāb al-baṣāʾir*) that the path to

[19] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 336.
[20] Ibid., vol. 7, 283.
[21] For a full translation of this section, see Appendix III.

[holy knowledge] has two routes: The first is that of the companions of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning (*al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*), and the second is the path of the companions of [spiritual] exercise and striving (*al-riyāḍa wa-l-mujāhada*)."[22] The first path of reasoning is that of the sages of metaphysics, and consists of inference (*al-istidlāl*) of the proof (*ithbāt*) of the existence of the Necessary of Existence [by virtue of] Its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi*). Rāzī then succinctly summarizes Ibn Sīnā's proof for the existence of God, the Necessary of Existence, then refers to Ibn Sīnā's argument for the existence of God based on contingency.[23] Given that everything that exists (other than God) is potentially existent, the cause of potential existents must go back to a being that exists necessarily – namely, God. Rāzī adds a critique that this proof cannot be successful unless: 1) the states of the existence of sensibles are shown to be potentially existent and are in need of a preponderant to make them exist; and 2) infinite regress (*al-tasalsul*) and circular reasoning (*al-dawr*) are false (*bāṭil*). If these two premises are affirmed, then the existence of the Necessary of Existence [by virtue of] Its Essence can be proved with certainty. Rāzī subsequently attempts to prove these premises in the first volume of the *Maṭālib*.

The second path to this knowledge is that of the companions of spiritual exercise. This path is that of the Sufis, and Rāzī employs mystical language to express it. Regarding this path, he writes:

> It is the verified, conquering, wondrous path, for if the human being labors in purifying (*bi-taṣfiyya*) his heart of the remembrance of not-God (*dhikr ghayr illāhi*), and persists with the tongue of both his body and his spirit in the

[22] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 53.
[23] For a discussion of the various iterations of Ibn Sīnā's proof of God's existence from contingency, and a reconstruction of that proof from the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifāʾ* and the *Ishārāt*, see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Proof from Contingency for God's Existence in the Metaphysics of the Shifāʾ," *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1980): 337–352. See also Jules Janssens, "Ibn Sīnā's Impact on Faḫr al-Dīn ar-Rāzī's Mabāḥiṯ al-Mašriqiyya, with Particular Regard to the Section Entitled al-Ilāhiyyāt al-maḥḍa: An Essay of Critical Evaluation," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 2010, 259–85.

> remembrance (*dhikr*) [of God], light, illumination, an overpowering state, and a lofty power occur in his heart. And lofty lights and divine secrets are revealed to the substance (*jawhar*) of the soul, and these are stations that one who has not reached cannot comprehend in a particular manner (*ʿalā sabīl al-tafṣīl*). I point out the stations (*maqāmāt*) that one must comprehend in order for that pointer (*tanbīh*) to be a cause of caution regarding the blunders that occur in [the stations].[24]

Rāzī does not employ rationalist language in this section, but rather focuses on the language particular to Sufi expression. He references the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God that is characteristic of Sufi texts, as well as the metaphor of the light (*nūr/ḍawʾ*) of the divine that illuminates the heart (*qalb*) as the seeker ascends through various stations (*maqāmāt*).[25] This passage is entirely different in terminology from the philosophical proof of the divine that exemplifies the path of theoretical inquiry. The description of purifying oneself from focus on what is other than God parallels Rāzī's commentary on the third section of the ninth class of Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, in which he warns that "the heart's paying attention to what is not-God prevents it from drowning in the love of God, so the knower (*al-ʿārif*) attempts to cut off attention to what is not-God, repelling

[24] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 54-55.

[25] Ibn Sīnā also employs such mystical imagery and terms in the *Ishārāt*, the ninth class of which, Rāzī notes in his commentary, "systematized the sciences of the Sufis (*ʿulūm al-ṣūfiyya*) in an unprecedented manner." al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 589. The reference to light is, for instance, evident in Rāzī's commentary on the ninth section of the ninth class, which refers to "flashes the companions of this path call 'moments' (*'awqāt*)". See Ibid., vol. 2, 617. This is to say that while the primary reference point is texts and practitioners of Sufism, Rāzī was deeply aware of—and I would argue profoundly affected by—Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of these terms and concepts. However, as both Gutas and Davidson contend, one may argue that there is no "genuinely mystical or ecstatic experience" in Ibn Sīnā's account of conjunction, and that Sufi terms employed by Ibn Sīnā in the *Ishārāt* do not represent a shift from his philosophical system. See Dimitri Gutas, "Intellect Without Limits: The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna," in *Intellect et Imagination Dans La Philosophie Médiévale*, ed. M.C. Pacheco and J. Meirinhos, vol. 11 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2006), 351–72; Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 105 n. 125. Ata similarly views Rāzī's characterization of this chapter of the *Ishārāt* as one that discusses the discipline of Sufism as "anachronistic and incorrect." Ata Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept* (University of South Carolina Press: Columbia, South Carolina, 2017), 17.

the impediment."[26] To occupy oneself with what is other than God prevents one from "drowning" in God, which can only be achieved when one ignores (or, Rāzī notes, becomes scornful of) all else save these lofty pursuits.

Returning to the *Maṭālib,* we find a warning that not all human beings are in possession of an innate ability to climb these spiritual heights. Just as mountains that hold noble metals at their core are rare, with most mountains containing only base materials or no valuable materials at all, just so are human souls, with most souls being void of the attraction to the world of spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyāt*). People who are empty of such desire will find little benefit from physical components of spiritual exercise. Those in whom divine "materials" exist vary in their capacity, as well as in the amount of noble material within them; some require intense and frequent practice to derive only a little benefit, while others derive great benefit from only a small amount of labor. "Just as it is not unlikely to find in the rarest of mountains ones containing caves filled with gold, it is not impossible to find, in remote times, a human being the cave of whose spirit (*rūḥ*) is filled with the lights of the magnificence of God."[27] Having previously warned that not all people are capable of intellectual ascent to reach the presence of the divine, here he insists that only a select few are created with a blessed soul that is capable of receiving the presence of the Holy.

Remarkably, to close these remarks on the spiritual path, Rāzī employs a line from al-Mutanabbī and a quotation from **(**pseudo-**)**Aristotle. Aristotle, Rāzī writes, noted that "whoever wishes to begin to seek these divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ilāhiyya*) must invent another *fiṭra*

[26] al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 593.
[27] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 57.

[innate disposition] for himself."[28] Aristotle's intent in this phrase, Rāzī writes, is to say that such a person goes to the greatest lengths to free her mind from relations of sensation and imagination.[29] Concluding a section on spiritual capabilities and mystical ascent by quoting Aristotle appears at first glance strange. Is Rāzī so out of touch, so hyper-rationalist, that he cannot separate himself from philosophical thought even in his elaboration of the Sufi way?[30] I would rather argue that Rāzī's choice to conclude this passage with a quotation from Aristotle is indicative of his conviction that, in its most noble and far-reaching form, mystical ascent is not to be separated from intellectual enterprise.

[28] Ibid. Rāzī no doubt had access to such collections of gnomologia as al-Mubashshir b. Fātik's popular *Choicest Maxims and Best Sayings* (*Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsin al-kalim*), compiled in the 11th century, which includes biographical sketches and sayings of ancient (and almost exclusively Greek) sages including Hermes, Plato, and Aristotle. The sayings of Aristotle in this collection Islamicize the figure and portray him as particularly pietistic and mystical. For al-Mubashshir's entry on Aristotle, see Abū al-Wafā'Mubashshir ibn Fātik, *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsin al-kalim*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 1980), 178–222.

[29] While Rāzī was by no means an advocate of the equal capabilities of men and women, given that the default language is masculine and does not necessarily denote that only men may achieve such spiritual perfection (and keeping in mind the remarkable women recorded in the Sufi tradition), I choose to alternate gender in my summaries while staying true to the gender form in my translations.

[30] That Rāzī quotes Aristotle out of ignorance and poor judgment is the interpretation of al-Sharqawi in his dissertation "Religion and Philosophy in the Thought of Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi: The Problem of God's Existence." He writes that Rāzī "never seems to understand Sufism properly," for he "quotes Aristotle on behalf of mysticism and takes the liberty to present the mystical proof of God's existence in a most rational way" ʿEffat Al-Sharqāwī, "Religion and Philosophy in the Thought of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: The Problem of God's Existence" (Ph.D., McGill University, 1970), 119. I would maintain that Rāzī's quotation of Aristotle certainly rationalizes the mystical ascent, but also intentionally mystifies rational inquiry. Rāzi is undertaking a reciprocal obfuscation and amalgamation that is entirely intentional and self-conscious, and which is simultaneously in keeping with the gnomologia available in his time (see note 24).

One who is spiritually capable of ascent through this path longs to return to the divine presence, for this existence as an embodied soul, busied with the base pleasures of the body, is one of disruption and separation. He writes:

> If the person exerts himself in striving to remove these [bodily] accidents and is left with the gem of the soul (*jawharat al-nafs*) and its original attributes (*lawāzimihā al-aṣlīya*), after the concealing dust and the hindering cover have lifted, then the light of the majesty of God appears in him.[31]

While Rāzī employs primarily mystical language to describe this path to the cognition of this holy knowledge**,** the language describing the primary goal of this spiritual striving is the same. Rāzī ends the description of this station of spiritual striving by stating:

> So let the human being strive in this matter, to the measure of what enjoyment occurs from comprehending an atom of the lights of that knowledge (*al-ʿilm*). For if that felicity (*al-saʿāda*) was achieved, then the pleasure strengthened and the delight magnified, and that [enjoyment] becomes one of the most powerful attractions (*jawādhib*) [which motivate] him to fully devote himself to it.[32]

While the method to achieve knowledge differs, the goal is the same: one strives to achieve knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) of God, and in doing so, attains eternal felicity (*al-saʿāda*).

The closing passage of this chapter on multiple paths to holy cognitions is most fascinating, as it advocates not one path over another but rather a combination of the two. Rāzī warns that one who only practices spiritual exercises is susceptible to error; while the seeker may believe that she has reached the utmost degree of spiritual unveilings, her lack of knowledge of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning disallows her from realizing that she has not achieved full potential. This becomes a barrier to the attainment of what she is seeking. Only one who practices both the way of intellectual inferential reasoning (*ṭarīqat al-istidlāl al-fikrī*) and the way of purification and spiritual exercise (*ṭarīqat al-taṣfiyya wa-l-riyāḍa*) can

[31] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 58.
[32] Ibid.

achieve the greatest heights of spiritual ascent. Rāzī again quotes (pseudo-)Aristotle to affirm this highly spiritual and pious notion. "It was transmitted from Aristotle," writes Rāzī, "that he said, 'I was drinking without being sated. When I drank from this sea, I was sated with such satisfaction that after that there was no thirst.'"[33] Rāzī closes the chapter by stating that these states cannot be explained, nor can speech reach them; for he who has not tasted (*lam yadhuq*) does not know (*lam yaʿrif*), and he who has not witnessed (*lam yushāhid*) does not believe (*lam yuṣaddiq*).[34]

The background of spiritual taste (*dhawq*) is rich and variegated, aligning Rāzī here not only with Sufi traditions but also with Avicennian notions of experiential knowledge. For instance, Ibn Sīnā states in the eighth chapter of the eighth class of *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhat* in a section on pain and pleasure that without taste (*dhawq*) one may not feel any desire for a certain pleasure.[35] The notion of specific aspects of knowledge as being experiential (though still maintaining a syllogistic structure[36]) is explored in a number of Ibn Sīnā's works, including the *Ishārāt*, *al-Risāla fī l-Kalām 'alā l-nafs al-nāṭiqa,* and *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād.* This concept of tasting ineffable knowledge as a result of witnessing (*mushāhada*) is further ascribed to Ibn Sīnā by Ibn Ṭufayl in his introduction to *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*.[37] There, too, Ibn Ṭufayl quotes a line from

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[33] Ibid., vol. 1, 59.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, 73; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, vol. 4, 19-20.
[36] Gutas, "Intellect Without Limits," 370. See also Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (New York: Brill, 1988), 75 n. 18, 345.
[37] Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, ed. Leon Gauthier (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1936), 5–7. Ibn Ṭufayl also distinguishes between Ibn Sīnā's no longer extant book on Eastern philosophy and the *Shifāʾ*, saying that Ibn Sīnā purportedly noted that the *Shifāʾ* follows the doctrine of the Peripatetics, while his doctrine is "something else," being represented fully his book on Eastern philosophy that portrays the truth as he conceives it without indirection. Gutas dismisses this note on the part of Ibn Ṭufayl as "deliberate misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Avicenna's Prologue to the Shifāʾ," the first of a long history of, as he sees it, misinterpreting Ibn Sīnā as a mystical philosopher. He argues in this article that the book on Eastern philosophy

al-Ghazālī on the state of spiritual-intellectual pleasure; indeed, prior to Rāzī, al-Ghazālī too incorporates the concept of *dhawq*, indicating spiritual pleasure in the Avicennian sense that represents a perfection of knowledge (though in al-Ghazālī's case, not syllogistic), into his philosophical theology. [38] Rāzī participates in a tradition of expressing the intellectual-spiritual pleasure resulting from the experience or witnessing (*mushāhada*) of ineffable knowledge through the inner sense of taste (*dhawq*), which by his time was a multivalent term that was employed by numerous thinkers on the spectrum of philosophical mysticism.

While Rāzī has previously referred to the path of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning by the word *ṭarīq,* in this final passage that refers to its combination with the mystical path, he switches to the feminized version of the word, *ṭarīqa*.[39] Although the feminine *ṭarīqa* bears the same literal meaning as its masculine counterpart, it additionally carries strong Sufi connotations; the "path" (*ṭarīqa,* feminine) is the Sufi way, embodying a whole theory of spiritual practice and life. The language of this passage is overtly mystical, yet Rāzī is unequivocally advocating the use of rational investigations, exemplified by his use of a pseudo-Aristotle quotation that melds the rationalist and the mystical.

(likely titled *al-Ḥikma al-mashriqiyya*) differed in style, but not in content, from the *Shifāʾ*. See Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ('Oriental') Philosophy: Nature, Contents, Transmission," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000): 160.

[38] On *dhawq* in al-Ghazālī and the Avicennian background of the term, see Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 48–63. The influence of this concept is not limited to Muslim thinkers or Islamic expressions of Sufism; on *dhawq* in Judah Ha-Levi (d. 1141), for instance, see Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 89–102.

[39] For a traditional explanation of "the path" in Sufism, see chapter three of Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

The relationship between the two paths may be clarified with reference to another account of this taxonomy in Rāzī's commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*. Rāzī describes four kinds of seekers of God, all of whom achieve some degree of result by albeit different paths. The first of these assiduously "practice" metaphysics (literally, the divine sciences, *al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya*). By this very striving "in seeking [these sciences] and reaching the intricacies by careful examination and deep contemplations, there arose in them a strong desire (*shawq shadīd*) and complete attraction to the loftier side. Their love of perfection in that brought them to [the practice of] spiritual exercise."[40] The second group of seekers consist of those who by their nature (*fiṭra*) were inclined to that lofty side, without being taught any science or practicing any "examination (*baḥth*) or contemplation (*naẓr*)." Even by removing themselves slightly from the sensibles (*al-maḥsūsāt*), either in listening (*samāʾ*) or in reflection, these seekers become "overpowered by ecstasy and the longing within them intensified."[41] These seekers, by nature and without need of a guide in their pursuits, are drawn to what is lofty and enthralled by the experience.

Yet as we have noted from examination of passages from the *Maṭālib,* those who solely practice spiritual exercise without the reinforcement of theoretical inquiry are handicapped in their pursuits and cannot achieve the loftiest heights of experience and knowing. This is made clear by his description of the third of these categories of seekers which comprises the souls of those who embody a combination of the first two. "These, on the basis of their nature (*fiṭra*), are formed longing for the side of glory. That yearning was then perfected by practice of divine signs (*al-maʿālim al-ilāhiyya*) and true investigations (*al-mabāḥith al-ḥaqīqiyya*)."[42] Finally, the

[40] al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 603.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

last group consists of those who embody neither of these characteristics, but who have become convinced of the truth of the path after hearing of its perfection and its relationship with eternal felicity.

We see rational inquiry play a role in two of these groups, namely the first and third. In the first, the pursuit of metaphysical truths is so sincere and so arduously pursued that the practice of spiritual exercise becomes inevitable. The third group, representing those who practice theoretical reasoning and have an innately spiritual nature, represents the pinnacle of experience. For these, the two practices, spiritual and intellectual, reinforce each other. Yet they also differ entirely in the paths traversed and knowledge acquired, as determined by the nature of the seeker; Rāzī states unequivocally that:

> [regarding] the two first divisions (that is, the one in which longing arises through knowledge without an innate disposition (*fiṭra*), and the other in which longing arises by an innate disposition (*fiṭra*) without knowledge), each one has what the other does not. Certainly, each differs from the other in the acquisition (*kasb*) of what is acquired (*muktasib*).[43]

Whereas one pursuing the path through knowledge requires solitude, one in possession of the innate disposition, but without such knowledge, requires a teacher. As for that which is gained, Rāzī writes that the possessor of knowledge achieves "greater quantity, but less quality" in his visions than those accessed by one who posses the innate spiritual disposition, for the revelations are divided and particularized by the theoretical faculty that determines them, "and the psychological faculty is divided among that multiplicity."[44] It is the one that is able to traverse both ways of knowing, however, that is the "noble, perfect, holy soul 'whose oil would almost gleam, even if not touched by fire'" (Q 25:35).[45]

[43] Ibid., vol. 2, 604.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

3. The Path to God in Sūrat al-Fātiḥa

A significant portion of Rāzī's exegesis of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa in his *Tafsīr* employs mystical language and imagery and allows us a first glimpse into the ways in which Rāzī infuses spiritual concepts with philosophical order. The fifth section of his commentary on this sura ("On the prayers being the ascent (*miʿrāj*) of the knowers (*ʿārifīn*)") treats the seeker's prayer as a *miʿrāj* of the soul, a rising up to God re-iterated in each believer. The term *miʿrāj* is first and foremost associated with the Prophet Muhammad's night journey (the *Isrāʾ*), recounted in hadith, and rooted primarily in the first verse of Sūrat al-Isrāʾ (Q 17:1). Rāzī employs the *miʿrāj* not as an experience specific to the Prophet, but as a model of the ascent of the soul that every seeker should emulate. This re-allocation of the *miʿrāj* from the extraordinary and the singular, to the universal and the collective, is particularly characteristic of Sufi thought. By Rāzī's time, the understanding of the term *mirʿāj* was established within Sufi tradition to mean the ascent of the soul in the general mystical sense, an expression of the Sufi's own mystical experience. Among other great Sufi thinkers, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. ca. 264/877), Sanāʾī, (fl. early 6th/12th century), Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (fl. 6th/12th century), and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) all wrote of their own experience of *mirʿāj*; like these Sufi thinkers, Rāzī interprets *miʿrāj* as the spiritual ascent first undertaken by the Prophet, and subsequently by spiritual seekers in their effort to approach the divine.[46]

Rāzī begins this fifth section of the commentary on Sūrat al-Fātiḥa with a decidedly mystical interpretation of Muhammad's ascent. "Know that the Prophet Muhammad had two ascents," writes Rāzī. "The first was from the Masjid al-Ḥarām to the Masjid al-Aqṣā, and the

[46] Nazeer El-Azma, "Some Notes on the Impact of the Story of the Miʿrāj on Sufi Literature," *The Muslim World* 63, no. 2 (April 1973): 95.

other was from al-Aqṣā to the highest celestial realm (*malakūt*) of God Exalted."[47] Within this initial sentence is the presence of mystical-philosophical language; the realm of divine sovereignty, *ʿālam al-malakūt*, is a qur'anic term used extensively by al-Ghazālī to describe the celestial realm that is entirely spiritual, separated from matter and bodies, and by mediation of which God governs the sublunar realm.

This concerns the external, Rāzī adds. Yet as for that which concerns the world of spirituals, the two ascents are: from the world of witnessing (*ʿālam al-shahāda*) to the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*); and from the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) to the world of the unknown of the unknown (*ʿālam ghayb al-ghayb*). The "world of witnessing" and the "world of the unknown" are again Sufi concepts rooted in the Qu'ran that are employed extensively by al-Ghazālī.[48] In al-Ghazālī's cosmology, the world of witnessing is the realm of *mulk*, and denotes the phenomenal world (*ʿālam al-khalq*) that is governed by the world of the unknown, the highest celestial realm (*ʿālam al-ghayb wa-l-malakūt*).[49] Rāzī also defines the *ʿālam al-shahāda* as "all that relates to the body and bodily entities," and the *ʿālam al-ghayb* as that world of spirits that has no end.[50] These two worlds, Rāzī states, are as close as "the small

[47] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1934), vol. 1, 275.
The Prophet's night journey from the sacred sanctuary (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) to the most remote sanctuary (al-Masjid al-Aqṣā) is reported in the first verse of Sūrat al-Isrāʾ (Q 17:1). While al-Masjid al-Ḥarām was understood immediately to refer to the sanctuary in Mecca, a consensus formed as early as fifteen years after the Hijra that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was located in Jerusalem. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, s.v. "al-Masdjid al-Akṣā," by O. Grabar.
[48] As they are rooted in the Qur'an, these terms are certainly not exclusively employed in Sufi texts. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, refers to the *mughayyabāt*, unknown things or events, as past, present, or future events that are revealed to the prophet through contact with the celestial souls. Gutas, "Intellect Without Limits," 360.
[49] Kojiro Nakamura, "Imām Ghazālī's Cosmology Reconsidered with Special Reference to the Concept of 'Jabarūt,'" *Studia Islamica*, no. 80 (1994): 32.
[50] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 275.

distance of two adjoining bow-lengths"—a reference to verse nine of Sūrat al-Najm, a contested reference to Muhammad's *miʿrāj*.[51] Rāzī comments that this verse alludes to Muhammad crossing this distance and achieving "self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*) of his soul."[52]

While Rāzī's subsequent description of the ascent of the soul employs non-rationalist terminology, his cosmology has not shifted. The upper ranks of beings are increasingly abstracted from matter and the body, and each rank is more perfect than the last. While he employs qur'anic terminology to describe the celestial spheres and intellects, the nature of these beings appears uncontested.[53] Though they are viewed through a pious rather than intellectual lens, they are the same ranks of beings that exist in a hierarchy of creation, each worshiping its Creator by its very existence within the perfection of such creation. The human spirit is the last rank of spirits, and thus the soul, in its ascent, passes through perfections and felicities of upper celestial beings until it arrives at: those spirits related to the sky of the world; the spirits of the second sky; those that reside at the degrees of the divine chair (*al-kursī*); the angels around the throne (Q 39:75); those that bear the divine throne (Q 69:17); then the spirits that are beyond any bodily relation, whose food is the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God, and whose drink is the love (*maḥabba*) of God, whose intimacy is the praise of God, whose pleasure is the work of God, and who are signified by the verses "those near Him do not disdain worshipping Him" (Q 21:19), and "they praise night and day, and do not slacken" (Q 21:20). Rising still, the human soul reaches

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[51] For a discussion of the various classical sources of the *miʿrāj* narrative, as well as analysis of anthropomorphic aspects of the qur'anic narrative of ascent, see Josef van Ess, "Vision and Ascension: Sūrat al-Najm and Its Relationship with Muḥammad's Miʿrāj," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 47–62.

[52] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 275.
Self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*) is a distinctively Sufi concept. The early Persian Sufi mystic Junayd (d. 298/910) was among the first to formulate the concept that one must pass away to one's individuality before affirming God's unity.

[53] Rāzī's cosmology is explored in full in the third chapter of the dissertation.

the Light of Lights, the Cause of Causes, the Principle (*mabdaʾ*) of All, the Fount of Mercy, the Source of Good—that is, God Exalted. The world of spirits is the *ʿālam al-ghayb*, and the presence of the majesty of Lordliness is the *ghayb al-ghayb*.[54]

Rāzī relates that after the *miʿrāj*, Muhammad asked God how he could grant his loved ones and companions vehicles by which to "return to one's homeland" – that is, to the divine presence.[55] God commanded then that Muhammad grant his community the prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), for this exercise combines the bodily and the spiritual. Rāzī then describes the prayer as a spiritual meditation that leads the seeker through the ascent, following the path of Muhammad to God. When one begins by physically raising one's hands in prayer, this signifies the rejection of both this world and the next in favor of purely focusing on the divine.[56] To say "God is greater" is to

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[54] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 276.

[55] This concept of return (*maʿād*) is both Sufi and philosophical, mystical and rationalist; it is a theme in Sufi thought, for the goal of mystical meditations is a return to a state of oneness with the divine from which the human soul initially emanated, and it is this return that is experienced by all souls (or by only the enlightened souls, depending on the thinker). The concept of *maʿād* is fundamental as well to Ibn Sīnā's philosophy. It is tied closely with the systematic nature of emanation of creation from the most perfect to the most base, with human beings occupying the unique position of existing within the visible world of corruption and decay, yet possessing the spiritual capacity through the rational soul to ascend from this world to that which is everlasting and purely intellectual. After death, the souls return to their origin, with enlightened souls freeing themselves from bodily constraints and ascending effortlessly to the divine.
Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān; McGill Institute of Islamic Studies, 1984), 113.
The notion that God imposed the prayers upon the Muslim community during Muhammad's *miʿrāj* is included in the account recorded in ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummi's (d.c. 307/919) *tafsīr*, taken from the *Kitāb al-Miʿrāj* attributed to Abū al-Ḥakam Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī. In this account, God first imposed fifty daily prayers, and Moses advised Muhammad to request a lower requirement because his community is the last and weakest. Subsequently, God reduced the prayers to ten, then to five, with each prayer being worth ten to account for the original demanded fifty.
R. P. Buckley, *The Night Journey and Ascension in Islam: The Reception of Religious Narrative in Sunni, Shi'i and Western Culture* (London; New York: IBTauris, 2013), 6–18.

[56] This statement brings to mind the well-known saying transmitted from the early female Sufi mystic Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya al-Qaysiyya, who said that she wished to ascend to heaven "to throw some fire into Paradise and some water on Hellfire, so that both of them may disappear

affirm that God is greater than all that exists and all that is known, and beyond comparison with anything in existence. As he describes the ascent of the soul in prayer, Rāzī's own ability to express the glory of God begins to consciously stumble. He writes:

> Then say, 'There is no God other than You,' and that is a sign that all of the attributes of majesty and names of perfection are for Him and no other, for He is the perfect, and there is no perfect except Him; and He is the holy, and there is no holy but Him. And in truth, there is no Him but Him, and no God but Him. And here, the intellect breaks off, the tongue seizes, comprehension besotted, imagination perplexed, and the intellect becomes as if ill.[57]

Rāzī has here thrown himself fully into the path of spiritual exercise. Knowledge of God is not attained but experienced. At this level, nothing is gained through composition of premises, and no truth is achieved such that it can be stored, conveyed, and reformulated. Rather, the human being, in meditating on the divine through the gift of prayer granted by the Prophet Muhammad, has experienced the presence of God in a way that is beyond words and intellect.

The passage is distinctly Sufi, marked by explicitly mystical terminology and concepts. Rāzī describes the experience of prayer as one of the Sufi stations; it is connected to the first door of eight doors to heaven, the station of cognition (*al-maʿrifa*), with the remaining seven doors being the stations of remembrance (*al-dhikr*), thankfulness (*al-shukr*), hope (*al-rajāʾ*), fear (*al-khawf*), fidelity (*al-ikhlāṣ*), prayer (*al-duʿāʾ*) and supplication (*al-taḍarruʿ*), and lastly, emulation (*al-iqtidāʾ*) of the good, pure spirits, and guidance by their lights.[58] Through these

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and that human beings may contemplate God without hope or fear, for if neither hope for Paradise nor fear of Hellfire existed, would they worship al-Ḥaḳḳ and submit to it?" *EI2*, s.v. "Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya al-Ḳaysiyya," by Margaret Smith.

[57] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 277.

[58] These stations also correspond with spiritual stations of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, as listed in his handbook on Sufism (*al-Risāla al-qushayriyya fi ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*). Namely, *maʿrifa* is the 48th station; *dhikr* the 17th; *shukr* the 20th; *rajaʾ* the 10th; *khawf* is the 9th; *ikhlāṣ* the 28th; *dūʿāʾ* the 40th.
See ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf* (Cairo: Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣabīḥ, 1966).

stations, the soul ascends, and is guided as well by the spirit of Muhammad. Passing beyond spiritual perils (desires/*al-shahawāt*, anger/*al-ghaḍab*, and passion/*al-hawā*), the human soul ascends to the threshold of the Governor of the Earth and Heavens. It is at this station that "the light of your spirit ascends, and the light of the spirit of Muhammad (may God honor him and grant him peace**)** descends, and the two spirits encounter each other."[59] The soul is guided by Muhammad's prophecy, and, for Rāzī, each line of the Sūrat al-Fātiḥa offers a roadmap to the divine. It is the soul's emulation of Muhammad's *miʿrāj* in prayer that allows it to ascend to the presence of God, embarking to a point that is at once both the unknown of the unknown (*ghayb al-ghayb*) and the true "homeland" (*waṭan*) of the soul.

Previously, at the end of the third section of his commentary on Sūrat al-Fātiḥa, Rāzī has stated that there are two ways by which the soul achieves perfection: one through the intellect, and the other through emulation (*iqtidāʾ*). Rāzī interprets the sixth and seventh verses of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa ("Guide us to the straight path / the path of those upon whom you have bestowed favor, not those who have incurred your disfavor, and not those who are misguided") to indicate "the two ways in which the human soul is perfected by cognitions (*al-maʿārif*) and knowledges (*al-ʿulūm*)."[60] The first way is that of "the straight path" (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*); this is the path by which the human soul attempts to achieve perfection through thinking (*al-fikr*), theoretical inquiry (*al-naẓar*), and inferential reasoning (*al-istidlāl*).[61] The "path of those upon whom you have bestowed favor" is that of the second division, and represents the way by which the achievements of predecessors (*maḥṣūlāt al-mutaqaddimīn*) are conveyed to the human being, and by which his soul is perfected. The path of the mystic can only fall into this second division,

[59] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 279.
[60] Ibid., 269.
[61] Ibid.

for Rāzī writes that it is in this division that seekers attempt to "emulate the lights of the intellects of the rightful sect (*ṭalaba an yakūna iqtidāʾuhu bi-anwār ʿuqūl al-ṭāʾifa al-muḥiqqa*)."[62] Those who disrupt good works are the ones who incur God's disfavor, and those who disrupt true creeds are those who are misguided.

The highly spiritual interpretation of the opening sura explored in the fifth section of the commentary on Sūrat al-Fātiḥa embodies the second way, "the path of those upon whom you have bestowed favor." "Emulation (*iqtidāʾ*) of the good, pure spirits" is the highest degree of this path, the eighth door of heaven. The mystical path is one of emulation; the seekers emulate those who have risen before them, "the lights of the intellects of the rightful sect."

Given the difficulty of the path of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning, and the rarity of the innate ability to compose premises that is necessary for this path, it is natural that Rāzī would choose to privilege the spiritual path at the beginning of his *Tafsīr al-kabīr*. The readership of the *Tafsīr* would have been broader than that of his *Maṭālib,* as evidenced by the relative ubiquity of *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* among extant manuscripts. Rāzī begins the first sections of the *Maṭālib* by immediately employing dialectical reasoning and intensely difficult logical proofs about the existence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence. The initial difficulty of the *Maṭālib* may even be purposeful; he has stated that those of lesser intellects can only be harmed by the lofty pursuits, so perhaps he intends to intimidate those who are incapable of understanding this particular work. His *Tafsīr* begins conversely with material that is deceivingly simple. The mystical way may be the more broadly accessible path of the two in Rāzī's mind, and, as he stated in the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, even if the person lacks an innate spiritual sensibility,

[62] Ibid.

appreciation for the spiritual path will lead one towards God.[63] It is certainly more appropriate to be highlighted in a *tafsīr* work, and finally, may be the less dangerous alternative for one who is incapable of following the path, be it spiritual or intellectual. The danger of the intellectual path that Rāzī has highlighted in the *Maṭālib*—namely, specious arguments (*al-shubahāt*) that may extinguish the light of the seeker—are absent in the spiritual attempt. Yet it is important to note that Rāzī's *Tafsīr al-kabīr* does not solely advocate the mystical path. In his commentary on verse 31 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, Rāzī extolls the virtues of intellectual knowledge (*al-ʿilm*). This lengthy commentary also includes a *miʿrāj* of the soul that mirrors the mystical form taken in the commentary of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa but employs rational terminology and concepts.

4. Miʿrāj Passages: The Conjunction of the Rational and the Mystical

The combination of both the mystical and rationalist paths is exemplified in numerous *miʿrāj* passages that Rāzī incorporates throughout his corpus. The ascent in these passages is mystical in form, for the seeker rises, degree by degree, through various layers of existence until they reach the divine presence of God. Rāzī's tone is ecstatic rather than scholastic; he is not attempting to document in detail the stages of ascent, nor is he entertaining various arguments and comparing the truth-value of various opinions. Rather, he appears almost overwhelmed at the beauty of the experience of the *miʿrāj*, and attempts, without prefacing the passages with explanation or concluding with justification, to illustrate the transcendent experience to the reader. He mixes rationalist and mystic terminology, and includes qur'anic verses as attestations of various stages of the ascent.

[63] al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 603.

Two passages are translated in full below to illustrate the mystical-rationalist *miʿrāj*. The first passage occurs in the third introductory section of *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*.[64] This section discusses the question of multiple paths to holy cognitions (*hadhihi al-maʿārif al-qudsiyya*), and is the same discussion in which Rāzī later affirms that there are two primary paths to this knowledge—the rationalist and the mystical –but that the ideal way is a combination of the two. This *miʿrāj* passage occurs immediately after Rāzī has stated that the only way to achieve knowledge about God is through inference about the cause from the caused—namely, through rising from the effect to that which creates the effect, from creation to the Creator. The passage is an illustration of that ascent, after which Rāzī refrains from further explanation, stating only, "Let us be content with this degree of clarification about this topic (*maqām*), for it is a sea with no shore."[65] Just as was Ibn Sīnā's conviction, Rāzī implies that this experience of pleasure can only be known if it is tasted, and cannot otherwise be explained or conceptualized.

Rāzī merges the mystical and the rationalist in a number of ways. For instance, the world of the intelligibles (*ʿālam al-maʿqūlāt*) and ranks of holy spirits are conceptually combined, with both entities emanating light that banishes the incapable seeker. He cites the "pure drink" related in verse 21 of Sūrat al-Insān, and relates that it is this drink, enjoyed in the presence of the

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[64] For a full translation of this section, see Appendix III.

[65] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 52.
The "sea" is a rich metaphor found throughout Islamic philosophy and Sufism as well as early Arabic poetry. To name a few instances: al-Kindī writes in *On the Proximate Agent Cause of Generation and Corruption* of "[those] who have not yet climbed to reach the towering height of first philosophy, nor swum in the unfathomable depths of its immense and tumultuous oceans…" Peter Adamson, *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī*, Studies in Islamic philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 156. Ghazālī warns of plunging into the "sea of divine mysteries" in his *Mishkāt al-anwār*; Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī quotes his patron, Abū Jaʿfar b. Bānuyya, in his *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* as saying that "'He who swims in our sea has no shore but himself'" Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, Studies in Islamic Culture and History 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 18.

divine, that purifies the seeker from connections with the realm of potentiality and origination (*al-imkān wa-l-ḥudūth*), and manifests to him the Existence by its Essence (*al-wujūd bi-l-dhāt*). By combining mystical and philosophical concepts with quotations from the Qur'an, the piety of sacred text is melded with the rationalist conceptual understanding of creation and the divine. He pulls metaphors from mystical tradition and religious text, and employs philosophical concepts and terminology to give meaning to the images. The mystical and pious give depth to the rationalist, and the rationalist, in turn, gives logical and systematic meaning to the mystical. The two reinforce each other, and, here, neither is privileged.

The passage states:

> We say that the rational human soul is positioned at the last rank of abstracted holy existents, and you will know the truth of this premise (*muqaddima*) when you comprehend the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the degrees of angels and their ranks. If this is so, then this human soul advances from its knowledge of itself to its knowledge of its cause, and from its knowledge of its cause to its knowledge of the cause of its cause, and thus it advances rank by rank until it reaches, at last, the presence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence. As He said in the Holy Book, "To your Lord is the highest degree" (Q 53:42), "Only to God do all things lead" (Q 42:53), and "He is the First, and the Last" (Q 57:3). And the Truth is "The First" point in the descent from the Truth to creation (*min al-ḥaqq ilā al-khalq*), and "The Last" point in the ascent (*al-ṣuʿūd*) from creation to the Truth. And whereas the degrees of intermediaries are many, and their ranks concealed from human intellects, and the states of those intermediaries, and the ranks of their lights, force, and power are various, so too is the power of the human rational soul weak when it comes to advancing in these stages. Certainly, most people remained in the depths of the realms of the sensibles (*ʿawālim al-maḥsūsāt*), and only a rare few rid themselves of the world of sensation (*ʿālam al-ḥiss*), rising from the world of the sensibles (*ʿālam al-maḥsūsāt*) to the world of the phantasms (*ʿālam al-khayālāt*). Few of the companions of phantasms moved to the world of the intelligibles (*ʿālam al-maʿqūlāt*). Then, in the world of intelligibles, there are many ranks of holy spirits. Certainly most of the remaining intellects, upon arriving at the realms of the lights of the intelligibles, waned and were destroyed in the light of those holy spirits, except for those who were aided by a vanquishing power and a divine soul. These rise from the ginger of Mars to the cool water (*salsabīl*) of Jupiter, and from it to the camphor of Saturn. Surpassing all and rising above all, from the concomitants of the realm of potentiality (*lawāḥiq ʿālam al-imkān*) and the change of origination (*ghiyār al-ḥudūth*), they arrive at the Holy Presence [of God] (*al-ḥaḍra al-muqaddasa*).

> They take joy in His saying "Their Lord supplied them a pure drink" (Q 76:21). And that pure drink purifies [the seeker] of relations of potentiality and temporal creation (*ʿalāʾiq al-imkān wa-l-ḥudūth*), and makes manifest to him the threshold of the Necessity by its Essence (*al-wujūd bi-l-dhāt*). If you knew that, then it has become apparent that only a select few of human spirits enjoy the reception of an atom of the atoms of the lights of the realm of magnificence.[66]

The passage blends philosophical vocabulary with mystical expression. Here, the seeker of knowledge who has been granted the rare capacity to do so rises through the ranks of the intelligibles to arrive at the Presence of God. Within the broader scope of his argument, the section is an illustration that an exceptional human being can attain knowledge about God through a rationalist-mystic ascent from what is known about creation to the Creator, from the caused to the cause.

The next passage is taken from Rāzī's *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*. It occurs within his analysis of verse 31 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, "And He taught Adam the names, all of them, then presented them to the angels and said, 'Inform me of the names of those, if you are truthful.'" His commentary on this verse is lengthy (32 pages in the printed edition), and includes analysis of various philosophical and theological issues, including the origin of language and the virtues of knowledge. Rāzī digresses into this mystical-rationalist *miʿrāj* at the beginning of a sub-section entitled "Regarding the intellectual evidences (*al-shawāhid al-ʿaqliyya*) for the virtue of knowledge (*al-ʿilm*)."[67] The passage occurs after the assertion that the human being is, without doubt, superior to all other animals. This superiority is not due to the strength or power of the human being, for other animals are superior in these attributes. "Rather," Rāzī writes, "it is due to the human being's particular luminous nature and lordly subtlety that [he] comes to be prepared to grasp the truths of things, and the study of these things, and devotion to the worship

[66] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 51-52.
[67] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 2, 198.

of God."[68] The *miʿrāj* section subsequently illustrates the actualization of the innate potential of human nature to rise in knowledge of creation, acquiring knowledge of "the truths of things," to knowledge of the divine. Rāzī writes:

> The ignorant (*al-jāhil*) is like one in great darkness who does not see anything at all, and the knower (*al-ʿālim*) is like one who flies in the regions of the realm (*al-malakūt*) and swims in the sea of the intelligibles (*al-maʿqūlāt*), inspecting existence and non-existence, and the necessary (*al-wājib*) and the possible (*al-mumkin*), and the impossible (*al-muḥāl*), and then comprehends the division of the possible into the substance (*al-jawhar*) and the accident (*al-ʿaraḍ*), and the substance into the simple (*al-basīt*) and the compound (*al-murakkab),* and he goes to the greatest lengths dividing every one of them into their species (*anwāʿihā*), and the species of their species and their parts (*ājzāʾihā*), and the parts of their parts, and the part by which it combines with that different from it, and the part by which it is distinguished from that which is different from it, and he knows the effect (*athar*) of every thing and that which affects (*muʾaththir*), and that which is caused (*maʿlūlihi*) by it and its cause (*ʿillatihi*), and that which is necessary for it (*lāzimihi*) and that which is necessitated by it (*malzūmihi*), and its universality (*kullīhi*) and its particularity (*juzʾīhi*), and oneness (*wāhidihi*) and multiplicity (*kathīrihi*), until his intellect becomes like a copy upon which all of that which is known (*al-maʿlūmāt*), in its particularities and divisions, is fixed. There is no felicity above this degree. Then after his becoming like that, the ignorant souls become a sign (*ʿalāma*), and that soul becomes like the sun in the world of spirits (*ʿālam al-arwāḥ*) and a means by which to obtain eternal life for the rest of the souls (*sababan li-l-ḥayāt al-abadiyya li-sāʾir al-nufūs*). It is as if [the soul] was perfect (*kāmila*), and then it became perfecting (*mukammila*), and becomes an intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) between God and His people (*ʿibādihi*). To this end, the Exalted said, "He sent the angels with a spirit from his command" (Q 16:2), and the exegetes explained this spirit as meaning knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) and the Qur'an. Just as the body without spirit is dead and corrupted (*fāsid*), so too is the spirit without knowledge dead. Just as the Exalted said, "And thus we have revealed to you a spirit from our command" (Q 42:52), so too is knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) the spirit of the spirit and the light of the light and the essence of the essence. This felicity is eternal, secure from annihilation and change. Extinction and change do not reach the universal forms, and if this felicity were at the extremity of majesty in its essence, then it is eternal, everlasting of the everlastings, for all eternity; it is, without doubt, the most perfect felicity**.** For the prophets, God's blessings be upon them, were not sent except to summon to the truth (*al-ḥaqq*). The Exalted said "Summon to the path of your God with wisdom" (16:125), and so forth, and said, "Say, this is my path, I summon to God with insight, I and whoever follow me" (Q 12:108). Consider then from the beginning of the issue, for God Exalted, when he said, "I will make a deputy (*khalīfa*) on earth," the angels said, "Will you place

[68] Ibid., vol. 2, 198-99.

> upon it one who causes corruption?" His Exalted said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know" (Q 2:30). So the Exalted answered them that he is all-knowing, and did not use the rest of the attributes of his majesty…[while all other qualities] are in the extreme of honor, still the attribute of knowledge is more noble than the rest of them.[69]

This passage, like the first *miʿrāj* section translated from the *Maṭālib*, blends philosophical terminology with mystical descriptions. The seeker first comprehends the world through philosophical classifications, dividing existence into various ontological categories. It is at this point of understanding that knowledge of all of existence is fixed within the seeker's soul. This knowledge produces the utmost degree of spiritual felicity, and the seeker's soul then becomes a beacon for the souls of others, and the means by which they might attain eternal life. Once again, Rāzī employs the imagery of the light of superior souls that illuminate the way for other seekers. Rāzī's mixture of philosophical and mystical imagery and terminology implies that these powerful souls have attained a superior degree of felicity through the combination of the path of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning, and the path of spiritual exercise.

5. Rāzī and Sufism

In his doxography of beliefs that fall within and outside of Islam (*Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn*), Rāzī writes that it is a mistake to leave the Sufis out of an account of Islamic groups (*firaq*) for "the path to cognition (*maʿrifa*) of God exalted is purification (*taṣfiyya*) and abstraction from bodily connections."[70] Despite his high appraisal, Rāzī's particular blending of philosophical concepts and mystical inclinations was by no means welcomed by the adherents of Sufism of his time. While orthodox Sunni peers were deeply

[69] Ibid., vol. 2, 199-200.
[70] al-Rāzī, *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn*, 72.

uncomfortable with Rāzī's incorporation of philosophical concepts and method into his theology, his Sufi peers also viewed his employment of theoretical inquiry as highly problematic. Long before Rāzī, the incorporation of book-learning into mystical practice was traditionally looked down upon in Sufi circles. As Annemarie Schimmel notes in *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* "'To break the ink-pots and to tear the books' was considered by some mystics the first step in Sufism."[71] Further, the philosopher was a target for Sufi derision as one who strives down the wrong path, and Ibn Sīnā "became the representative of dry rationalism."[72]

Rāzī himself was the object of such derision among key Sufi figures. Rūmī's (d. 672/1273) spiritual guide, Shams-e Tabrizi, dismissed Rāzī as the most arrogant of apostates, for Rāzī would say "Mohammed-e Tāzi" – Mohammed the Arabian, i.e., the Prophet – "says this, and Mohammed-e Rāzī says thus."[73] Rūmī himself alludes directly to Rāzī in at least two poems in his *Masnavi.* In both, he dismisses Rāzī as a hyper-rationalist. In the first, he refers to "the philosopher" who repented on his deathbed (as Rāzī debatably did, but famously so, in his *waṣiyya*[74]) and admitted that "We charged our mental steed too hard and fast / In pride we raised our head above all men / and swam in vain imagination's sea / But nothing here, in the vast sea of soul, / can swim; Noah's ship's the only savior."[75] Both of Rāzī's primary faults—pride and hyper-rationalism—are cited here. The second refers to Rāzī by name. Rūmī writes: "If reason

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[71] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 17.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Rūmī M4:3354-7, Franklin Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi* (Oxford; Boston: Oneworld, 2000), 58.
[74] For a translation and analysis of Rāzī's *waṣiyya*, see Street's "The Life and Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī." As Street notes, "the document is hardly a repentance for having used *kalām*" (138). Yet from Ibn Taymiyya's unfaithful paraphrase, to relatively recent scholarship that mischaracterizes Rāzī's relationship to both *kalām* and philosophy, Rāzī's *waṣiyya* has a history of being misunderstood. Street, "Concerning the Life and Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."
[75] Rūmī M5:4144-5, Lewis, *Rumi: past and present, east and west: the life, teaching and poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi*, 59.

clearly saw its way along, / then on faith's truth had Rāzī zeroed in! But 'he who has not tasted does not know,' / and so his fancy reason just confused him."[76] Nor did Bahā al-Dīn (d. 661/1262) approve of Rāzī, specifically finding fault with his closeness to various rulers; Bahā al-Dīn referred to both Rāzī and the Khwarazmshah as theological "deviants" (*mobtadeʿ*).[77]

One popular story tells us that Rāzī searched out the great Sufi Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221) and asked that he guide him. Yet when al-Kubrā began to extract Rāzī's knowledge that he had gained by book learning from his soul, Rāzī could not abide and fled.[78] While the details of such a meeting are of doubtful authenticity, we do have access to two letters written to Rāzī by two important Sufi thinkers of the time, Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) and Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234). In his letter to Rāzī, al-Suhrawardī subtly exhorts Rāzī to join knowledge with action, and action with knowledge; his intellectual understanding should not exist abstracted from the world but should be manifested as lived expression. He also writes against apodictic demonstration in favor of observing the rites of the community, saying, "For apodictic demonstration (*burhān*) is for thoughts, and witnessing (*ʿiyān*) is for [divine] secrets. No demonstration-sign (*burhān dalāla*) nor demonstration- reason (*burhān ʿilla*), but rather, observance is for the rites (*shaʿāʾir*) of the community (*umma*)."[79] He stresses humility, writing

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Mohammed Rustom, "Ibn ʿArabī's Letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: A Study and Translation," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 1. Shihadeh treats two accounts of this meeting, one recorded by Muṣannifak, a descendent of Rāzī, and another by Ibn Taymiyya, who relied on the account of al-Maqdisī. He concludes that there can be little doubt that al-Kubrā and Rāzī did meet at an earlier stage in Rāzī's life, though he doubts that this had a lasting influence on Rāzī's later Sufi developments. See Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," 103–6.
[79] Nasrollah Pourjavady, *Dū mujaddid: pizhūhish-hāʾī dar bāra-yi Muḥammad-i Ghazzāli va Fakhr-i Rāzī* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 2002), 516.

that one must undergo exoneration and atonement to ascend the ladder of apology, and only then dive into the secrets of the divine.[80]

It seems likely that it is not only Rāzī's method of investigation, which gives utmost weight to theoretical inquiry, that comes at odds with esoteric Sufi experiential knowledge, but also his association with the rich and mighty. Rāzī found patronage in the leadership of two warring dynasties (the Ghurids and the Khwarazmshahs) and was treated generously by both.[81] He was both brilliant and entirely lacking in humility; his undeniable arrogance can be witnessed not only in the way he treats his interlocutors in *al-Munāẓarāt jarat fī bilād mā warāʾ al-nahr* (his autobiographical retelling of debates he held in Transoxiana), but also in his biographers' accounts. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa relates, for instance, that the judge Muḥyi al-Dīn told him that Rāzī "was haughty even in respect to kings."[82] Al-Suhrawardī's words appear carefully chosen; he does not seek to openly reprimand, but he does target what would have been Rāzī's least desirable qualities for the Sufis of his time, namely, his hyper-rationalism and his self-aggrandizement.

Ibn ʿArabī's letter to Rāzī explicitly chastises him for his over-reliance on intellect, which cannot, in Ibn ʿArabī's view, lead one to the divine. He echoes Rāzī's impulse that obtaining knowledge is the height of human perfection: "My friend, may God grant him success, already knows that the perfection of human subtle reality resides in that which bears divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-illāhiyya)*, and its distortion is the opposite of that."[83] But the intellectual should not waste his life in the pursuit of knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of that which is created and its

[80] Ibid.
[81] See Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received."
[82] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 23.
[83] Ibn ʿArabī, *Majmūʿat Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭāʾī (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍāʾ, 2000), vol. 1, 608.

intricacies. Ibn ʿArabī exhorts Rāzī to recognize the weakness of the single human intellect, and its inability to transcend to the Creator through rationality alone. Knowledge of God is different from knowledge of the existence of God, and "God exalted is beyond being known by the intellect through its theoretical reasoning (*naẓar*) and thinking (*fikr*). The intellectual must empty his heart of thinking (*fikr*), for cognition (*maʿrifa*) of God is by way of witnessing (*mushāhada*)."[84] Specifically addressing Rāzī's understanding of the mechanics of divine inspiration (inherited from Ibn Sīnā), Ibn ʿArabī insists that the intellect, whose knowledge is illuminated through the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), is a poor substitute for knowledge of God revealed through unveiling (*kashf*). Further, knowledge/cognition of God cannot be attained by the intellect; one should rather commit oneself to "the path (*ṭarīq*) of spiritual exercise, striving, and retreat."[85] Ibn ʿArabī notes that he wishes to go into further detail on spiritual retreat, but is prevented by the "teachers of evil" (*ʿulamāʾ al-sūʾ*) – a phrase that is an echo of al-Ghazālī's warning in the Book of Knowledge of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*.

Ibn ʿArabī's letter goes to great lengths to convince Rāzī by a number of arguments attempting to illustrate that his faith in the power of rationality is misplaced. The letter firstly clarifies Ibn ʿArabī's own understanding of the role of intellect, as well as the trend among Sufis of minimizing the role of intellectual inquiry in spiritual practice. Yet it also serves as confirmation that even in his own lifetime, Rāzī was perceived to be actively attempting to merge the spiritual with the rationalist in his pursuit of knowledge of the divine. As Shihadeh has noted, the letter also portrays Rāzī as one plagued by uncertainty, as it includes an anecdote relayed by a trusted mutual acquaintance who witnessed Rāzī weeping due to recognizing the

[84] Ibid., vol. 1, 609.
[85] Ibid., vol. 1, 615.

falsity of a position he had held for thirty years, and thus becoming plagued by self-doubt.[86] It is this propensity to skepticism, Shihadeh argues, that propels Rāzī's late "conversion" to Sufism.

6. The Influence of al-Ghazālī: Knowledge, Practice, and Felicity

Al-Ghazālī's life and works undoubtedly exerted an enormous influence upon Rāzī. On the surface, there are numerous similarities: both Rāzī and al-Ghazālī are prominent Ashʿarī theologians who incorporate Sufi concepts and terminology into their works, both were influenced by philosophical terminology and concepts, and both emphasize that knowledge is the key to salvation. Further, al-Ghazālī was certainly heavily influenced by Ibn Sīnā on questions of ontology, the human soul, and prophecy;[87] the same conceptual influences are evident in Rāzī's corpus. These similarities are significant, and certainly attest to the influence al-Ghazālī's thought had upon Rāzī, as well as Ibn Sīnā's manifest influence upon both thinkers. Yet Rāzī's apparent frustration with al-Ghazālī is one indication that these similarities do not run as deep as they appear. While al-Ghazālī praises knowledge, it is a specific type of knowledge that should be employed in the pursuit of eternal happiness, namely, religious knowledge that primarily encompasses correct action and right belief. One can argue that for al-Ghazālī, there are not multiple paths to God; rather, the mystical path is the only means to spiritually ascend to the divine, and correct worship and living guided by knowledge, which is informed by revelation above reason, is the only means to salvation. These points are illustrated in al-Ghazālī's autobiography, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl,* and supported by other key works such as *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn, Mishkāt al-anwār,* and *Kīmīyā-yi saʿādat*.

[86] Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," 102–3.
[87] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 9.

It is well-attested that the mature al-Ghazālī was a Sufi, and terms and concepts from Sufi thought abound in his works. His autobiography, *Deliverer from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*), narrates this shift from rationalism to mysticism. Initially highly rationalist, al-Ghazālī recounts that he delved into such an intense degree of skepticism about certainty of knowledge that he mistrusted his senses and even his reason. Perhaps this state, he writes, is that of the Sufis when they dive into themselves and lose touch with the intelligibles—or, perhaps, it is death. Then again, "perhaps this earthly life is only a slumber preceding the afterlife."[88] Al-Ghazālī finds his deliverance in the mercy of God, manifested in the "light of God," rather than being derived from the strength of rational arguments. He writes:

> The suffering persisted for two months… until God Exalted cured me of that sickness, and the soul returned to health and temperance, and intellectual necessities became, once again, accepted and trustworthy, secure and certain. This was not due to the ordering of proof and the arrangement of dialectical theology (*kalām*), but rather to the light (*nūr*) which God Exalted cast into my chest; that light is the key to the greatest cognition (*maʿārif*). He who thinks that unveiling is premised upon written proofs has narrowed the vast mercy of God Exalted.[89]

At this point, al-Ghazālī recounts an epistemic shift after which point he no longer looked to reason as the ultimate arbiter of the highest metaphysical matters, but instead to revelation and submission to the *bi-lā kayf* doctrine commonly accepted by the Ashʿarite school.

As conveyed in his autobiography, al-Ghazālī takes it upon himself to explore *kalām*, philosophy, and Sufism as different ways by which one may attempt to attain truth. Similar to Rāzī, al-Ghazālī expresses deep dissatisfaction with *kalām* as serving orthodox doctrine rather than pursuing the truth unhindered by preconceptions. Yet the Islamic philosophers—or so-called philosophers (*mutafalsifa*)— such as Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī should

[88] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. Kāmil ʿAyyād and Jamīl Ṣalībā (Damascus: M. Bījū, 1990), 35.
[89] Ibid., 36.

be taken as disbelievers.[90] In this, Rāzī is evidently at variance with al-Ghazālī; while both incorporate Ibn Sīnā's method and concepts into their theology, Rāzī does so with frequent explicit reference to his source and praise of Ibn Sīnā's critical mind, while al-Ghazālī is profoundly influenced by Ibn Sīnā but outwardly condemns him. Further, in the section of his autobiography on the division of the sciences, al-Ghazālī warns that logic cannot firmly establish conclusions on religious questions, and it is liable to abuse by those who do not understand its limitations.

Upon realizing that the Sufi way is the true way to God, al-Ghazālī underwent a self-professed period of mental and physical deterioration that continued until he abandoned his post as teacher at the Niẓāmiyya school in Baghdād, and giving up his land and possessions, devoted himself to years of spiritual meditations and devotions in seclusion (*khalwa*), during which time he became convinced that Sufis are "the true followers of the path of God; that their way is the best way; that their path, the most right; their morals, the purest."[91] This path, for al-Ghazālī, is purer and straighter than those of the theologians and the philosophers alike.

In the final section of his autobiography, al-Ghazālī addresses the question of revelation, and the human being's need for that revelation. He further emphasizes in this section that access to metaphysical knowledge occurs through divine guidance. The use of reason represents an advanced stage of human development, but divine inspiration occurs beyond this phase. It is out of ignorance that certain intellectuals reject the state of divine revelation; it is inaccessible to them, and they therefore assume its nonexistence.

[90] Ibid., 44–45.
[91] Ibid., 67.

For al-Ghazālī, while the fruits of intellectual inquiry may be employed in one's ascent to divine knowledge, they are left behind when one discovers and treads the Sufi path. It is not possible that these ways be combined for al-Ghazālī; rather than co-existing with the path of theoretical inquiry, the Sufi way supersedes the intellectual. This conviction is stated explicitly in his autobiography, and is also affirmed in numerous other works. In *Mishkāt al-anwār* (a work on mysticism that influenced Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl's doctrine of illumination), al-Ghazālī describes the world as composed of the inner, spiritual world of *al-malakūt*, and the outer world of witnessing (*al-shahāda*). This vision is certainly shared by Rāzī, who situates this spiritual understanding of the world within the cosmological schema largely inherited from the *falsafa* tradition. As it is for Rāzī, this spiritual world for al-Ghazālī is fully accessed by a select few human beings, namely the prophets and the highest saints. Unlike Rāzī's conception of human perfection, however, al-Ghazālī indicates that the highest human perfection occurs in a prophetic faculty rather than in the intellect. The prophets and select saints' souls contain the property that allows them to access a stage that is beyond the intellectual, and which cannot appear in the intellect.[92]

The same analogy to sensation that al-Ghazālī stated in his autobiography is first stated in the *Mishkāt al-anwār*: just as physical sensation cannot access the wonders achieved by the intellect, the intellect too cannot fathom that which exists beyond it. Al-Ghazālī issues a warning for the rationalist: "Do not assume that utmost perfection stops at yourself!"[93] Thus, al-Ghazālī's conviction that the highest metaphysical truth about God cannot be accessed by intellect is not merely creedal. He does not object to the philosopher's arguments because the conclusions are

[92] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sayrawān (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1986), 166.
[93] Ibid., 167.

unacceptable (in some cases, al-Ghazālī in fact supports the same conclusions). Rather, he objects because this very path cannot be tread by the intellect, and it is self-delusory to believe that one can attain such elevated metaphysical truths through rational demonstration.

There is much scholarly debate on al-Ghazālī's commitment to rational inquiry, and numerous venerated scholars, including Richard M. Frank and Frank Griffel, argue for the deep and lasting influence of Ibn Sīnā on al-Ghazālī's thought. To this point, Richard M. Frank states in *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* that "purely intellectual and theoretical understanding of the universe and God is far more important for al Ghazali than for prior Ashʿarites. Sufism is subordinate to this intellectual vision."[94] Certainly, the rational and the mystical are not inherently exclusive, as best illustrated for our purposes by Rāzī's works.

In the *Kīmīyā-yi saʿādat,* al-Ghazālī exhibits many of the same points of influence that are of utmost interest in Rāzī's corpus. It is knowledge (here, *maʿrifa*) that guarantees the eternal felicity of the soul, and spiritual hell consists of an over-attachment at the time of death to worldly associations. Yet is this "knowledge" proper to the intellect as understood by Ibn Sīnā, and can it be described as rationalist? Indeed, much of the *Kīmīyā-yi saʿādat* focuses on knowledge (*maʿrifa*) as it produces correct practice, stems from and is tied to love of God, and contributes to an ascetic lifestyle. In *Kīmīyā-yi saʿādat,* the ultimate end of knowledge is not the attainment of rationalist truth (on such topics as the divisions of the universe and the structure of the human self), but rather vision of God. The goal is not only experiential, but it is, furthermore, outside of the control of the seeker, for God reveals Himself to whomsoever God wills. Knowledge prepares the soul for correct behavior rather than ennobling the human soul through the attainment of the intelligibles.

[94] Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, 10.

The first section of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn,* titled "The Book of Knowledge" (*Kitāb al-ʿilm*), exemplifies the necessary relationship that al-Ghazālī demands between knowledge that is the guarantor of eternal felicity and the human soul. The sixth section of this book is devoted to the differentiation between the learned people of the hereafter, and those who are knowledgeable but maintain a disconnect between knowledge and correct behavior, which earns them even greater punishment in the next life. These are "teachers of wickedness" (*ʿulamāʾ al-sūʾ*) for whom various levels of hell are reserved depending on their variety of transgression. As in other sections, al-Ghazālī cites a variety of hadith, qur'anic verses, and popular tales (many of them related to Sufi figures) to confirm this condemnation. Nearly every story cited attests to knowledge being useful only insofar as it is put into practice; if one knows what is correct, but fails to connect that knowledge to action, this is the greatest sin of all.

This naturally implies that the knowledge about which al-Ghazālī is concerned is that knowledge that would relate to correct practice and belief. In fact, he charges that only knowledge that is beneficial for the hereafter, and that draws one to good works (*ṭāʿāt*), should be pursued. Other knowledge that is not beneficial to this cause and rather increases argumentation should be avoided. This pursued knowledge, writes al-Ghazālī, should be like that which Ḥātim al-Aṣamm learned from his teacher, Shaqīq al-Balkhī, one of the earliest and most pivotal Sufi ascetics. These are counted as eight points of learning. Yet these are not enumerations of knowledge gained, but rather knowledge applied; his lessons come from observation and qur'anic verses, and the outcome is a shift in the ways in which his external actions and inward alignment towards the world prepare him for the afterlife.

In the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī is following Sufi predecessors in veneration of a specific type of knowledge rather than the general concept. Annemarie Schimmel observes that

according to Sufis in the formative period, "'*ilm*, 'knowledge,' the pursuit of which is incumbent upon every male and female Muslim, is the knowledge of a Muslim's practical duties."[95] Knowledge as *ʿilm* is a means, but cognition of God (*maʿrifat Allah*) is an end. For instance, while much of al-Qusharyī's *al-Risāla fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf* is devoted to the veneration of knowledge, this is either the specific type of knowledge (*ʿilm*) that informs correct belief and practice, or it is the cognition (*maʿrifa*) of God that is the goal of Sufi practice. He relates, for instance, that Muhammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Balkhī, playing upon the similarities in the words knowledge (*ʿilm*) and action (*ʿaml*), said: "There are four deviations from Islam: Those who do not perform what they know; those who perform what they do not know; those who do not learn that of which they are ignorant, and those who prevent others from learning."[96] The conviction relayed by al-Ghazālī that knowledge is intimately bound with practice is one inherited from the Sufi tradition.[97]

While many elements likely influenced Rāzī's view of knowledge as the basis for the everlasting felicity of the human soul, there are fundamental differences that come to the fore in Rāzī's own expressed frustrations with his predecessor in *al-Munāẓarāt jarat fī bilād mā warāʾ al-nahr*. He discusses al-Ghazālī extensively in this autobiographical recounting of disputes he (Rāzī) held in Khwarazm and Transoxiana. In this work, Rāzī accuses al-Ghazālī at numerous points of censuring others for faulty reasoning, yet himself employing flawed logic to achieve

[95] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 17.
[96] Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*, 68.
[97] Ibn Sīnā, like al-Fārābī before him, also follows the Peripatetic tradition of distinguishing between theoretical and practical philosophy. Based on theoretical philosophy which offers universal knowledge, practical philosophy aids in "making rational choices and deliberations that lead to actions." Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Rational Soul," *Muslim World* 102, no. 3–4 (2012): 418.

certain conclusions.[98] Included in the *Munāẓarāt* is a criticism of al-Ghazālī's method of disproving the viewpoints of philosophers (one might extrapolate that this is a reference to *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, in which al-Ghazālī successively summarizes and deconstructs specific key doctrines of the *falāsifa*, primarily Ibn Sīnā). On astrology, Rāzī refers explicitly to al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā's agreement that astrology is an ill-founded science, then states, "Those are the most eminent philosophers and the most excellent scholars, and they all agreed in censuring this art. The people of our own time even if they have achieved a high standard of excellence, in comparison to them, are as a single drop is to the ocean, and as one torch is to the moon."[99] Subsequently, after dismissing an objection brought forth by al-Ghazālī against the *falāsifa* on the topic of astrology and the poles of the globe as meaningless and weak, he writes:

> I pray Almighty God, the Compassionate, to free my mind and soul from crooked reasoning, because when philosophers have proved their argument, and then a questioner advanced an objection, such an objection could be considered if the questioner showed that every point mentioned by the philosophers is included in his question. If he is not able to show this, the objection becomes a false and weak argument deserving of no attention.[100]

In the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī seeks to disprove particular viewpoints on metaphysical questions which he believes to be beyond the reach of theoretical reasoning to decide upon demonstrably. He does so by attacking the key premises or steps of the argument, but does not address every point of the argument. It is to this style of objection, among other methodological errors, that Rāzī objects.

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[98] See Fathalla Kholeif and Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Rāzī, "A Study on Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxiana" (Dar el-Machreq, 1966).

[99] Ibid., 56.

As we will address in the next chapter, however, Rāzī's views on astrology shifted throughout his career.

[100] Ibid., 60.

Though al-Ghazālī viewed the intellect as limited, and knowledge as key only insofar as it informs practice, al-Ghazālī's influence upon Rāzī cannot be denied. Rāzī follows al-Ghazālī in specific areas of adaptation, employing Ibn Sīnā's concepts as well as traditional Ashʿarite thought, and together, Rāzī and al-Ghazālī represent two key figures fundamental in the Avicennian turn in neo-Ashʿarite thought.[101] Rāzī heeds al-Ghazālī's insistence on the importance of reason and exemplifies the crystallization of his call to incorporate logic into theological discourse.

7. Ibn Sīnā and the Rationalist-Mystic Path

Rāzī was influenced by Ibn Sīnā in significant areas of intellectual development, conceptual positions, and method of analysis. He wrote both an extensive commentary on, and concise summary of, Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, as well as commentaries on his *ʿUyūn al-ḥikma* and *al-Qanūn fī aṭ-ṭibb*. Of particular significance for the present essay is evidence that Rāzī not only read but also appears to have scribed a copy of Ibn Sīnā's *Miʿrāj nāmeh*, a rationalist interpretation (*ṭarīq-i maʿqūl*) of Muhammad's ascent written in Persian by Ibn Sīnā for his patron ʿAlāʾ ad-Dawla.[102] In fact, Rāzī's manuscript is the oldest known copy of the

[101] See Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicenna's Islamic Reception," in *Interpreting Avicenna*, 2013.
[102] For a discussion of the authenticity of the treatise as Ibn Sīnā's work, see Appendix B of Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sina)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 1992), 201–7.
Frederick Colby compares the base narrative of Muhammad's night journey employed by Ibn Sīnā in his *Miʿrāj nāmeh* to the "Bakrī Version" (a version that circulated prior to the end of the 7th/13th century and penned by a later writer who assumed the early traditionalist name of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī and included additional details on the composition of the heavens, the names of angels, descriptions of upper spheres, tours of hell and heaven, and encounters with the court of the divinity) and the "Primitive Version" of Ibn ʿAbbās (first referenced in 354/965 by Ibn Ḥibbān Bustī). Colby remarks that while it bears close resemblance to the Bakrī Version in the first half of the narrative, it diverges in the second half, possibly due to some insertions that lent themselves to Ibn Sīnā's philosophical interpretation (including Muhammad's request to be

work. The colophon (written in Arabic) states that Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī finished the transcription of the manuscript on the 15th of Ṣafar, 584/1188.[103] This would have been four years after Rāzī completed *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq,* which was finished in Shawwāl 579/January 1184 according to a note in one of the manuscripts, which exhibits Rāzī's high degree of interest in the philosophical tradition.[104] We can date Rāzī's time in Khwarazm and Transoxiana to around 582/1186, when Rāzī notes in his *al-Munāẓarāt jarat fī bilād mā warāʾ al-nahr* that he debated the philosopher Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī. After Rāzī was "driven out" from Khwarazm and Transoxiana, he returned to Rayy.[105] Ibn al-Qifṭī notes that al-Rāzī read the books of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, and learned a great deal from them, in Khurāsān before traveling to Transoxania.[106] It is not unlikely that he would have been interested in scribing a copy of Ibn Sīnā's *Miʿrāj nāmeh* (a short text) for himself, were he to come across a copy in Transoxania or Khurāsān, or on his way back to Rayy. Given his interest, and the plausibility of both the noted date and general location in which the manuscript was likely available, one can assume that Rāzī, likely for his own use, scribed this copy of the *Miʿrāj nāmeh*. Rāzī's interest in the treatise, exemplified in expending the time, money, and effort to scribe it himself, combined with his evident incorporation of these ideas into his own philosophical theology, is a great indication of the influence that Ibn Sīnā held upon him.

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granted the ability to solve difficult problems, which is unique to Ibn Sīnā's version). He views Ibn Sīnā's base narrative as representing an intermediate position between the two versions. Frederick Stephen Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey Tracing the Development of the Ibn 'Abbās Ascension Discourse* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 152–53.

[103] Peter Heath references the manuscript in his book *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna* as one of the resources for his translation of the *Miʿrāj nāmeh.* A facsimile edition was prepared by Mehdi Bayānī and published by Anjuman-i Dūst′dārān-i Kitāb in Tehran in 1952.

[104] Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 323.

[105] Ibid., 320-21.

[106] al-Qifṭī, *Ibn al-Qifṭī's Tā'rīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, 291.

The *Miʿrāj nāmeh*'s style is strikingly simple and clear. In the treatise, Ibn Sīnā takes Muhammad's *miʿrāj* to be in fact intellectual and only clothed in the language of exterior, bodily experience. While this epistle contains Ibn Sīnā's conception of the rational-mystical ascent of the soul in a condensed and clear form, these same ideas are echoed in other sections of his corpus.[107] In the seventh class of *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, he addresses the return of the rational soul to the divine, through the hierarchy of creation that flows from God. These sections are technical, for they address the construction of creation and the mechanisms by which the soul makes contact with the Active Intellect to return to its Creator. In the eighth class of the *Ishārāt*, Ibn Sīnā advocates for intellectual spiritual pleasure as far superior to bodily pleasure, and for the seeking of truth about the divine as an end in itself and a as a kind of worship of God. Rāzī was well aware of Ibn Sīnā's descriptions of the ascent of the soul in the *Ishārāt,* and refers to this phenomenon in his commentary on the ninth class of the *Ishārāt*. Rāzī describes this spiritual-intellectual *miʿrāj,* stating that Ibn Sīnā's goal was to illustrate the nobility of the rank of knowers (*al-ʿārifīn*) in this life over the next, for by the grace of their power and perfection,

[107] In his article "Intellect Without Limits: the Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna," Gutas argues against characterizing Ibn Sīnā's writings as mystical because the mechanisms by which revelation are received are natural and explicable in his corpus, and because he does not mention Sufism explicitly except in a pejorative sense. I would suggest, however, an expanded understanding of the term "mystical" that not only includes traditional Sufi thought and practice but also accounts for emotionally charged experiences or awareness of an ultimate reality that are produced by navigating through a recognized hierarchy of being. These mystical trends in the Islamic world extend beyond the bounds of traditional Sufism as it developed into a recognizable phenomenon, and include philosophical mysticism as represented by such thinkers as Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, and arguably such mystical-philosophical theologians as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Maimonides groups influenced by Hermeticism such as the Ṣābiʾans and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and even doxographic accounts of the beliefs of such classical Greek thinkers as Empedocles, Aristotle, and Plato. David Blumenthal's thoughts on characterizing the writings of Maimonides as belonging to philosophic mysticism (and his account of the scholarly debate regarding this characterization) are helpful in navigating this debate on Ibn Sīnā and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. See David R. Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2006), 21–48.

"they became like abstracted separate [beings] moving towards the holy world, and away from their bodies, while they were yet still embodied."[108] The conception of this relationship between the human soul and God, and its journey to the divine, as expressed in the *Miʿrāj nāmeh* is simplified but representative of Ibn Sīnā's views as portrayed in other books within his corpus, and it is one of which Rāzī was very much aware.

Ibn Sīnā begins the treatise with an introduction that includes the popular formula that he wrote this treatise due to the insistence of a friend, this time to explain the meaning of Muhammad's ascent (*miʿrāj*) in a rational way (*bi ṭarīq-i maʿqūl*). What emerges, however, is not the explanation of a physical journey as it pertains to intellectual inquiry. Rather, the physical, external journey is the allegory for the truth of intellectual ascent. In truth, it was Muhammad's rational soul that traversed the plains of intelligibles and the celestial spheres, to reach the Divine Presence, not his body.

Ibn Sīnā prefaces his commentary on Muhammad's *miʿrāj* with a short précis of the divisions of the human soul, and the relationship between the human soul, knowledge, and the First Intellect. After noting ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla's approval of the treatise, and penning sufficient praise of his patron, Ibn Sīnā shifts to exploring the psychological bases for prophethood and apostleship. He first summarizes the composition of the human being, which is made up of body (*tan*) and spirit (*jān*), with the body being the instrument of the spirit. The human being's soul is tripartite: there is an animal (*ḥayvānī*) soul in the heart; the natural (*ṭabīʿī*) soul in the liver; and the psychic (*nafsānī*) soul in the brain. While the first two souls are subject to generation and decay, the third is eternal, and remains forever after the passing of the body. This psychic soul is

[108] al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 590.

not called spirit (*jān*) but rather soul (*ravān*); this soul does not decay and it is the source of rationality (*nutq*), knowledge (*ʿilm*), and perfection in the human being.

Differences between human beings stem from varying degrees of control exercised by each soul. The nobility of human beings lies in the rational soul (also called the Holy Spirit, *rūḥ-i qudsī*) and the intellect (a state of the rational soul), which are from the "higher world" (*ʿālam-i ʿulūw*); and although they govern the body, they are not its residents (*sākin*). Indeed, rationality ennobles the human being and is shared with the angels. Ibn Sīnā employs mystical language to describe the intelligible realm. The attendance of the intellect, which results from the emanation of knowledge (*fayẓ-i ʿilm*), is termed "spiritual concentration (*himmat*)."[109] Further, "the eye of its sight (*baṣīrat*) is open," and its "constancy (*mudāvamat*) is called yearning (*shauq*)."[110] What is revealed to this inner sight is hidden from the sight of the senses; it is the intellect that accesses the world of the *ghayb*. "Thus for the intellect, the eye of knowledge (*ʿilm*) is always opened through the pupil (*ḥadaqat*) of [inner] sight."[111] The human soul seeks the guidance of the celestial spheres, and it is the ascent of the soul through these spheres that characterizes advancement in the actualization of human perfection. Upon passing through the eight celestial spheres, the human being becomes united with the Universal Intellect (*ʿaql-i kull*). The First Intellect (*ʿaql-i avval*) elevates the human soul, refining it and cultivating it such that the person

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[109] Ibn Sīnā, *Miʿrāj-nāmeh*, ed. Mahdī Bayānī (Tehran: Anjuman-i dūstʹdārān-i kitāb, 1952), fol. 11v.
I produced the summary and selective translation of the *Miʿrāj nāmeh* by recourse to the facsimile of the manuscript stated to have been scribed by Rāzī and to Heath's translation in *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna.* This earliest known manuscript of the *Miʿrāj nāmeh,* stated in the colophon to have been completed by Muhammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī in the middle of Ṣafar 584/1188, is catalogued in Aḥmad Munzavī's *A Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts,* 5 vols. (Tehran: Regional Cultural Institute, 1970-73) 2:846-48 as Sanā 219 [6:481], Tehran (Munzavī 7866).
[110] Ibn Sīnā, *Miʿrāj-nāmeh*, fol. 11r.
[111] Ibid.

on whom it gazes becomes a prophet. Its nourishment of the human soul is called sanctification (*taqdīs*).

Ibn Sīnā's language is infused with pious terms, but the concepts are derived from the philosophical tradition. God is the Necessarily Existent from whom creation emanates. The first creation, per the Neoplatonic tradition, was the First Intellect, which gave rise to a succession of celestial intellects and souls. Here, Ibn Sīnā calls the prophetic human being "the bearer of that Holy Emanation. That power, which is the fruit and proximity to the First Intellect, is that of which the Prophet said, 'Faith is right, and wisdom to its right.'"[112] He employs numerous hadiths and qur'anic verses to verify and clarify the relationship between prophetic power, the emanation of knowledge, and Gods's creation within his greater narrative of Muhammad's intellectual ascent.[113] Further, just as reason may exist without speech, but no speech can be uttered without reason, prophecy (*nubuwwat*) may exist without a mission (*risālat*). In short, a prophet may exist without being sent to a particular community; Ibn Sīnā is not only addressing Muhammad's prophecy here, but also the general potential prophetic capacity of all human beings regardless of apostolic status.

Ibn Sīnā implies that the state of prophethood is one of self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*). He writes:

> Divine discourse is unveiling of meaning (*kashf-i maʿnī*) by the Holy Spirit by mediation of the Universal Intellect to the spirit (*rūḥ*) of the prophet. The utterance (*nuṭq*) of the prophet becomes this same discourse (*kalām*), and he loses control of himself; the name of the Holy falls upon him, his utterance is the entire Qur'an. That which he says comes not from the origin of the truth of his own

[112] Ibid., fol. 14v.

[113] Jules Janssens states in his article "Avicenna and the Qur'ān" that "for Avicenna human reason is by its very nature a limited one, and that, therefore, in practical matters Revelation unconditionally prevails," and that Avicenna employs Qur'ānic denominations when speaking of God in sharp contrast to al-Fārābī (178-79).
See Jules Janssens, "Avicenna and the Qur'ān," *MIDEO* 25 (2004): 177–192.

> reality (*ḥaqīqat-i ḥaqīqat-i khūd*), but by leave of the Command; nay, rather, by heeding the discourse. So when he said, "The Merciful taught the Qur'ān and created the human being," and when this unveiling of utterance (*kashf-i nuṭq*) gave rise to the immersion (*mustaghriq*) of his self, the truths and sublime realities (*maʿānī*) became the entirety of the prophet.[114]

To apprehend the intelligibles is the greatest of human happiness; paradise consists of apprehension of intelligibles, and hell (*dozakh*) consists of corporeal preoccupations— "humans fall to hell (*jaḥīm*), remaining a captive of imagination."[115]

The road is determined by the intended destination; the intellect's path is traversed because of the spiritual goal. Ascension can occur either in a corporeal sense – an upward movement – or spiritual, propelled by the faculty of cognition (*quvvat-i fikrī*) to the intelligibles. The prophet's goal was lofty, and therefore his ascent was spiritual; it was an ascent of the intellect as it acquires successively higher ranked intelligibles. This same sense of the path informed by the destination is found in Rāzī's works. Rāzī implies that, if the seeker is capable, the universe is so strongly hierarchical and systematic that the path is clear and one can only be misled by faulty reasoning or impure desire.

Before beginning his line-by-line exegesis, Ibn Sīnā enjoins the reader not to share these ideas – written so plainly in this particular text – with those who are ignorant and foolish. His treatise is meant to give a rationalist explanation (*sharḥ-i maʿqūl*) of the allegory of Muhammad's ascent to an intellectual person (*ʿāqil*)– and only to such a person should this commentary be entrusted. Ibn Sīnā interprets what he evidently views as the allegory of Muhammad's ascent (*miʿrāj*) to heaven, mounted upon the mystical creature, Burāq, as Muhammad's intellect ascending by means of the Active Intellect to the divine presence of the

[114] Ibn Sīnā, *Miʿrāj-nāmeh*, fols. 16v – 17r.
[115] Ibid., fol. 19r.

Necessarily Existent. Muhammad's intellect is first cleansed and abstracted from bodily attachment, then unites with the Active Intellect (Burāq). He successively contemplates and moves beyond the two lower cognitive faculties (estimation and imagination), then the two lower souls (natural and animal). Muhammad subsequently comprehends the rational faculties of the brain, and then begins an intellectual ascent through the successive celestial spheres. Muhammad then abstracts the realities of substantiality (*jawhariyat*), corporeality (*jismiyat*), materiality (*mādiyat*), and form (*ṣawrat*), conceptualizing these elements of existence through the allegory of four seas, each of a different color.

The angels that Muhammad witnesses in the tale of the *miʿrāj* are, in Ibn Sīnā's interpretation, the souls that are abstracted from the bodily realm. Of these souls that reside at the outermost limit of the celestial spheres, Ibn Sīnā writes:

> These angels are… the abstract souls that are liberated from sensual desire and are pure. For every human being whose soul becomes pure and abstract in knowledge (*ʿilm*) and cognition (*maʿrifat*), when separated from the body, remains with the Truth Exalted, not in any locality or place. He makes them angelic, adorned with eternal felicity.[116]

To this end should human beings strive in life, attaining the rank of angels as "they are always occupied with comprehension and knowledge of the unknown (*ghayb*)."[117] Withdrawing from sensual perception in this life, and immersing themselves in the pleasure of intellectual pursuit, these most perfect of humans come into the fullness of their nobility when they are separated from their bodies in death.

Muhammad continues his ascent to reach the First Soul and the First Intellect. This First Intellect is the first rank of God's creation (though there is no temporal beginning), while the

[116] Ibid., fols. 38v – 38r.
[117] Ibid., fol. 38v.

human being is the last of God's emanation; yet to human beings, God bestowed soul and intellect by which to obtain nobility. The Holy Presence, God, is the First Cause, the pure Necessary of Existence (*wājib al-wujūd maḥḍ*). The Necessary of Existence is distinct from body, substance, and accident that are ascribed to this world; It is neither body nor substance, and is absolutely singular, one. In this realm, close to the divine presence, the rational soul achieves such a degree of pleasure that all of the faculties of the animal and natural souls desist, and Muhammad is entirely immersed (*istighrāq*).

Muhammad hears the command "draw nearer"; yet God's speech is not the speech of creatures, but is rather "the establishment of knowledge (*ʿilm*), abstract and pure, in the soul (*rūḥ*)."[118] Knowledge is the praise of the Necessarily Existent, for Its knowledge is the enunciation of Its own praise. Muhammad was given perfect knowledge (*ʿilm-i tamām*) in accordance with his rank, and he arranged the foundations of religious law as guided by that knowledge. It was by this wisdom that he knew to relay the story of his intellectual travel as a story of external journey (*safar-i ẓāhir*), even though it was in truth cognitive (*safar-i fikrī*). Ibn Sīnā ends his exposition by repeating his initial warning. The secrets (*ramz-hā*) of these words should not be revealed to the ignorant or the masses; they are meant only for the intellectual (*ʿāqil*).

While this epistle contains Ibn Sīnā's conception of the rational-mystical ascent of the soul in a condensed and clear form, these same ideas are echoed in other sections of his corpus. In the eighth class of *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, Ibn Sīnā writes of the superiority of intellectual spiritual pleasure and the import of seeking knowledge of the divine. In the ninth class, he melds traditionally Sufi spiritual exercises and stages of perfection with rationalist tendencies, focusing

[118] Ibid., fol. 44r.

on the attainment of knowledge of God. Yet the *Miʿrāj nāmeh*'s view of the steps of rational-mystical ascent, taking Muhammad as the exemplar seeker, is striking in comparison with Rāzī's *miʿrāj* passages, as well as his influence on Rāzī's conviction that eternal felicity of the soul is guaranteed through knowledge of the divine.

Conclusion

To describe Rāzī as simply a rationalist is deeply insufficient, and to dismiss him as a traditionalist who sought to disprove Ibn Sīnā's theories and limit his influence is profoundly inaccurate. Rāzī in fact represents one of the key figures in the development of the philosophical-mystical tradition in the Islamicate world. The truths obtained by the way of theoretical inquiry are, for Rāzī, just as important for the eternal felicity of the soul as the cognition of God unveiled through the path of spiritual exercises. Rāzī's form of rationalism, therefore, takes on pious connotations, and cannot be truly separated from worship and orientation towards the divine. He emphasizes either the spiritual or the rational path depending on the work and his given audience, and it is clear that the ideal way to the perfection of the human soul, accessible to the intellectually and spiritually elite, is a melding of both paths. Further, although he at times begrudges some limitations of the human intellect, the potential of the human intellect to spiritually ascend to the presence of the divine is significantly greater than his predecessors of both the theological sciences and the mystical tradition.

Rāzī was influenced by al-Ghazālī in his call for logic to be a robust tool in theological inquiry, but outstripped his predecessor in the importance and scope allotted to theoretical inquiry, extending his pursuits far beyond what is granted by revelation and what appears immediately useful for worship and spiritual submission to the divine. He was profoundly

influenced by Ibn Sīnā, whose *Miʿrāj nāmeh* most clearly illustrates this line of influence on the concept of the intellectual *miʿrāj* and the fundamental importance of knowledge for the everlasting felicity of the human soul.

The rational intellects of some people are simply not strong enough to serve as the primary means for understanding creation, one's existence as a created being, and God as Creator; for these, the path of spiritual exercise is more sure, and following truths inherited from those of stronger capacities is essential. Rāzī's privileging of the mystical path as separate from the intellectual in certain works may reflect his wish to shield those who are incapable from the doubts that would be produced by faulty reasoning. Yet for the select few who are capable of such a task, to rise through the intelligibles by way of both the rational faculty and spiritual exercises is the highest form of existence, the means by which to perfect one's soul, and the goal through which one exists in complete spiritual felicity after death.

In the coming chapters, we will explore each path separately and in greater depth. The second chapter of the dissertation discusses the path of rationalist inquiry, focusing on axiomatic truths and syllogistic reasoning, as well as the role of God in the human being's ability to form and synthesize concepts. The path of spiritual exercise is intimately related to Rāzī's cosmology, a connection made explicit in Rāzī's statement that in order to understand the human being's rank in relation to abstracted holy existence, one must first "comprehend the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the degrees of angels and their ranks."[119] We will therefore devote the third chapter to explicating Rāzī's understanding of cosmology, and discuss the ranks of beings insofar as it relates to the human person's existence and comprehension of God and creation. Finally, in the last chapter of the dissertation, having laid the groundwork for a robust understanding of Rāzī's

[119] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 51.

two paths to knowledge of metaphysical matters, we will discuss the intimate connection between knowledge of these matters and eternal felicity.

Chapter II: The Rationalist Path: Axiomatic Truths and Syllogistic Reasoning

Introduction

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) later works, including *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* and *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr,* include extended discussions of epistemology that posit both the processes and limits of perception and reasoning. These works include a melding of philosophical and theological concepts and terms through the equation of the self-evident knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-badīhī*) of Islamic theological traditions with Aristotle's first principles. Further, while not citing Plato's dialogue by name, Rāzī presents extended formulations of Meno's paradox in the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib* to argue that the human being is incapable of attaining new knowledge, with the conclusion that axiomatic knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-badīhī*) is granted by God rather than being the product of human capacity. Yet this should not be taken to mean that Rāzī is in agreement with Plato's innatism, which theorizes that all knowledge is pre-existent in the soul, as is evident through an examination of passages in his *Tafsīr*. Rāzī writes there that the human being is not created in possession of these axiomatic truths at birth, but rather accesses them through the God-given senses and synthesizes them through innate psychological process. It is by virtue of knowledge occurring through innate processes and inborn tools that Rāzī concludes that they are product of God's grace rather than human ability.

Rāzī rejects, however, the Avicennian epistemological framework by which concepts are acquired, namely the abstraction of forms. In its place, and motivated by the need to prove God knowing of particulars, he posits relational knowledge. Namely, he writes that that knowledge consists solely of the relation between knower and known, and is grounded in specific experience of the object of knowledge. While Rāzī does not further elucidate his theory of

relational knowledge beyond a few short repeated descriptions, we may note that this further emphasizes the need for experience in order to produce mental concepts. The soul requires the body in order to form a relation to that which is known through the senses, and it is these concepts from which axiomatic truths are derived.

Ultimately, Rāzī's emphasis on the divine origin of axiomatic knowledge, the basis for syllogistic reasoning, entails two key implications. The first is practical: Rāzī's entire method of exhaustive examination of premises and arguments proceeds through the differentiation between what is axiomatic and what is merely theoretical. While his project is primarily one of critique, his goal is to demonstrate, through appeal to what is self-evident, that conclusions previously thought to be demonstrative are not, in fact, so.

A second key implication of Rāzī's focus on axiomatic truth is a sanctification of syllogistic reasoning. Rāzī's argument that axiomatic knowledge is not formed by human capacity but is rather God-granted allows him to root syllogistic reasoning in divine grace. This is born out fully in passages from the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr* that characterize the highest spiritual and intellectual echelons of humanity—the prophets and the sages—as perfect in their ability to synthesize axiomatic premises and produce apodictic conclusions.

1. Rāzī on First Principles

Rāzī explicitly equates what he terms "immediate knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-badīhī* or *al-badīhiyyāt*) with Aristotle's first principles as incorporated into Ibn Sīnā's philosophy.[1] These

[1] One could translate *badīhī* in a number of ways, including "immediate," or "immediately self-evident." I have chosen, however, to translate and refer to the term *badīhī* throughout the dissertation as "axiomatic," and to *al-ʿilm al-badīhī* as axiomatic knowledge or axiomatic truth. An axiom is a self-evident truth, and thus correlates with the spirit of Rāzī's term, and I believe most successfully conveys the function of the *badīhiyyāt* in syllogistic reasoning. Further, I

axiomatic truths for Rāzī form the basis for all further certain knowledge. Axiomatic knowledge, he asserts, is not achieved by human effort, but is rather the result of a relationship between knower and object known made possible through God-given senses and interpreted through innate and automatic processes. He rejects the human being's ability to either produce or obstruct this process, thus rooting all axiomatic truth in divine grace.

The background of this discussion includes not only Ashʿarite views on predestination but also philosophical contentions on the production of new knowledge, rooted in Meno's paradox, and the wider theological concept of necessary knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī*). In these sections on knowledge acquisition in the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī merges the conceptions of axiomatic knowledge (*al-badīhiyyāt*) and necessary knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī*) of the theological traditions with the division of knowledge into conceptual (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*) in the philosophical, and ultimately equates the *badīhiyyāt* with Aristotle's first principles (*al-awwaliyyāt*).

In Aristotle, first principles are axiomatic truths proper to a discipline that form the bases of demonstrations but cannot themselves be demonstrated. These represent Aristotle's answer to his reformulation of Meno's Paradox in the *Posterior Analytics;* all knowledge must indeed be based on previous knowledge, but there exist first principles that serve as the foundation of further scientific inquiry. These principles, translated as *al-mabādiʾ al-awwal* and *al-awāʾil* in the Arabic translation of the *Posterior Analytics*, are obtained through induction (*al-istiqrāʾ*) after repeated exposure to phenomena.[2] While the senses perceive particular phenomena, what is

contend that such a translation avoids, at least in this case, the danger of losing the philosophical valence of the discussion by translating Arabic terms too literally.

[2] See Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* B19. In Arabic translation, see Aristotle, *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1948), vol. 2, 482-485.

sensed, Aristotle asserts, is the universal. "Thus it is plain," Aristotle states at the end of the second book of the *Posterior Analytics*, "that we must know the primitives (*al-awāʾil*) by induction (*bi-l-istiqrāʾ*), for perception (*al-ḥiss*) obtains the universal (*al-kullī*) by induction in this way."[3] Thus in Aristotle, these first principles are not recollected as per Socrates' answer to Meno's paradox, but are learned through innate processes and empirical experience.

Rāzī's primary reference point for these principles of scientific inquiry is Ibn Sīnā, who terms these first principles "the firsts" (*al-awwaliyyāt*). While it is unclear given the enigmatic nature of Aristotle's writing whether these first principles represent primary concepts or primary propositions (which include both a subject and predicate),[4] Ibn Sīnā interprets them to be propositions (such as the whole being greater than the part). As will be echoed in Rāzī, these first principles for Ibn Sīnā come about through the soul's natural operation (*fiṭra*).[5]

Rāzī's choice to refer to axiomatic knowledge by the term *badīhī* rather than by the traditional Peripatetic term of first principles (translated by such phrases as *al-awwaliyyāt, al-ʿulūm al-awwaliyya*, and *al-maʿqūlāt al-awwaliyya*) reflects a presumably conscious melding of the necessary and immediate knowledge of Islamic theological traditions with Aristotle's (and subsequently, and most importantly for Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā's) first principles.[6] As Rāzī will do in the *Maṭālib*, both Ashʿarite and Muʿtazilite theologians often begin discussions of the nature of knowledge by dividing knowledge first into that which is divine and that which is human, then discussing human knowledge as either necessary (*ḍarūrī*) or acquired (*muktasab*). While

[3] APst 100^{b}5; Aristotle, vol. 2, 484.
[4] Joep Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice* (New York: Brill, 1994), 135.
[5] Dimitri Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," *Oriens* 40, no. 2 (October 2012): 404–10.
[6] While the word *badīhī* and the concept of immediately apparent knowledge is not absent from the philosophical tradition, it is not commonly used nor is it employed as a synonym for the first principles in philosophical (in the strict sense of *falsafī*) texts.

theologians vary in their definitions of necessary knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī*), common features include that this knowledge is indubitable, produced by God and that, occurring necessarily, it is outside of the control of the human being.[7] Immediate knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-badīhī*) is defined in various ways, but often includes self-awareness and propositional truths. Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), for instance, includes self-awareness as part of immediate knowledge (*ʿilm badīhī*), which he defines as that knowledge which is created in the human being initially (*ibtidāʾan*) without existing in any of the senses. Also in the category of immediate knowledge is propositional knowledge (such as that a report cannot be both entirely true and entirely false) as well as knowledge of the intention of a speaker.[8] Al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) subdivides necessary knowledge into immediate knowledge (*ʿilm badīhī*) and sense perception (*ʿilm ḥissī*), and, like al-Bāqillānī, states that immediate knowledge includes positive direct knowledge such as a person's awareness of themselves and of their internal states (such as hunger and pain) and negative direct knowledge of what is impossible, such as the world being both created and eternal (yet unlike al-Bāqillānī, al-Baghdādī does not mention recognition of intentionality as part of immediate knowledge).[9] Al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), rather than including immediate knowledge as a subcategory of necessary knowledge, divides knowledge into necessary (*ḍarūrī*), immediate (*badīhī*), and acquired (*kasbī*). While he states that both necessary and immediate

[7] Binyamin Abrahamov, "Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 1 (1993): 20–21.
[8] Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1957), 10.
[9] Abrahamov, "Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology," 21; ʿAbd al-Qāhir Ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawla, 1928), 8.

knowledge are outside of the control of the human being, necessary knowledge is connected to harm and need, while immediate knowledge is not.[10]

Rāzī conceptually associates axiomatic or immediate knowledge (*al-badīhiyyāt*) with Aristotle's first principles (*al-awwaliyyāt*) in the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib*, and is explicit regarding their equivalence in the *Tafsīr*. Following Ibn Sīnā, he interprets them to represent propositional knowledge that is immediate and intuitive. Addressing terms thought to be synonyms of knowledge in a passage on verse thirty-one of Sūrat al-Baqarah, Rāzī offers definitions for "*al-badīha*" and "*al-awwaliyyāt*." He states:

> The axiom (*al-badīha*) is the knowledge occurring (*al-maʿrifa al-ḥāṣila*) initially (*ibtidāʾan*) in the soul but which is not due to thought (*al-fikr*), like your knowledge that one is half of two…. And the first principles (*al-awwaliyyāt*) are the same as the axiomatic truths (*al-badīhiyyāt*), and the reason for this name is that the mind joins the predicate of the proposition with its subject first, without the mediation of anything else.[11]

As we will see throughout this chapter, the key notion for the *badīhiyyāt* for Rāzī is that they are not the outcome of the application of human intellectual capacity, but are rather a necessary outcome of innate and universal psychological processes. These axioms occur after the human being acquires data about the world through the senses, and they form the bedrock of syllogistic reasoning.

2. Meno's Paradox in the Greek and Arabic Philosophical Traditions

With this theological and philosophical background in mind, we see a conceptual and terminological amalgamation in Rāzī that both emphasizes the importance of axiomatic

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[10] ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbd Allāh Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adillah fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm and Tawfīq ʿAlī Wahbah (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2009), 20.
[11] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 2, 207.

knowledge for syllogistic reasoning and roots it in divine grace. This focus on the divine origin of knowledge mirrors Rāzī's arguments for divine predestination of action. Much in line with the Ashʿarite school of thought, Rāzī views all human action as constrained and ultimately predestined by God's will. His approach to the question, while certainly informed by the Ashʿarite position, is scientific rather than theological as he argues against free will by appealing to human psychology. The human person, he writes, does not in fact control what she will do in any given situation, but is instead following the basic, indisputable desire to achieve that which is in her self interest as dictated by her nature and prior experience. The human being is motivated by personal benefit, which necessitates action; Rāzī maintains that ultimately this motivation is created by God.[12]

Rāzī's determinism is not limited to human action, but includes human epistemology. In a discussion on whether the human being chooses belief or unbelief in the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī details a version of Meno's paradox in which he examines the possibility of the human being acquiring any new knowledge. Not only is human action limited as the person interacts predictably with external factors that are outside of her control, but even the attainment of knowledge is outside the capacity of the human being to achieve without divine aid.

Rāzī was undoubtedly aware of Meno's paradox, and certainly would have encountered the tradition as it developed not only in Greek and Hellenic philosophy, but also as it influenced Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī's views on the acquisition of new knowledge. Plato's *Meno* was among

[12] For a comprehensive discussion of Rāzī's views of human action, see Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 13–44. Rāzī's works were a key influence not only on Islamic intellectual history, but also for developments in content and form of Eastern Christian systematic theology. On the influence of Rāzī's arguments on determinism and human action on Copto-Arabic thought, see Schwarb, "The 13th Century Copto-Arabic Reception of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."

the works translated into Arabic by Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn, as relayed in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*.[13] However, the reception of Plato was limited primarily to summaries and paraphrases, and it is likely that this dialogue and the paradox it contained was not translated in full into Arabic but was instead primarily known through the commentary tradition.[14] The theory of reminiscence, which is posited by Socrates in *Meno*, was evidently known in the Arabic tradition and is attributed to Socrates both by al-Fārābī and al-Kīndī.[15]

The dialogue begins with Meno's question to Socrates on whether virtue can be taught. Socrates responds that one cannot delve into this question without first knowing the nature of virtue itself—a truth that neither he, nor anyone else in Athens, possesses. When Meno attempts to define virtue by presenting examples of its instantiation, Socrates maintains that what they are seeking is to define virtue in a way that is universal. After discussing the components of a true definition, with Socrates interrogating Meno and pointing out the shortcomings of his answers, Meno becomes frustrated and accuses Socrates of being like a sorcerer whose spells and potions engender only perplexity in his interlocutors. Socrates rejoins that he is genuinely perplexed himself, and not toying with Meno; he too is searching for the meaning of virtue.

Of import for our discussion is the short section of the text following this moment of exasperation on the part of Meno. When Socrates admits his own confusion, Meno demands, "And how are you going to search for this when you don't know at all what it is, Socrates? Which of all the things you don't know will you set up as a target for your search? And even if

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[13] Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, trans. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol. 2, 593.
[14] See Rüdiger Arnzen, "Plato, Arabic," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2011), 1012–16.
[15] Dimitri Gutas, "Platon: Tradition Arabe," in *Dictionnaire Des Philosophes Antiques. Supplément*, ed. Richard Goulet, Jean-Marie Flamand, and Maroun Aouad, vol. 5a (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 2003), 853–54.

you actually come across it, how will you know that it is that thing which you didn't know?"[16]

Clarifying Meno's objection, Socrates states:

> I know what you mean, Meno. Do you see what a disputatious argument you're bringing down on us – how it's impossible for a person to search either for what he knows or for what he doesn't? He couldn't search for what he knows, for he knows it and no one in that condition needs to search; on the other hand he couldn't search for what he doesn't know, for he won't even know what to search for.[17]

As a solution for this paradox, Socrates proposes his theory of recollection. Learning, for the immortal human soul (which has been born many times) is in fact a process of remembering what one knew before, for "there is nothing it has not learnt."[18] Socrates demonstrates this by asking Meno to summon a servant boy, whom he guides into discovering (or, as Socrates phrases it, recollecting) a principle of geometry purely through interrogation. The boy's ability to discover an apparently inborn knowledge of geometry is, for Socrates, one of the proofs of the soul's immortality, and an immortal state of (albeit subconscious) knowing.

Aristotle, too, alludes to Meno's paradox in the *Prior Analytics* and the *Posterior Analytics.*[19] He begins the *Posterior Analytics*, a text that primarily addresses demonstrative or scientific arguments, by stating: "All teaching and all learning of an intellectual kind proceed from pre-existent knowledge" (Arist. *APst* 71a1-2, trans. Barnes). He proceeds to examine a version of Meno's paradox, which leads him through discussions of definitions and syllogistic reasoning. He posits the existence of first principles, which represent self-evident concepts that

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[16] *Meno,* 80d as translated in Plato, *Plato's Meno in Focus*, ed. Jane M. Day, Routledge Philosophers in Focus Series (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 47.
[17] *Meno,* 80e; Plato, 47.
[18] *Meno,* 81c; Plato, 47.
[19] See Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 1.1, 71a1-b8 and Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, 2.21, 67a21-b27. Even before the translation of these key works into Arabic in the 9th century, however, Greek logic began to be absorbed into Arabic discourse through traditions of teaching logic in Greek and Syriac communities. See Uwe Vagelpohl, "The Prior Analytics in the Syriac and Arabic Tradition," *Vivarium* 48, no. 1–2 (2010): 134–58.

cannot be deduced from any other proposition, and are necessary components of syllogistic reasoning that produce scientific knowledge. Yet whereas Socrates in Plato's *Meno* solves the problem of seeking new knowledge if one has no previous knowledge of what is being sought through innatism, Aristotle ends the *Posterior Analytics* with an assertion of the empirical nature of *all* knowledge, including first principles.

Aristotle's conclusion that the formation of universals in the human mind has its foundation not in some eternal state of knowing, but rather in an empirical process that intuits the universal from repeated experience of a particular, sets the stage for al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā's interpretations. Both thinkers follow Aristotle in critiquing Socrates' solution to Meno's paradox by positing, instead, various epistemological mechanisms by which new knowledge is acquired. Al-Fārābī discusses Meno's paradox in four texts, namely: the *Philosophy of Plato* (*Falsafat Aflāṭun*); the *Harmony of the Two Sages* (*Kitāb al-Jamʿ*); the *Book on Demonstration* (*Kitāb al-Burhān*); and the *Long Commentary on the 'Prior Analytics'* (*Sharḥ al-Qiyās*).[20] While he relays the paradox as it is posed in Plato's *Meno* and cites the dialogue by name in the *Philosophy of Plato*,[21] al-Fārābī's solution to the paradox, attributed to Plato, is decidedly Aristotelian: "It became clear to [Plato] that this knowledge result by investigation and by a voluntary faculty (*bi-quwwa ṣināʿiyya*) according to which that investigation proceeds."[22] In the *Harmony*, al-Fārābī dismisses those who take Plato's discussion of recollection as a serious philosophical proof of

[20] For an in-depth discussion of al-Fārābī's views on this topic, see Deborah L. Black, "Al-Fārābī on Meno's Paradox," in *In the Age of al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in the Fourth-Tenth Century*, ed. Peter Adamson, Warburg Institute Colloquia 12 (London: Turin: Warburg Institute; Nino Aragno, 2008).
[21] Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer, eds., *Plato Arabus*, vol. 2 (London: In aidibus Instituti Warburgiani, 1943), 6.
[22] Rosenthal and Walzer, 2:6.

the soul's immortality, demoting the discussion instead to "signs and indications."[23] He states that "universals are experiences in truth" that are obtained unintentionally and called "among the learned… such names as 'first principles of cognitions' (*awāʾil al-maʿārif*) and 'principles of demonstration' (*mabādiʾ al-burhān*)."[24] As Black notes, while al-Fārābī does detail Plato's understanding of recollection in his account of Meno's paradox in the *Harmony*, "recollection ends up being nothing but Plato's more colourful version of the view expressed by Aristotle in the opening lines of the *Posterior Analytics*."[25] Ultimately, what emerges in al-Fārābī's solution to the paradox in the *Harmony* is an implicit rejection of Plato's innatism, and support for the attainment of universals through experience as posited in *Posterior Analytics*. Further, in the *Book of Demonstration*, al-Fārābī frames a response to Meno's paradox by distinguishing between two types of knowledge: conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*), a distinction not present in Plato's discussion of Meno's paradox but which becomes a primary distinction thenceforth in Arabic texts on logic (including Rāzī's).[26]

Ibn Sīnā, too, details the paradox of new knowledge found in Plato's Meno in Book I of the *Demonstration* of the *Logic* of the *Shifāʾ*.[27] After describing the paradox (but dismissing the theory of recollection as an impossibility), he concludes, as Rāzī will, that all new knowledge

[23] Friedrich Dieterici, *Alfarabi's philosophische abhandlungen aus londoner, leidener und berliner.* (Leiden: Brill, 1890), 20.
[24] Dieterici, 20.
[25] Black, "Al-Fārābī on Meno's Paradox," 17.
[26] Ibid., 31; Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Farābī, *al-Manṭiq ʿind al-Fārābī*, ed. Majid Fakhry and Rafīq al-ʿAjam (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1987), 82.
[27] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ (Healing): al-Manṭiq (Logic) V, al-Burhān (Demonstration)*, ed. Ibrāhīm Madkūr and A. E Affifi (Cairo: Government, 1956), 72–77. For a translation and commentary on these passages, see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna on Meno's Paradox: On 'Apprehending' Unknown Things through Known Things," *Mediaeval Studies* 71 (2009): 47–62.

can be traced to "first principles."[28] While he does not here discuss the origin of these principles, he notes that discussion of these first principles is outside the realm of logic.[29] As Marmura notes, this discussion occurs in the fifth section of the sixth chapter of *Kitāb al-Najāt* in which Ibn Sīnā defines the primary intelligibles (*al-maʿqūlāt al-ʾūlā*) by which secondary intelligibles are reached as:

> the premises by which assent (*al-taṣdīq*) occurs, not by acquisition (*al-iktisāb*), and not by any consciousness on the part of one who grants assent that he could at any point abstain from granting said assent, like our conviction that the whole is greater than the part, and that things equivalent to one thing are equivalent [to each other].[30]

Rāzī inherits this characterization of the primary intelligibles as automatic rather than being acquired by effort, and, as previously noted, consistently refers to these premises as immediately self-evident (*badīhī*).

As we will see, Rāzī is likely influenced by the Arabic philosophical tradition's insistence on the empirical nature of first principles insofar as they are acquired by experience, and its

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[28] Marmura, "Avicenna on Meno's Paradox: On 'Apprehending' Unknown Things through Known Things," 61; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ (Healing): al-Manṭiq (Logic) V, al-Burhān (Demonstration)*, 77.

[29] Marmura asserts that for Ibn Sīnā, the separate cause that bestows the first principles is none other than the Active Intellect. Marmura, "Avicenna on Meno's Paradox: On 'Apprehending' Unknown Things through Known Things," 62. Gutas alternatively focuses on the experiential aspects of knowledge formation in Ibn Sīnā and argues that Ibn Sīnā viewed these first principles (as well as the abstracted concepts by which they are produced) not as *a priori* truths that result from connection with the Active Intellect, but rather as the products of an empirical process through which repeated perceptions are sorted and categorized by innate human faculties. Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," 411–12. Finally, Griffel points out the role of *fiṭra* in Ibn Sīnā's understanding of first intelligibles. The *fiṭra* includes both estimation and intellect. First intelligibles occur in the intellectual faculty, with no other cause than themselves by which to acknowledge their truth. They are not acquired through induction (*al-istiqrāʾ*) from concepts derived from the Active Intellect. Further, the human being feels as if these truths were always present, without recognizing that these truths are in fact acquired (albiet "at once," *fī l-ḥāl*). Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (Fiṭra) and Its Background in the Teachings of Al-Fārābī and Avicenna," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 1 (January 2012): 22–23.

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dismissal of innatism insofar as it constitutes ready knowledge pre-existing in the soul. His arguments against the human being's acquisition of axiomatic truths, and repeated emphasis on their being God-granted, does not indicate that he considers them to be innate in the human being from birth (a notion that he explicitly rejects in the *Tafsīr*, as we will examine) but that they are instead the result of automatic and innate processes. The implication born out of the characterization of axiomatic truth as God-granted, in addition to forming a methodology that consistently appeals to immediately self-evident truths, is a sanctification of syllogistic reasoning.

3. The Origin of Knowledge

While Rāzī does not name the paradox outright, he discusses Meno's paradox at length in the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib* and formulates his own arguments for the inability of the human being *alone* to attain new knowledge. As in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics,* he begins with the statement that all knowledge must stem from axiomatic truth. Rejecting infinite regress and circularity, he argues that all scientific knowledge must be based upon previous knowledge (echoing the first sentence of the *Posterior Analytics*), and that at the root of all synthetic knowledge are God-given axiomatic truths (*al-badīhiyyāt*).[31]

It must be noted that the type of knowledge that Rāzī is addressing here is purely that which falls under the category of Aristotle's scientific knowledge or episteme. We are not speaking here of theoretical knowledge, which is not certain, nor of knowledge that results from spiritual exercises, which will be the focus of the next chapter of this dissertation. Rāzī has taken

[31] These arguments are also briefly recounted in Rāzī's exegesis of Q 2:26-27. See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 2, 143-144.

Aristotle's discussion of syllogisms in the *Posterior Analytics* to its logical conclusion, and appears to consider syllogistic reasoning as appropriate for the attainment of conclusions through consideration of universal concepts which are therefore only applicable to that which is eternal and unchanging.[32] Further, this syllogistic reasoning is limited to analysis of that which is created and, for Rāzī, relates to our experience of the world; God, as entirely different from all phenomena that the human being can epistemologically access, is beyond the bounds of demonstration.[33]

What is of interest as well is Rāzī's merging of the philosophical with the theological, not only in his subject matter, but also in his framing of this debate. He is approaching the discussion through an assertion found in numerous Qur'anic verses that is the subject of considerable theological discussion in the centuries prior to, and after, Rāzī. The section is entitled, "On the proofs indicating that the attainment of belief and unbelief in the hearts of human beings can only be by the creation (*takhlīq*) of God Exalted,"[34] a title that alludes to the oft-stated Qur'anic notion that God has sealed (*khatama*) the hearts of the unbelievers.[35] Having constructed a theory of predetermined human action (which Rāzī has addressed in the previous section), Rāzī takes this assertion to indicate that human knowledge, too, is predestined by God. Characteristic of his

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[32] Galston notes this logical conclusion on the nature of science in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. As an end of demonstration, "science so defined is confined to objects that are eternal and invariable. It thus excludes the possibility of demonstrable knowledge of most of the things that make up the natural world as well as almost all ethical and political subjects." Miriam Galston, "Opinion and Knowledge in Farabi's Understanding of Aristotle's Philosophy" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 1973), 216.

[33] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 50. This limitation, too, is paralleled in Aristotle's understanding of demonstration, which given its comprehension of objects through analysis of their causes, cannot comprehend the unmoved mover. Galston, "Opinion and Knowledge in Farabi's Understanding of Aristotle's Philosophy," 219–20.

[34] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, 101.

[35] See Qur'an 2:7; 6:46; 45:23.

discussions of free will, Rāzī tackles this theological tension by employing philosophical concepts and methodology. As previously noted, Rāzī also merges two divisions of knowledge from two different disciplines in this discussion, dividing knowledge into conceptual (*taṣawwur*) or assent (*taṣdīq*) as per the philosophical tradition, and immediate (*badīhī*) and acquired (*muktasab*) as per the theological. He equates the immediate knowledge of the theological tradition with Aristotle's first principles, and analyzes knowledge that comprises conceptual knowledge or assent in light of whether it is automatic for the human being or acquired by human effort.

Let us now turn to ninth volume of the *Maṭālib* and examine Rāzī's analysis of scientific knowledge (which he consistently terms *ʿilm*). Rāzī's focus throughout the section is to prove that all knowledge gained by the human being is attained by the grace of God and not through individual capacity. By all indications, these remarks represent Rāzī's own opinion. The section is written in first person plural, and his remarks therein are consistent with other discussions of self-evident knowledge in his corpus. Further, Rāzī does not consider other viewpoints except through brief discussions of possible objections to his assertions, which he answers immediately and thoroughly. Finally, at numerous points throughout the section, Rāzī emphasizes the point that "we know" that God is the creator of cognitions (*maʿārif*) and knowledges (*ʿulūm*).

3.1 A Chain of Knowledge

Rāzī begins with a short proof by which he argues that any new knowledge builds on a finite chain of previous knowledge. This series cannot be infinite, nor can it be circular; rather, acquired knowledge must be rooted foundationally in some knowledge that is in the intellect (*al-*

ʿ*aql*) but has not yet been acquired.[36] Those truths that form the bedrock of knowledge production are axiomatic (*al-badīhiyyāt*).[37] Not only is any knowledge that is acquired rooted ultimately in axioms, but the process of synthesizing knowledge, Rāzī claims, also does not proceed by human capacity or choice. Rather, the conclusions, given the presence of certain axioms in the mind, are achieved automatically and necessarily. Given that these foundational axioms are not the result of human ability, that which proceeds from them also cannot be claimed to be the result of human capacity. This characterizes the process of producing all subsequent knowledge; the first resulting acquired knowledge leads necessarily to a second conclusion, which too is not the result of human will. "It is thus established," Rāzī writes, "that nothing of knowledges (*al-ʿulūm*) and cognitions (*al-maʿārif*) is a result of human capacity (*qudra*) and human choice (*ikhtiyār*)."[38] Rāzī's description of knowledge production from innate axioms does not allow for the intervention of human ability; inborn axioms necessarily produce further conclusions which constitute "acquired knowledge."

3.2 Meno's Paradox: **Taṣawwur** *and* **Taṣdīq**

Rāzī proceeds to attempt to prove that neither knowledge that constitutes conceptual knowledge (*taṣawwur*) nor assent (*taṣdīq*) can be acquired by the human being. This division of knowledge into concept and assent, and its further subdivision into that which is primary and that

[36] This statement reflects the influence of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics,* which begins by stating that "All teaching and all intellectual learning proceed from pre-existent knowledge" (APst 71a; Aristotle, *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, 329). Rāzī's argument that these immediate knowledges which are not acquired form the foundation for further knowledge also reflects Aristotle's reasoning in the *Posterior Analytics.*

[37] See also al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 101.

[38] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Aḥmad Saqqā, al-Ṭabʿah 1. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987), vol. 9, 101-102.

which is acquired, became a tradition of Arabic texts on logic after al-Fārābī.[39] Rāzī defines assent (*taṣdīq*) as entailing a judgment of the truth or falsity of the statement, whereas conceptual knowledge (*taṣawwur*) does not involve such a judgment. What is implied by this division is the difference between a concept and a proposition; a concept, while having meaning, can be neither affirmed nor negated, whereas a proposition can either be true or false and thus entails the presence or absence of assent (*taṣdīq*).[40]

The first, brief proof that Rāzī presents is essentially a summary of Meno's paradox. While he does not reference Plato, he plays the role of Meno and asserts that if we are attempting to acquire knowledge of something, we either have an awareness (*shuʿūr*) of the essence of what is sought, or we do not. If we do have an awareness of what we are seeking, then the concept is already present in us—and that which is already possessed cannot be obtained. If we do not have this awareness, then our mind is ignorant of it—and one cannot seek that of which one is ignorant.[41]

Rāzī argues that not only is conceptual knowledge not the product of human effort, but so too does assent (*taṣdīq*) result from automatic processes that are outside of human control. Assent, he writes, requires two conceptualizations: that of the subject and that of the predicate.[42]

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[39] Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Terms Taṣawwur and Taṣdīq in Arabic Philosophy and Their Greek, Latin and Hebrew Equivalents," *The Moslem World*, April 1943, 1–2.

[40] For instance, a "hedgehog" would be an example of conceptual knowledge, whereas "a hedgehog is a mammal" would entail assent. While a hedgehog alone has no truth value, the statement of its being mammalian can be either true or false, and elicits either assent to, or rejection of, the proposition.

[41] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, 102-3.
In this section devoted to disproving the ability of the person to acquire conceptual knowledge, Rāzī also argues that knowledge of external essences cannot be directly acquired by the human being, and dismisses the theory of abstraction of essences as posited by Ibn Sīnā. We will examine these arguments in the section of this chapter on knowledge as relational.

[42] Rāzī's implicit characterization of the form of assent (*taṣdīq*) as being a sentence, and conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) as a word, lends support to Wolfson's claim based in Averroes'

For Rāzī, the process of forming axiomatic knowledge is immediate and automatic. If these conceptualizations are abstracted in the mind and independently affirmed through assent, they produce axiomatic knowledges (*al-badīhiyyāt*). If they are *not* affirmed immediately as true, they subsequently constitute theoretical knowledges (*al-naẓariyyāt*) that are not apodictic.

Rāzī presents examples to illustrate the difference between axiomatic knowledge (*al-badīhiyyāt*) and theoretical knowledge (*al-naẓariyyāt*). Addressing self-evident knowledge first, he writes that if the mind conceptualizes "one" and "half of two," "the abstracted presence of these two conceptualizations in the mind (*dhihn*) necessitates the mind's judgment that one is half of two."[43] This conclusion, produced through the consideration of two conceptualizations, is axiomatic (*badīhī*). As an example of theoretical knowledge, Rāzī writes that if we conceptualize the meanings of "the world" (*al-ʿālam*) and "temporally created" (*ḥādith*), we do not find our minds immediately affirming the truth of the proposition. These two mental conceptualizations do not bring about a judgment necessarily that the world is, or is not, created.[44] As in Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of Aristotle, we thus find that Rāzī views axiomatic knowledge as propositional and not merely conceptual. While he rejects the process by which Ibn Sīnā posits that knowledge of essences is achieved (namely, for Ibn Sīnā, by abstraction and with the aid of the Active Intellect), the presence of mental concepts in the knower is essential for the formation of axiomatic truths.

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analysis that the Arabic concepts of *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq* are rooted in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, chapter 4, in which he distinguishes between a word (*lafẓah*) and a sentence (*qaul*). There, Aristotle writes that a sentence, if enunciative (*jāzim*), is either true or false, whereas a word, while having a meaning, expresses neither affirmation nor negation. Wolfson, "The Terms Taṣawwur and Taṣdīq in Arabic Philosophy and Their Greek, Latin and Hebrew Equivalents," 6.

[43] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, 105.

[44] Ibid., vol. 9, 105-106.

Rāzī proceeds to examine whether or not assents are axiomatic (*badīhiyya*). If they are intuitively self-evident, the human being has not actually acquired any knowledge through her own effort; it is rather the abstracted presence of two concepts that, considered together, produces immediate and necessary assent. As Rāzī has previously sought to prove, the person is not capable in fact of acquiring these concepts. When the concepts are intellectually present, he reasons that the person has no capacity to either produce or prevent assent. If both concepts are present in the mind, assent occurs necessarily and the result is axiomatic knowledge. If one of the required concepts is absent, then assent is impossible.

Rāzī describes assent when both requisite concepts are present in the mind as necessary (*ḍarūrī*) or concomitant (*lāzim*). If it is necessary or concomitant, then the human being has no control over it. For when the conceptualizations occur, the assent follows necessarily, without any human control over that occurrence. This assent that occurs immediately is not due to human choice, nor is it affected by human ability. If this assent does not occur in this way, then, he reasons, it constitutes neither knowledge nor certainty. Rather, this assent represents a belief following tradition (*iʿtiqād taqlīdī*) which the human being came to without a necessitating reason. Yet when the human being questions himself about such supposed knowledge, he realizes that it is not certain. This description of knowledge as exclusively apodictic further illuminates the nature of episteme for Rāzī. True knowledge (*ʿilm*) results from syllogistic reasoning based in axiomatic truths, and cannot be the consequence of either tradition or uncertain premises.

Having broken down the various types of knowledge into that which is conceptual, and that which constitutes assent, and rejecting the capacity of the human being to either acquire or prevent the acquisition of axiomatic truth, Rāzī again emphasizes the divine origin of knowledge.

"So it is established that cognitions (*al-maʿārif*) and knowledges (*al-ʿulūm*) are outside of the capacity of the human being, and that their attainment is not other than by the creation of God."[45] Each type of knowledge as outlined by the philosophical tradition (that is, both conceptualization and assent) is in fact outside of the human capacity according to Rāzī's reasoning.

3.3 The Impossibility of Creating Knowledge and Ignorance

Rāzī offers one final demonstration that the human being is incapable of creating knowledge. These proofs are essentially a developed form of Meno's paradox, though once again Rāzī does not cite the dialogue by name nor refer to Plato in these arguments. He begins by stating that if the person wishes to create knowledge, this process must occur either by mediation of something, or directly. If the attempt to create knowledge is approached directly, then attaining a particular knowledge is no more likely than attaining any other knowledge. Without something preponderating the type of knowledge attained, there is no reason why a particular knowledge should be attained over any another.[46]

Yet it is also impossible, Rāzī argues, to attain knowledge by mediation of something else. To recognize that one's conviction (*iʿtiqād*) is in conformity with the reality of the object of conviction (*muṭābiq*^{an} *li-dhalika l-muʿtaqad*) and does not constitute ignorance (which Rāzī defines here as the conviction held lacking conformity with its object) again requires some way to distinguish between true knowledge and ignorance. This necessity of a means to distinguish the conformity or non-conformity of the conviction with its object requires one to already know the state of the object to be known. Yet this is a logical impossibility; to come to know

[45] Ibid., vol. 9, 107.
[46] Ibid.

something *by* the thing to be known requires that object to be a condition of itself. It is thus established, Rāzī writes, that it is impossible for the human being to make herself knowledgeable, or even ignorant, of something.

Even ignorance must be distinguished from knowledge based on whether it is in conformity with the thing known, and this cannot be recognized without one knowing first the state of the object of knowledge. In other words, one cannot recognize that one has attained ignorance without first attaining knowledge—yet this is a logical impossibility, and involves a contrary being conditioned upon its opposite. Emphasizing the divine origin then of not only knowledge, but also ignorance, Rāzī states: "It has thus been established by irrefutable proofs that everything that is attained in the hearts and minds of creatures of knowledges (*al-ʿulūm*) and ignorances (*al-jahlāt*) is entirely from God."[47]

Even if one objects that these knowledges and ignorances may be attained through the mediation of other knowledges or ignorances that have been successfully achieved prior to them, Rāzī insists that these must be rooted in initial knowledge, or ignorance, that is furnished by God. As there cannot be an infinite regress of ignorances, they must rest on an initial ignorance that is created by God. Just as one knowledge leads to the next out of necessity (as Rāzī has previously argued), so too would resulting ignorances, based on prior ignorances, occur necessarily. Thus all ignorance and all knowledge, at any stage, is from God.[48]

3.4 Final Demonstrations: On Human Intent and Scholarly Disagreement

[47] Ibid., vol. 9, 108.
[48] Ibid., vol. 9, 108-109.

Rāzī ends this section of the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib* with two additional brief demonstrations of the inability of the human being to control her own knowledge or ignorance. Rāzī addresses human intention, and writes that the human being does not aim for the acquisition of anything but knowledge. If ignorance instead is attained, then this occurs contrary to the person's intention and choice, and must therefore be the result of something else. If one objects that the person was simply mistaken in taking that ignorance for knowledge, then, Rāzī states, "We say that the choice of that ignorance is predicated on another ignorance, with those ignorances stemming from a first ignorance that occurs by creation of God."[49] Thus, it is both ignorance and knowledge that proceed in the human mind without the intervention of choice or effort.

Lastly, Rāzī points to the very disagreement among scholars on the essence and location of knowledge in the human body as an indication that the human being is not the source of his own knowledge. Scholars have presented different theories of knowledge, including the abstraction of the relation which is called "attachment" (*al-taʿalluq*), a real attribute that is necessitated by this relationship, and the expression of the form which is equivalent to the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of the thing known that is obtained in the self (*dhāt*) of the knower. Yet how can it be that the human being is the creator or originator of knowledge if he does not even understand what knowledge is? This again points to a logical impossibility, "for the pursuit of that which is not conceptualized is impossible."[50] Further, scholars have also been confused on the location of knowledge. Some said it is in the heart, others the brain, and still others, in the rational soul. "If I were the one who created these knowledges, would not I know the location in

[49] Ibid., vol. 9, 109.
[50] Ibid.

which I created it?"[51] Since there is so much confusion on the essence and location of knowledge, "we know that the creator of cognitions (*maʿārif*) and knowledges (*ʿulūm*) is God."[52] Rāzī thus unequivocally locates the source of knowledge, and ignorance, in the divine.

4. On the Sources of Axiomatic Knowledge (*al-badīhiyyāt*)

4.1 Axiomatic Knowledge and the Senses

Thus far, we have seen that Rāzī equates what he terms "immediate knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-badīhī*), which I have chosen to translate as axiomatic knowledge, with Aristotle's first principles. A crucial passage in Rāzī's *Tafsīr* grants us the key to understanding what he means by this assertion that axiomatic truths (*al-badīhiyyāt*), the basis of all subsequent knowledge, are not acquired through human capacity but instead are divinely granted. The passage is an exegesis of the seventy-eighth verse of Sūrat al-Naḥl, which states, "And God brought you out from your mothers' wombs, not knowing anything. And He gave you hearing, and sight, and minds, that you have cause to be grateful." Given the relevance of these two pages, I will translate them here in full. Rāzī states:

> The human being is created, at the beginning of innate nature (*fiṭra*), void of cognition (*maʿrifa*) of things. Then He said, "And He gave you hearing, and sight, and minds," and the meaning of this is that the human soul, when it was first created, was void of cognitions and knowledges (*al-maʿārif wa-l-ʿulūm*) of God, so God gave it these senses so that it could acquire, by them, cognitions and knowledges. A complete account of this calls for more explanation, so we say: conceptions (*al-taṣawwurāt*) and assents (*al-taṣdīqāt*) are either acquired (*kasbiyya*) or axiomatic (*badīhiyya*). The acquired [knowledges] (*al-kasbiyyāt*), however, can only be attained by mediation of compositions of axioms (*tarkībāt al-badīhiyyāt*); so these axiomatic knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*) must be first. At this point, one must ask: these axiomatic knowledges can be said to be obtained from the moment of our creation, or to not be obtained [at our creation]. The first is false, because we know necessarily (*bi-l-ḍarūra*) that, when we were a

[51] Ibid., vol. 9, 110.
[52] Ibid.

fetus in the womb of the mother, we did not know that negation and affirmation cannot be combined, and we did not know that the whole is greater than the part.[53]
As for the second possibility: It is thus necessary that these axiomatic knowledges were obtained in our souls after they were not obtained. At that time, they could not have been obtained except by acquisition (*kasb*) and pursuit (*ṭalab*). In this case, they must be preceded by other knowledges, indefinitely. That is entirely impossible; this question is extremely difficult.
The answer is that we say: The truth is that these axiomatic knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*) were first not obtained in our souls, and then they occurred and were obtained. As for the assertion that this must be by acquisition, we say that this premise is prohibited (*mamnūʿ*). Rather, we say that they occurred in the souls after their nonexistence by mediation of the assistance of the senses (that is, hearing and sight). The confirmation of this is that the soul, in the beginning of its creation, was void of all knowledges—except that God Exalted created hearing and sight. And if the child saw something a number of times, the essence of that object of sight was sketched in his imagination. Likewise if he heard something a number of times, the essence of that object of hearing was sketched in his audition and his imagination, with the same being true for the rest of the senses. Obtaining the senses becomes a reason for the presence of the essences of the objects of sense (*māhiyyāt al-maḥsūsāt*) in the soul and intellect. These essences are of two kinds: The first is that the presence itself completely necessitates, in the judgment of the mind (*fī jazm al-dhihn*), the reference of one to another by negation or affirmation. For instance, if the meaning of "one" were present in the mind as well as the meaning of "half of two," then the presence of these two conceptions in the mind is a complete cause of the judgment of the mind that one must be half of two. This kind is precisely the axiomatic knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*). As for the second kind [of essences], which are not like that: these comprise theoretical knowledges. For instance, if the meaning of "body" were present in the mind, and the meaning of "created," the abstraction of these two conceptions in the mind would not be sufficient for the judgment of the mind that the body is created, but would rather require a separate proof and previous knowledges. Thus, acquired knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-kasbiyya*) can only be acquired by mediation of axiomatic knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*), and the creation of these axiomatic knowledges occurs only upon the creation of the conception of their subjects and the conception of their predicates. And the creation of these conceptions is only due to the assistance of these senses in their particulars. It is clear that the primary reason for the creation of these knowledges (*al-maʿārif*) in the souls and intellects is that God Exalted granted these senses. For this reason, the Exalted said, "And God brought you out from your mothers' wombs, not knowing anything. And he gave you hearing, and sight, and minds," so that the obtainment of these senses would be a reason for your souls moving from

[53] Ibn Sīnā gives these same examples of primary intelligibles that are obtained by the developing intellect (but previously not present) in "On the Rational Soul." See Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 69; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs: risāla fī l-nafs wa-baqāʾihā wa-maʿādihā*, ed. Aḥmad Fuʾād al-Ahwānī (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1952), 195.

> ignorance to knowledge in the way that we have mentioned…and I say that perhaps minds (*fuʾād*) is in the plural in the form of the plural of paucity[54] as a sign that hearing and sight are many, while the minds are few. For minds are created for true cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ḥaqīqiyya*) and certain knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-yaqīniyya*), and most creatures are not like that but are rather busy with bestial acts and animalistic ways, as if their minds were not minds at all. For this reason, its plural was mentioned in the plural of paucity.[55]

In this passage, Rāzī describes the origin of axiomatic knowledge as divine in that it occurs after the terms are formed through repeated perceptions of phenomena accessed through God-given senses. This is not to say, however, that this means that they are acquired, a characterization of the process that Rāzī explicitly denies. The process of attaining the "essences of sense" from which universal concepts are produced is located firmly in particular repeated sensation of phenomena rather than, for instance, the analysis of definitions. The implication here is that not only are the human senses God-given, but so too are these psychological processes which derive axiomatic knowledge from experience. Rāzī does not consider these truths to be present fully formed in the human being from birth, a kind of innatism (posited by Socrates in response to Meno's paradox) that Rāzī explicitly denies. Rather, it is the *process* of knowledge formation that occurs necessarily, and is not due to individual human capacity or effort, but rather to the inborn (and therefore divinely formed) makeup of human experience. Here, as in the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī gives the example of one being half of two as axiomatic; when these concepts are internalized by way of sense experience, the human mind naturally and necessarily recognizes their equivalence.[56]

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[54] This plural form in Arabic is only to be used when the enumerated subject is between three and ten.

[55] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 20, 89-90.

[56] The importance of knowledge, and the assistance of the senses in the attainment of knowledge, is also stated in Rāzī's exegesis of Q 2:31. In the context of God teaching Adam all of the names, Rāzī lists thirty terms that are thought to be synonyms of knowledge. The fourteenth term that he lists is the mind (*al-dhihn*). He writes that "the mind (*al-dhihn*) is the power of the soul to

The automatic nature of these psychological processes is emphasized in a passage in the first introductory section of the *Maṭālib*, which explores what if anything can be known about God.[57] This section parallels previous theologians' discussions of necessary knowledge, and lists axiomatic knowledge as one of the types of knowledge that is immediately accessible to the human being. Rāzī briefly describes four kinds of conceptual knowledge (*al-taṣawwurāt*) that one can attain, a realization that Rāzī claims occurs after self-reflection and which he describes as axiomatic. The first kind of knowledge consists of essences that can be grasped through the five senses, namely, stimuli that are seen/heard/smelled/tasted/touched. The second type of conceptual knowledge consists of those essences which are grasped necessarily (*ḍarūrīyan*) such as pain, pleasure, hunger, satiety, happiness, anger, and the likes of these. A third kind are essences which are judged by the innate nature (*fiṭra*) of our minds, such as knowing the meaning of existence and nonexistence, singularity and multiplicity, necessity, possibility, and impossibility. And finally, the fourth category includes composite concepts formed from these simple universals, such as a human being with a thousand heads. Again, Rāzī emphasizes one's intuitive grasp of the truth in recognizing the plausibility or impossibility of these composite ideas. He gives the example of knowing that God has no partner; if one knows what it means to be a partner, and understands the meaning of God, then it is axiomatic (*badīhī*) that it is

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acquire knowledges that are not [previously] obtained; and the verification of this is that God Exalted created the spirit void of the verification of things and of knowledge of them, as He said 'And God brought you out from your mothers' wombs, not knowing anything.' However, God Exalted created them for obedience, as in His saying 'I did not create the Jinn and people except to worship,' and obedience is conditioned upon knowledge. And He said in another place, 'Establish prayer for remembrance of me (*li-dhikrī*),' clarifying that He commanded obedience for the sake of knowledge, and knowledge is necessary in any case. Thus the soul must be able to obtain these cognitions and knowledges (*al-maʿārif wa-l-ʿulūm*), so God gave it senses to assist in achieving this goal." Ibid., vol. 2, 206.

[57] This section is translated in full in Appendix I.

impossible that God have a partner. The process is sequential, and involves first understanding the component concepts, testing their composition, and recognizing the impossibility of the complex concept.[58]

The use of the word *fiṭra* for the initial grasping of these simple universals reflects not the theological valence of the word (stemming from the Qur'an and indicating a natural religious disposition before being raised into the faith of one's parents) but instead the meaning as developed by the philosophical tradition. Ibn Sīnā evoked inborn intellectual abilities in his description of human *fiṭra*,[59] and al-Fārābī employed the term in his *Epistle on the Intellect (Risāla fī l-ʿaql*) to refer to the means by which one accesses necessarily true universal premises.[60] This association was echoed by al-Ghazālī in *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*), in which he describes *fiṭra* as the means by which human beings can reach the true nature of things, and which may include a sound intellect.[61] After Rāzī (and undoubtedly influenced by his theories on the topic), Ibn Taymiyya integrated this characterization of *fiṭra* as ensuring sound reasoning, as well as the implications of such an innate and thus divinely-formed foundation for axiomatic knowledge, into theories of knowledge formation in *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-*

[58] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 49-50.
[59] Ibn Sīnā uses a variety of terms to describe the natural operation of the rational soul by which it moves from elementary concepts to axiomatic propositions, including *fiṭra* or *fuṭira, ṭabʿan, jibilla*, and *gharīza*. Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," 407. For Ibn Sīnā, however, these innate abilities are insufficient for the evaluation of the validity of arguments, for which one must study logic. Instead, *fiṭra* refers to judgments or statements that all human beings are able to form. Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (Fiṭra) and Its Background in the Teachings of Al-Fārābī and Avicenna," 14–19.
[60] Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (Fiṭra) and Its Background in the Teachings of Al-Fārābī and Avicenna," 13; Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Farābī, *Risāla Fī L-ʿaql*, ed. M. Bouyges, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1983), 8–9.
[61] Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (Fiṭra) and Its Background in the Teachings of Al-Fārābī and Avicenna," 6.

ʿaql waʾl-naql.[62] The importance for our discussion is Rāzī's understanding that these psychological processes which are able to achieve simple universals are innate, God-granted, and common to all people—a conviction emphasized all the more by his use of the word *fiṭra* to describe a natural intellectual judgment.

4.2 Initial Concept Formation: Knowledge as Relational

As Rāzī has indicated, in order to engage in syllogistic reasoning, the human being must in some way access the essence of that about which reasoning is being attempted. He rejects innatism as knowledge fully formed in the soul at its moment of creation, and posits instead that knowledge occurs through the attainment of particular sense data that is then synthesized through innate psychological processes. The essences of objects known are not, however, "acquired" by the human being, for Rāzī rejects Ibn Sīnā's theory of abstraction in the the *Maṭālib* as well as in earlier works such as the *Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma* and *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya*. Not uncharacteristically, the bulk of what Rāzī posits must be ascertained from his critique, with tantalizingly little set out as his own proper theory of knowledge. Yet from the few sections in the *Maṭālib* on the theory of knowledge with which Rāzī explicitly agrees, we can note that Rāzī follows al-Ghazālī and subsequently Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī in understanding knowledge to be a relation between knower and known, and appears to posit that the way in which the human being attains knowledge is through awareness of that relation. As is the case in the above section

[62] Ibn Taymiyya's conception of *fiṭra* as the basis for sound reasoning is explored in the forthcoming article, Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, "From Legal Theory to Erkenntnistheorie: Ibn Taymiyya on Tawātur as the Ultimate Guarantor of Human Cognition," *Oriens* 46, no. 1–2 (2018): 6–61.

of the *Tafsīr* on the formation of concepts through the senses, the experience of essences is decidedly particular, though it produces universal knowledge in the knowing subject.

Other scholars, most notably Bilal Ibrahim, have made Rāzī's epistemology, and particularly his critique of Avicennian essentialism, a focus of their work and it is not my intention to repeat their research.[63] However, Ibrahim, Hutchins, and Eichner focus primarily on *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq*[64] and *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya.* My reading of the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr* indicates that Rāzī's rejection of the abstraction of essences early in his career continues in his later writings. Further, both Hutchins and Ibrahim note Rāzī's discussion of knowledge as relational in earlier texts; my research additionally shows that, while the theory is not further developed, Rāzī continues to uphold the understanding of knowledge as relational later in his career.

As we will see in the *Maṭālib,* Rāzī dismisses the abstraction of essences and regards knowledge as relational, founded in the connection between the knower and thing known through immediate perception which is, by nature, particular in time, place, and individual. With the exclusion of divine inspiration and revelation, it does not appear that Rāzī holds that human

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[63] Works that treat various aspects of Rāzī's epistemology include: Peter Adamson, ed., *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, Warburg Institute Colloquia 16 (London: Warburg Institute, 2011); Heidrun Eichner, *The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological Summae in Context* (Wittenberg: Habilitationsschrift, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle, 2009); William Maynard Hutchins, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Knowledge" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 1971); Bilal Ibrahim, "Faḫr Ad-Dīn Ar-Rāzī, Ibn Al-Hayṯam and Aristotelian Science: Essentialism versus Phenomenalism in Post-Classical Islamic Thought," *Oriens* 41, no. 3–4 (2013): 379–431; Bilal Ibrahim, "Freeing Philosophy from Metaphysics: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Philosophical Approach to the Study of Natural Phenomena" (Ph.D., McGill University, 2013).

[64] While the logic of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* is published, the entirety of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* is only accessible in manuscript form. For the portion on logic, see Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Manṭiq al-mulakhkhaṣ*, ed. A.F. Qarāmalikī and A. Aṣgharīnizhād (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 2002).

beings can access knowledge of external reality beyond awareness of this relation. A distinction between what is known through this relation and reality as such was posited by Rāzī's intellectual predecessor Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, who in his *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar* takes a nominalist stance, denying the external existence of universals and presenting instead a theory of mental forms that are derived from a relation between knower and object known.[65]

As is often the case, Rāzī's primary interlocutor from the *falsafa* tradition is Ibn Sīnā, who developed a comprehensive theory of abstraction.[66] For Ibn Sīnā, the human intellect processes the particular data achieved by the senses, transferred to the imagination, and abstracted by the intellectual faculty after being made actually intelligible by the Active Intellect. While the role of the Active Intellect is an important one, Ibn Sīnā is not arguing that the intelligible forms are themselves emanated by the Active Intellect to the human consciousness.[67]

This role of the Active Intellect is developed fully in Ibn Sīnā's later works, which present a more nuanced view of the Active Intellect's role as mediating the rational intellect's abstraction of forms from particular sense data stored in the imagination. In the early treatise *Maqāla fī l-nafs ʿalā sunnat al-ikhtiṣār* (*Compendium on the Soul*), the Active Intellect appears necessary in the process of abstraction, but its role is not one of providing the intelligibles to the

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[65] Shlomo Pines, "Studies in Abu l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Poetics and Metaphysics," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana: Studies in Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Hugo Bergman, vol. VI (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1960), 135–47.

[66] While al-Fārābī notes that the human intellect extracts form from matter in the *Risāla fī l-ʿaql* and that the Active Intellect aids in this process in the *Mabādiʾ*, the theory of abstraction is significantly more developed in Ibn Sīnā's works.

[67] Dag Hasse notes, at the beginning of his article "Avicenna on Abstraction," that the standard reaction of modern scholars is to "believe Avicenna on emanation and to mistrust him on abstraction," and cites Rahman, Davidson, and Weisheipl as (mistakenly) interpreting abstraction to represent the emanation of intelligibles from the Active Intellect. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Avicenna on Abstraction," in *Aspects of Avicenna*, ed. Robert Wisnovsky (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001), 39.

rational faculty, but of rather assisting the human intellect by enforcing its power to grasp the intelligibles.[68] This notion of assistance is developed into one of mediation in mature works of the middle period such as *De Anima* and retained in later works such as the *Ishārāt* and the *Dāneshnāmeh*. The Active Intellect's role is one of illumination of the particulars in the imagination, which therefore allows for a connection between the human intellect and the imagination. When the rational faculty acquires abstract forms for the first time, the Active Intellect serves to illuminate these particulars; yet the intelligible forms derive ultimately from sense-data. It is only when the human intellect retrieves already abstracted forms that it relies solely on the Active Intellect.

Given Rāzī's dismissal of the existence of the Active Intellect of the *falāsifa*,[69] and his ultimate rejection of hylomorphism in favor of atomism, it is unsurprising that he argues against the process of abstraction as developed by Ibn Sīnā. Yet aspects of Ibn Sīnā's epistemology, including the importance granted to empiricism and innate, automatic cognitive processes, remain dominant in Rāzī's epistemology. Rāzī dismisses Ibn Sīnā's theory of abstraction, and instead posits a theory of relation between knower and known that allows for awareness of external essences through one's awareness of that relation.

Rāzī presents several arguments in the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib* against the capacity of the human being to know essences directly, which serve to strengthen his dismissal of the human capacity to acquire conceptual knowledge. First, he states that an essence must either come to be known by reference to itself, to something that is outside of it, or by some

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[68] Ibid., 43–46.

[69] We will discuss Rāzī's dismissal of the Active Intellect in the *Maṭālib* in the third chapter of the dissertation. This stance is expressed as well in the earlier *Mulakhkhaṣ fī l-ḥikma*. Ibrahim, "Freeing Philosophy from Metaphysics," 292.

combination of these. First, it cannot come to be known by reference to itself. The means to know something must be known before that which is to be known, and if both are the same, then it is known before being known – a logical impossibility. Further, the thing to be known cannot be understood by its internal parts (neither by some of its parts nor all of its parts). Knowing some parts of a thing does not constitute knowledge of the whole, for if knowledge of one part would lead to knowledge of another, it would require some kind of external knowledge (which is the third category considered). And if we consider that the essence can be known by knowing all of its parts, then we have equated the knowledge of the essence with the knowledge of the entirety of its parts—which is simply the knowledge of a thing by reference to itself.

Rāzī then considers the possibility of coming to know the conceptualization of that essence through factors external to it. It is known that various essences can contribute to a single concomitance (a single inseparable accident), how can one know that the description (*waṣf*) is specific to that essence rather than to another essence? We cannot know that the knowledge of that description is specific to the knowledge of that essence without knowing that it pertains to that essence, which must be preceded by a conceptualization of that essence. For the knowledge of a relation must be preceded by the knowledge that it is this particular whole essence that is inhering in that particular concomitance. This, then, is not helpful in specifying that essence. If we do not know that this is the essence at hand, then we are truly ignorant of it beyond knowing that it is necessary in a particular concomitant. Lastly, Rāzī rejects the possibility that one may define an essence by a combination of these different categories. It is not possible for one of these ways to be effective, so how can a composition of them be so? Rāzī ultimately asserts that

he has shown that it is impossible for anything of conceptualizations (*al-taṣawwurāt*) to be acquired by human capacity.[70]

The only conceptualizations that Rāzī views as achievable for the human being are those which are formed by the internal and external senses. That is, we conceptualize the object of our perception through sense data from the five senses or conceptualizations that we find within ourselves such as pain and pleasure, happiness and sadness, and the like. These points of access to phenomena also have the effect of limiting that about which human being can reason. He states that "as for the conceptualization of something beyond these divisions, we have absolutely no way to reach it."[71] This point speaks to the inability of syllogistic reasoning to access knowledge of God's essence, for it is beyond all conceptualizations formed by human senses.[72] The passage underscores the empirical nature of Rāzī's understanding of concept formation, which also serves to limit the objects of knowledge that one can access through logic. These simple concepts, which Ibrahim posits to be "sensible simples," are known purely through experience.[73]

Rāzī's criticisms of Ibn Sīnā's theory are not, however, limited to the ninth volume of the *Maṭālib.*[74] In a discussion of what "the sages (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) have written about the degrees of

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[70] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, 104. As Ibrahim notes, this point, which comes to be associated with Rāzī in later post-classical *kalām,* is connected to Rāzī's dismissal of real definitions, and is stated in a number of Rāzī's earlier works, including the *Muḥaṣṣal, al-Risāla al-kamāliyya,* and *Sharḥ ʿuyūn al-ḥikma.* Ibrahim, "Faḫr Ad-Dīn Ar-Rāzī, Ibn Al-Hayṯam and Aristotelian Science," 394 n. 62.
[71] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, 105.
[72] The point is also expressed in the first volume of the *Maṭālib.* See Ibid., vol. 1, 50.
[73] Ibrahim also theorizes that Rāzī understands complex sensible items to include a "structuring property" (*al-hayʾa al-ijtimāʿiyya*) which is accidental to the whole and accounts for the phenomenal (as opposed to noumenal) unity of the item. Ibrahim, "Faḫr Ad-Dīn Ar-Rāzī, Ibn Al-Hayṯam and Aristotelian Science," 401–2.
[74] For arguments against impression and the abstraction of essences, see also al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 69-89 and al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 2, 202-3.

souls in cognitions and knowledge" in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī criticizes the notion that perception occurs not only through senses accessing what is sensible through a particular matter, but also through the abstraction of essence in a complete manner by the intellect. He objects to this idea on a number of grounds.[75] Firstly, if "the intellectual form is an individual accident which inheres (*ḥāll*) in an individual soul," and is therefore joined with the soul, "then how can it be said that the form is abstracted?"[76] Further, he objects, if it is permissible to describe it in this way, then why would sensible form (*al-ṣūra al-ḥissiyya*) not also be considered abstracted? That is, if the sensible form of a physical object is sensed and internalized in the human mind, then this too, according to this logic, would be an abstracted essence. There is no reason to distinguish the essence of the object in the human soul from these physical data which are also abstracted from the object as they are cognized. The theory of abstraction, Rāzī remarks, is internally inconsistent. A supposed abstracted form's being abstracted "is itself a qualification additional to its essence which is in conjunction with it. The statement of its being abstracted makes its very being abstracted impossible."[77] That is, the essence of a form cannot exist without any qualification; even when abstracted, it is qualified by its abstraction.

Rāzī goes on to examine the five predicables (genus, differentia, species, property, and the "general accident," *al-ʿaraḍ al-ʿāmm*) and interrogates how these might relate to the idea of an abstracted essence. "The genus and the differentia, they are parts of the constitution of the essence. And the accident that occurs mentally cannot be part of the constitution of the essence existing externally, just as the sphere, the sun, and the moon cannot be the same as the accident

[75] For a full translation of this section, see Appendix VII.
[76] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 281.
[77] Ibid.

that inheres mentally, or be equal to it."[78] The differentia and the universal accident are of the attributes that subsist in external essences, and it is not possible that these be the same accident that occurs in the mind. "It is therefore established that the statement on the form that inheres in the soul being an abstracted universal essence is speech that has no truth to it whatsoever, and no foundation."[79] This passage underscores Rāzī's dismissal of real definitions (*al-ḥadd al-ḥaqīqī*) in favor of nominal definitions (*al-ḥadd bi-l-ism*), a point also made earlier in the logic of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* and highlighted by Ibrahim.[80]

As others have noted, Rāzī's alternative theory of relational knowledge is presented with tantalizing brevity. In some ways, it seems to represent the fragments of the epistemology of the *falsafa* tradition that remain after stripping away abstracted essences and the Active Intellect. What then is perceived, and what results from perception, is purely particular and purely relational, and knowledge is formed through this direct interaction between knower and known. While references to relational knowledge are brief, they occur at numerous points in the *Maṭālib* with such frequency and harmony as to signal Rāzī's affirmation of the theory.[81]

In the third volume of the *Maṭālib*, in a section that examines knowledge (*ʿilm*) and grasping (*idrāk*), Rāzī rejects alternative epistemologies in favor of knowledge as relation between knower and thing known. He argues against knowledge as the presence of the abstracted essence of that which is known in the knower (per the philosophical tradition) or as an attribute existing in the knower (per the majority of theologians). He also notes that while it is agreed upon that knowledge is either conceptual (*taṣawwur*) or the granting of assent (*taṣdīq*), the finer

[78] Ibid., vol. 7, 282.
[79] Ibid.
[80] "Faḫr Ad-Dīn Ar-Rāzī, Ibn Al-Hayṯam and Aristotelian Science," 394–98.
[81] While our focus is on the *Maṭālib*, the position is also stated in the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*. See al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 226.

points of defining knowledge are contested. Here, he presents four positions, and is explicit regarding which he believes to be true.

Rāzī begins by detailing the theory of knowledge that he prefers. He states this theory of knowledge as claiming:

> …that knowledge (*ʿilm*) and grasping (*idrāk*) are expressions of an abstracted specific relation (*nisba makhṣūṣa*). This is a position that a group of the great sages (*ḥukamāʾ*) and theologians (*mutakallimūn*) have held, and it is our preferred position—and it is the truth. For if we know something, we find between our minds and that thing known a specific relation and a specific correlative (*iḍāfa*). For this reason, when there is no encounter between that which is the knower and that which is the thing known, the attainment of what is called knowledge (*ʿilm*) is impossible. Thus, attaining this relation (*nisba*) at the point of attaining that which is called knowledge (*ʿilm*) and grasping (*idrāk*) and awareness (*shuʿūr*) is a matter that is known axiomatically (*bi-l-badīha*).[82]

Despite the succinctness of the statement, a few key points may be highlighted. The first is that this view appears to be held by esteemed theologians and philosophers alike, with Rāzī characterizing these philosophers as sages (*ḥukamāʾ*) and thus further signaling his own agreement with the position. The second is Rāzī's emphasis on specificity; this relationship between knower and known is particular but it results in knowledge that is (implicitly) universal. And finally, once again, Rāzī appeals to axiomatic knowledge, for it is upon self-examination that one realizes immediately that it is fundamentally this relationship between knower and known that allows for knowledge.

Rāzī dutifully presents the theories of knowledge that he rejects as well. These include the view of the Philosophers (in this case *al-falāsifa,* with the use of this signifier signaling Rāzī's disagreement) that knowledge is a real attribute (*ṣifa ḥaqīqiyya*), consisting in the attainment of the form of the thing known in the knower. This description of knowledge refers to

[82] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 3, 104.

Ibn Sīnā's theory of abstraction, which Rāzī has sought to reject. With no equivocation, Rāzī states, "We have addressed this topic in the first part of this book on logic, and went to great lengths to invalidate it, and brought forth many cogent proofs to demonstrate its falsity."[83]

Rāzī also objects to a view that combines his preferred theory of relational knowledge with that of the Philosophers. This theory, he notes, belongs to the majority of the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), and consists of knowledge being a real attribute as well as a specific correlative. This theory states that:

> Knowledge is a specific attribute subsisting in the self of the knower, and that attribute is attached to the thing known – and they mean by this attachment (*al-taʿalluq*) what we have termed relation (*nisba*) and correlation (*iḍāfa*). However, those theologians denied that that real attribute is a form (*ṣūra*) equal to the essence (*māhiyya*) of the thing known, and rather said that it is a specific essence, but that is in itself different from the essence of that which is known, but between it and the thing known there is a specific, particular relation (*nisba*) which is called attachment (*al-taʿalluq*).[84]

What is implied in Rāzī's description of the difference between his own preferred theory and that of the majority of theologians is that these theologians still hold that a form is acquired in the knower, which Rāzī rejects entirely. Rāzī *solely* locates knowledge in the relation between knower and known, which is superadded to the knower's self.

As for the fourth rejected opinion, it claims that knowledge is a real, specific attribute, but that it is a negation. This view is expressed in one way by a group of prior theologians who claimed that knowledge is simply the absence of ignorance. The second expression of this understanding of knowledge through negation can also be seen, Rāzī states, in the philosophical view that the object of cognition is abstracted from matter.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

Rāzī's own position that knowledge is relational is reiterated at numerous points in the *Maṭālib*, though without much further elucidation. However, these few instances are enough to emphasize two points in Rāzī's theory, namely, that relational knowledge is specific in its occurrence though universal in the concepts it produces, and that this knowledge is accessed through a person's awareness of this relation. The first emphasis on the specificity of the relation is iterated in a section in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* in which Rāzī emphasizes the temporality and specificity of perception. "The truth," he writes, "is that the state which occurs in the soul is knowledge of these essences and awareness of them, and this knowledge is a specific accident and a specific attribute inhering in a specific soul at a specific time."[85] In no uncertain terms, Rāzī here again dismisses the notion of abstracted universal essences as "meaningless speech."[86]

Rāzī's theory of relational knowledge is generated from a need to prove God capable of knowing particulars while at the same time remaining everlasting and immutable.[87] The same impulse drove al-Ghazālī to posit the theory of relational knowledge in the thirteenth discussion of his *Tahāfut* as a way in which God may know particulars without necessitating a change in His essence.[88] Ibn Sīnā stated in the *Shifāʾ* that knowledge exists as an accident in the soul of the knower, with any change in knowledge necessitating a change in the essence of the knower.[89] According to Ibn Sīnā, God must therefore only know particulars in a universal manner, precluding knowledge of temporal events as well of individuals and, al-Ghazālī charged,

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[85] Ibid., vol. 7, 282.
[86] Ibid., vol. 7, 282.
[87] Hutchins makes note of the importance of knowledge as relational for Rāzī's arguments on God's knowing particulars in his dissertation, referencing the *Mabāḥith,* the *Muḥassal*, and the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*. See Hutchins, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Knowledge," 61, 76–77, 87–88, 100.
[88] al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifah*, 140–43.
[89] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 107–10.

imperiling individual accountability before the divine. In response, al-Ghazālī drew on earlier *kalām* arguments to posit that knowledge is purely a relation (*iḍāfa*) between the knower and the thing known.[90] The solution allows God to know particulars without His essence being changed by that knowledge, just as one may view a moving object from a stationary position without one's own location changing (an analogy later reiterated by Rāzī). The debate regarding the nature of knowledge and the possibility that it may consist of a relation between knower and known was taken up by numerous intellectuals in the 12th century, including Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī as a defender of relational knowledge and ʿUmar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī and Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī as defenders of Ibn Sīnā's position, and notably gave rise to Suhrawardī's theory of knowledge by presence.[91]

Rāzī's own acceptance of the theory of relational knowledge is doubtless driven by these theological concerns. In the third volume of the *Maṭālib* in a section on God's knowledge of Himself, Rāzī states that while theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) hold that knowledge is an attribute that subsists in the self of the knower, "we only establish two things: the self (*al-dhāt*) and the relationship (*al-nisba*) [between knower and known], which is called 'knowing'. We claim that this relation is not the same as the self, but is rather something additional to the self that is found in the self."[92] That is, the relation that constitutes knowledge is found *superadded* to the self of the knower; it is not the same as the self, but accounts for all aspects of the awareness of the subject. As Rāzī has emphasized in his taxonomy of the various theories of knowledge, he *only*

[90] Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) Incoherence of the Philosophers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 203.
[91] I am particularly grateful to Frank Griffel for his guidance in these points, among other key sections of this dissertation.
[92] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 3, 224.

believes knowledge to consist of that relation between knower and known, and does not necessitate the existence of an attribute within the knower. This is emphasized as well in a section on God's knowledge of particulars in the third volume of the *Maṭālib* in which Rāzī states that he has previously mentioned that:

> there is no meaning to [knowledge] except this disclosure (*inkishāf*) and except for this specific clarification. As for the establishment of an attribute beyond this specific relation, and other than this specific correlation, we have mentioned in the book on knowledge that the evidence does not at all indicate its existence (*thubūt*).[93]

Rāzī unequivocally rejects the notion that is held by unnamed theologians that knowledge, in addition to being relational, involves an attribute in the knower. While this is connected undoubtedly to his rejection of the abstraction of forms, a major contention in the formulation of this view is his need to establish God's knowledge of particulars without allowing that knowledge to change God's essence. With knowledge being limited to a relation to that which is known that does not entail an attribute in the knower, and which is superadded to the self of the knower, the core of God's essence remains immutable.

Rāzī's conception of knowledge as relational echoes Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's critique of Avicennian epistemology.[94] He follows in Abū al-Barakāt's footsteps not only in his emphasis on self-awareness (*shuʿūr*) and axiomatic truths as the basis of all further knowledge, but also in his dismissal of Ibn Sīnā's theory of the abstraction of intelligible forms.[95] Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, too, states that knowledge is relational, and it may well be Abū al-Barakāt

[93] Ibid., vol. 3, 155-56.
[94] Pines writes that "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) is the only important thinker who may be described as a disciple of Abu'l-Barakāt." Pines, "Studies in Abu l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Poetics and Metaphysics," 157.
[95] Ibid., 139; Shlomo Pines, "La Conception de la Conscience de soi chez Avicenne et Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī," in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, 1954, 88 ff.

that Rāzī has in mind when he insists that knowledge *solely* consists in that relation and is not also an attribute in the knower. At the beginning of the third volume of *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar*, Abū al-Barakāt states:

> Knowledge (*ʿilm*) is a correlative attribute of the knower to the object known. And grasping and cognition (*maʿrifa*) are like that, that is, correlative attributes of the grasper to that which is grasped, of the cognizer to that which is cognized. And we hold that cognition and knowledge are correlative attributes of ourselves to things that we cognize and know, and the things that we cognize and know are first of all existents in existence per se (*fī l-aʿyān*). And our cognition and knowledge of them is a correlative attribute of them in the minds. We then cognize and know the cognitive correlative attributes.[96]

Rāzī appears to be both influenced by this description by Abū al-Barakāt of knowledge as relational, and wary of his characterization of it as an "attribute" belonging to the knower which results in cognitive correlative attributes. This particular trend of critique of Ibn Sīnā's theories, and the generation of new principles of epistemology, continues its development not only in Rāzī but also in Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl's reframing of the theory of relational knowledge in illuminationist terms (*al-iḍāfa al-ishrāqiyya*).[97]

While Rāzī's insistence on knowledge being relational does not preclude the formation of concepts in the mind, he unfortunately does not clarify the relationship between these mental concepts and their objects in extra-mental existence. His epistemology appears reactionary and even in his last works, still inchoate. For our purposes, however, we may note that rather than divorcing knowledge from extra-mental reality, it grounds universal knowledge in the experience

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[96] Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma* (Hyderabad, 1938), vol. 3, 2.
[97] Like Rāzī, and influenced no doubt by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Suhrawardī emphasizes individual experience of the object of knowledge, whether that be through the external or the internal senses. This encounter entails a relation between knower and known, termed by Suhrawardī as the "illuminationist correlative/relation" (*al-iḍāfa al-ishrāqiyya*). Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination: A Study of Suhrawardī's Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, c1990), 129–71. See also Adamson, *In the Age of Averroes*.

of particulars. If knowledge is a relation between knower and known, then experience of the object of cognition is required for knowledge formation. Knowledge is not innate, and the soul requires the body in order to form concepts.[98] As we have seen in the prior sections, these concepts are then processed to produce axiomatic truths, which are subsequently assembled to form all subsequent knowledge that is achieved through rationalist, rather than spiritual, means.

5. Implications, Practical and Holy

5.1 Rāzī's Methodology

The first key implication is that Rāzī's developed theory of axiomatic knowledge allows him to examine philosophical and theological arguments for their level of certainty through logic and an appeal to axiomatic truths, and to discern ultimately what is apodictic from what is only theoretically true. In this emphasis on axiomatic truths, we see significant influence from Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, who made self-evident truths occurring through self-reflection and self-awareness the foundation of his philosophical method.[99] This appeal to what is self-evident, and its goal of separating out what is certain from what is probable, is manifest in Rāzī's method in the *Maṭālib*, in which he exhaustively examines arguments for logical shortcomings and more often than not ultimately concedes that a given issue cannot be decided one way or another with certainty.

[98] While Rāzī initially ascribed to the atomistic understanding of the human person as purely physical, his later works exhibit a shift to endorsing body-soul dualism. See *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 116–29. Rāzī's understanding of human anthropology will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

[99] Shlomo Pines, *Nouvelles études sur Awḥad al-Zamân Abu-l-Barakât al-Baghdâdî* (Paris: Durlacher, 1955), 7–19. See the introduction to *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar,* al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma*, vol. 1*,* 2-5.

Whether or not a premise is axiomatic (or, in other words, self-evident and undoubtedly true) allows Rāzī to distinguish what is certain from what is merely theoretical. A prime example of the analysis of axiomatic truths in the establishment of certain premises occurs in Rāzī's discussion of a key premise in his proof of God's existence, namely, that that which is contingent requires something to influence its existence. He therefore takes it upon himself to prove the truth of this premise, for if the conclusion of this proof (God's existence as the Necessary of Existence) is to be apodictic, then this premise must be axiomatic. The discussion illustrates how Rāzī's theory of axiomatic knowledge is incorporated fully into his methodology. We also see the ways in which Rāzī makes recourse to the psychological function of self-examination for the discovery and assertion of axiomatic premises.

Rāzī presents both sides of the argument on whether this key premise ("the knowledge that what is contingent and what is originated requires an influencer (*muʾaththir*)") is axiomatic or merely theoretical, beginning with those who oppose this view. [100] One who views this knowledge as only theoretical, and not axiomatic, might posit that if one examines the knowledge that one is half of two, and the knowledge that the contingent requires a preponderator in order to exist, one realizes that the judgment regarding the first premise is more evident than the second. This implies the possibility of contradiction on the question of preponderance, implying in turn that this requirement of preponderance is theoretical and not certain knowledge.[101] Rāzī locates the difference between these two statements not in assent (*taṣdīq*) but rather in the conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) of the terms of the proposition. While the concepts "one," "two," and "half" in the first proposition are obvious and are in no need of

[100] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 79.
[101] Ibid.

careful definition, the terms of the second proposition require one to conceptualize the essences of "the contingent" (*al-mumkin*), "reliance" (*al-iftiqār*), and "influencer" (*muʾaththir*). The difference between these propositions is due then to the nature of the foundational concepts making up each proposition; whereas one being half of two is self-evident, the contingent relying upon something to influence its existence is obscure.[102]

Further, Rāzī warns that defying this intuitive logic has dire repercussions for theoretical reasoning. He states:

> The expressed principle regarding the difference between axiomatic knowledges (*al-badīhiyyāt*) and other knowledges is found to be the case by those possessing reason within their souls and minds, in a manner that is evident and obvious. If you open the door of denial based on haughtiness, then you have opened the doors of that for all things, and in that case, all else will fail.[103]

Rāzī views this differentiation between apodictic and merely theoretical knowledge as the most basic logical principle; to deny it is to deny rationality altogether, and to lose the foundation of argumentation.

This principle, Rāzī emphasizes, does not rest on repetition of an outcome, but on the nature of the conceptualizations as they occur in the mind. In the case of an axiomatic proposition (*al-qaḍiyya al-badīhiyya*), the conceptualization of the subject of the proposition along with its predicate is sufficient to produce assent (*taṣdīq*). In the case of an axiomatic proposition, it is impossible for these two concepts to be grasped without producing certainty in assent. When this certainty in assent does not occur, it is enough to note that there is even one case in which this assent does not occur necessarily. This is not a result of the repetition of an

[102] Ibid., vol. 1, 80.
[103] Ibid., vol. 1, 80-81.

occurrence, but of a natural, abstracted reaction to the concepts forming in the mind of the observer.[104]

In the second half of the section, Rāzī responds to the hypothetical interlocutor's arguments, including this purported difference between conceptualizing the propositions of one being half of two, and the contingent relying upon an influencer for its existence. He indicates that if the more complicated case regarding the contingent is broken down logically, the truth of it is undeniably axiomatic. He states:

> The true answer is that this difference [between these two propositions] is prohibited. For one who purges his mind from reverting to debate and quarreling in everything, and summons in his intellect [the fact] that the relation of existence [to the contingent] is like the relation of nonexistence to it, and that there is absolutely no preponderance for either of the sides over the other, judges axiomatically that, as long as this equality remains, it is impossible that preponderance occur. If preponderance occurs, then the equality disappears, and something else joins with the side that is dominant. If the intellect considers this proposition in this way, then there remains no difference between it and the statement that one is half of two.[105]

This is to say that Rāzī pushes the reader to grant this complicated proposition more attention, and to realize that when the more complex proposition is actually considered carefully and broken down into its logical components, the truth of the matter is in fact self-evident. While the proposition "every contingent requires an influencer" is complicated and certainly more obscure than "one is half of two," analyzing what this in truth entails allows one to recognize its axiomatic nature. If two possibilities are entirely equal, then one cannot occur without something that tips the scale – and the contingent being existent, or nonexistent, is an example of such a case. While not made explicit here, this example of a particularly obscure axiomatic truth may also illustrate why human beings vary in the amount of certain knowledge that they are able to

[104] Ibid., vol. 1, 81.
[105] Ibid., vol. 1, 85.

obtain; relatively complex propositions may still be axiomatic, though the recognition of them as such requires acuity in reasoning and logic.

This discussion allows us to note the key implications of Rāzī's understanding of axiomatic truths for his methodology. Firstly, Rāzī holds that propositions of a syllogism must be axiomatic in order for the conclusion to be apodictic. An axiomatic proposition is discovered not through repeated experience or experimentation, but rather through internal reflection on the concepts involved in the premise. While the process is relatively simple, the arguments presented and critiqued also serve as a warning that understanding the axiomatic nature of a proposition may require an advanced degree of analysis. Rāzī's wielding of this methodology allows him at other points in his works to cut with the other side of the sword, so to speak. He also resorts to what is self-evident to demonstrate that conclusions that some have claimed to be apodictic are not in fact so, for he is able to show that the premises on which they rest are not axiomatic.

5.2 Syllogistic Reasoning and Human Perfection

Secondly, Rāzī's emphasis on the God-given nature of the tools and processes by which the human mind accesses axiomatic truths and their subsequent fundamental role in the attainment of further knowledge also serves to sanctify syllogistic reasoning. While he denies that the attainment of axiomatic knowledge is due to individual effort, he does allow for variation in each person's ability to compose these axioms into syllogisms that allow for further knowledge. In both the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr*, Rāzī details gradations of human capacity, from those void of knowledge to those for whom syllogistic reasoning is effortless. Those in possession of the greatest ability to access further knowledge through syllogistic reasoning are

the prophets and sages for whom these knowledges are present in actuality and whose souls are illuminated and perfected by these truths.

Rāzī's presentation of these gradations in both works exactly parallels Ibn Sīnā's conception of human psychological development. Ibn Sīnā presents these theories concisely, for instance, in his treatise, "On the Rational Soul" (*Risāla fī l-kalām ʿalā al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*), a work written in the late period of Ibn Sīnā's life and dated to around 428/1037.[106] In this treatise, Ibn Sīnā describes the development of "the faculty capable of grasping the intelligibles."[107] At the beginning, the faculty is devoid of all intelligibles, and is called the material intellect (*ʿaql*^{an} *hayūlānī*^{yan}). Subsequently, the human being obtains the forms of the primary intelligibles (*ṣuwar al-maʿqūlāt al-awwaliyya*), "whose truth is ascertained without [the use of] syllogisms or [a process of] learning and acquisition (*iktisāb*)."[108] Ibn Sīnā gives examples of these first-obtained primary intelligibles, including knowledge that the whole is greater than the part, that a single body cannot occupy two places at the same time, be simultaneously black and white, or be both existent and non-existent. It is through these primary intelligibles that the mind is prepared to acquire secondary intelligibles by thinking—that is, composing (*taʾlīf wa tarkīb*) these primary intelligibles—or by intuition (*ḥads*), in which case the intellect realizes the middle term of the syllogism all at once. Next, the faculty comes to a state called "disposition" (*malaka*) in which the intellect is called actual (*ʿaql bi-l-fiʿl*) and in which it can summon these intelligibles without needing to acquire them. Finally, when the intelligibles are actually obtained, and

[106] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 165.
[107] Ibid., 68. Gutas notes that this treatise "survives in a single manuscript, Leiden 958 Warner (catalogue number 1468), ff. 247a–250a, dated at the end of the treatise on 19 Ḏū l-Qaʿda 954 / 31 December 1547" (Gutas 67). For the published Arabic edition of this manuscript, see the reprint of A.F. Ahwānī's edited edition from *Al-Kitāb* 5 (1952) 419–423 (sans critical apparatus) in Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 195–99.
[108] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 69; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 195.

observed and represented in the faculty, it is called an acquired intellect (*ʿaql*^{an} *mustafād*^{an}).[109] While Rāzī refers to intuition (*ḥads*) in his account of these degrees in his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* (in a section that provides a commentary on the Light Verse), he does not reference it either in the *Tafsīr* or the *Maṭālib*.[110] These later works are not commentaries upon Ibn Sīnā, and Rāzī chooses not to reference Ibn Sīnā's conception of intuition (*ḥads*), for *ḥads* accounts for hitting on the middle term of the syllogism through connection with the Active Intellect, the existence of which Rāzī rejects. Otherwise, however, Rāzī's descriptions in both the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr* parallel that of Ibn Sīnā.

The first section of Rāzī worthy of note occurs in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* and is entitled "On the ranks of souls in cognitions and knowledges." Here, Rāzī considers the sages' (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) views on gradations of cognition. While this is not one of the sections of the *Maṭālib* in which Rāzī is explicitly giving his own view of a subject, there are a few clues that signal his agreement with the opinions presented. The first is the centrality of axiomatic truths (termed here *al-badīhiyyāt*) to cognition in this account, which we have already shown to be fundamental in Rāzī's theory of knowledge formation. Secondly, here and elsewhere, Rāzī

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[109] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 70; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 196.

[110] al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 269-70. As both Janos and Jaffer note, Rāzī does provide an account of the nature of intuition (*ḥads*) in his commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* as well as in *al-Mabaḥith al-mashriqiyya*, which they take to be an endorsement of Ibn Sīnā's concept of *ḥads*. From my reading, however, Ibn Sīnā's theory of intuition (*ḥads*) has not been incorporated into Rāzī's epistemology in the *Maṭālib*. Given that the commentary on *al-Ishārāt* as well as the *Mabāḥith* both represent works that explore Ibn Sīnā's philosophy (without necessarily representing Rāzī's own opinions), I would be cautious to conclude from such passages that Rāzī agrees with Ibn Sīnā's theory of *ḥads*, particularly as it is aided by connection with the Active Intellect (the function of which Rāzī rejects). Rāzī certainly incorporates syllogistic reasoning wholeheartedly into his epistemology, but it is God, and not the Active Intellect, that allows for the automatic syllogistic production of conclusions which Rāzī consistently describes as performed through the "compositions of axiomatic knowledge." See Jaffer, *Razi*, 137–42; Janos, "Intuition, Intellection, and Mystical Knowledge: Delineating Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Cognitive Theories," 193–98.

groups the sages with the prophets; his attribution of views to "the sages" signals agreement with the beliefs presented in a given section unless he voices critique or opposition. Finally, as we will see, these degrees of human development are also detailed in Rāzī's *Tafsīr*. The parallel account presented in the *Tafsīr* further signals his agreement with this section of the *Maṭālib*.

In this section, Rāzī presents a breakdown of the material, dispositional, and actual intellect that incorporates his understanding of axiomatic and acquired knowledge. He writes that the material intellect is equivalent to the souls of children which are void of cognitions and knowledges, though they are certainly receptive to them. The dispositional intellect—and Rāzī here notes "as we have shown"—consists of acquired knowledges which can only be obtained through axiomatic truths. Here, again, Rāzī clarifies that axiomatic knowledge precedes that which is acquired, and is synthesized such that what was once unknown becomes known.

Rāzī notes that there are differences between individuals. The first is in "the multiplicity, or deficiency, of those axiomatic knowledges."[111] While he does not clarify, we can guess his meaning: given that he has elsewhere stated that axiomatic knowledges become present through sense experience, it is logical that human beings possess different amounts of axiomatic knowledge. Secondly, the synthesis of axiomatic truths through which one reaches further conclusions is easier for some than others. He writes that the degrees of variation in these levels of ability may be endless; just as it is possible that there be a great degree of deficiency in ability, so too is it possible for there to exist some who are perfect in this capacity. "The possessors of this perfection," Rāzī writes, "are the great prophets and perfect sages; and of the Sufis there are some who called this kind of knowledge divine (*al-ʿilm al-ladunī*), taken from His saying, 'And

[111] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 279.

we taught him knowledge proceeding from Us.' [Q 18:65]"[112] Again, while he is here speaking through the account of "the sages," this position finds resonance with descriptions of knowledge and syllogistic reasoning throughout his later corpus. His measure here of the prowess of the prophets and sages is their ability to effortlessly compose sounds syllogisms from axioms to attain further apodictic conclusions.

Rāzī explains that the actual intellect represents the complete, abundant attainment of acquired knowledge. These are, however, not present in the mind except when summoned, but can be brought forth without need of anything outside of the intellect. The fourth and final level of the acquired intellect (*al-ʿaql al-mustafād*) Rāzī describes as representing the last ranks of human capacity. Knowledges at this level are present in actuality (*al-ʿulūm ḥāḍira bi-l-fiʿl*), and described as "brilliant, complete, perfect, exact."[113] This, presumably, is a degree of perfection that can only be ascribed to the "great prophets and perfect sages."

Rāzī also details these gradations of human capacity in his *Tafsīr* in a discussion of the 122nd verse of Sūrat al-Anʿām which reads, "Is then he who was dead, whom We enlivened and for whom We made a light by which to walk among the people, like one whose likeness is in the shadows from which he does not emerge?" Again, given the importance of the passage for this discussion, I translate it here in full. After stating the opinion of the philologists (the people of language, *ʾahil al-lugha*), Rāzī states the view of "the people of meanings" (*ʾahil al-maʿānī*). He writes:

> The people of meanings (*ʾahil al-maʿānī*) said that the unbelievers were described as dead in His saying '[They are] dead, not alive, and do not perceive when they will be resurrected,' and also in His saying, 'That he may warn whoever is living,' and His saying, 'You will not make the dead hear,' and His saying 'And the blind and deaf are not equal, and the living and dead are not equal.' When He made

[112] Ibid., vol. 7, 280.
[113] Ibid.

disbelief [equal to] death, and the unbeliever a dead person, He made guidance [equivalent to] life and the guided one alive.[114] For He made disbelief death because it is ignorance, and ignorance leads necessarily to bewilderment (*ḥayra*) and immobility (*waqfa*). This is like death, which leads necessarily to silence (*sukūn*). And the dead is not guided to anything, as is the ignorant one. And guidance is knowledge and sight, and knowledge and sight are due to the obtainment of reason and success and deliverance. And His saying, 'We made for him a light by which to walk among the people' is connected to His saying, 'We enlivened him.' This light must be different from that life. What comes to mind – and God knows—is that the human spirits are of four ranks in cognition (*maʿrifa*). The first is their being prepared for the reception of these cognitions (*maʿārif*); that initial preparedness differs in spirits. Perhaps the spirit was described by perfect, powerful, noble preparedness and perhaps it was scant, weak preparedness, with its owner being a deficient dolt. And the second level is that [the human spirit] obtains primary, universal knowledges, which are called "intellect" (*ʿaql*). And the third level is that the human being attempts to synthesize those axioms (*tarkīb tilk al-badīhiyyāt*) and to attain, by way of these compositions, knowledge of acquired ignorances, except that perhaps those cognitions (*maʿārif*) are not present in actuality (*ḥāḍira bi-l-fiʿl*). Instead, when their possessor wishes to retrieve them and to summon them, he is capable of doing so. The fourth level is that those holy cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-qudsiyya*) and manifest spiritual truths (*al-jalāyā al-rūhāniyya*) are present in actuality (*ḥāḍira bi-l-fiʿl*), and the essence of that spirit is illuminated by those cognitions, enlightened by them, and perfected by their presence in it.

If you know this, then we say that the first level is solely the obtainment of the preparedness, and is that which is called death. The second level is that the universal, axiomatic knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya al-kulliyya*) are obtained in it, and they are indicated by His saying, 'We enlivened him.' And the third level is the synthesis of the axioms (*tarkīb al-badīhiyyāt*) until one reaches, by their compositions, knowledge of [that which were previously] theoretical ignorances, which is the intention of His saying, 'and We made for him a light.' And the fourth level is His saying 'by which to walk among the people,' which indicates [this possessor of knowledge] being one who summons those manifest

[114] This analogy, and the attribution of it to the "people of meaning" (*ʾahil al-maʿānī*), may be in reference to Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī's (d. ca. 400/1010) lexicography, *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya*, which explores the difference between near-synonyms and their antonyms in an extended argument against the existence of complete synonymity (*tarāduf*) between any two words of a single dialect or language. In a section exploring the meaning of *qiyās,* he states that God may be called "an Analogist" (*qāyis*^{an}) for drawing the likeness (*li-tashbīhihi*) between the unbeliever and the dead, the believer and the living, unbelief and darkness, and belief and light. Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAskarī, *al-Furūq al-lughawiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1934), 61.

I am grateful to David Larsen for making this connection, and for kindly sharing the passage in al-ʿAskarī's *Kitāb al-Furūq.*

> holy truths, and one who looks to them. At this point, the degrees of felicities of the human soul are complete.[115]

As in the passage in the *Maṭālib*, this passage in the *Tafsīr* presents a gradation of human ability and knowledge based upon one's capacity to synthesize axiomatic knowledge in order to comprehend that of which one was previously ignorant. It is by such knowledge that one is illuminated and enlivened, and through which one reaches perfect felicity. As in other aspects of Rāzī's later corpus, we see a blending of the philosophical with the theological and mystical; syllogistic reasoning is cast with a sacred light, and the heights of prophethood and sagacity are achieved by its perfect usage.

Together, these passages grant us a fuller account of the origins of axiomatic knowledge in Rāzī's system. Through God-granted tools (the senses) and innate psychological processes, the human being gains knowledge and forms concepts by which she acquires axiomatic truths. The inborn ability to subsequently combine these axioms into sound syllogisms, producing further knowledge, varies from individual to individual. For the highest level of human beings, acquired knowledges—consequences of these axioms—are brilliant, complete, and immediate. These are the prophets and sages of greatest perfection.

Conclusion

Knowledge formation for Rāzī insofar as it is achieved through rationalist means can be described as a bottom-up process. The human being experiences the world through God-given senses and innate psychological processes, which Rāzī expresses as "relational," that allow for the formation of mental concepts. These concepts are the bases of automatic axiomatic truths

[115] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 13, 171-72.

which are then assembled through syllogistic reasoning to reach further apodictic knowledge. Those human beings who are at the height of perfection in their ability to perform syllogistic reasoning are, Rāzī states, the greatest prophets and the perfect sages. These echelons of humanity, by the grace of these ever-present illuminating truths, attain the heights of human felicity.

While Rāzī's ecstatic descriptions of syllogistic reasoning, and its being rooted in God-given truths, serve to sanctify this rational function, the description of the prophets and sages as accessing the heights of knowledge through syllogistic reasoning is still somewhat puzzling.[116] Rāzī has stated that the human being can only access that which can be conceptualized through human experience (namely by the external senses and internal sensibilities); how can a person produce conclusions about God, of which there is no direct sensual experience? If knowledge consists in a relation between knower and known, can a human being claim a connection to God who is exalted so far beyond creation?

We may posit that, for Rāzī, these heights of intellectual perfection cannot be achieved without combination with what he calls "the path of spiritual practice and striving" (*ṭarīq al-riyāḍa wa-l-mujāhada*), as indicated by the mystical language employed to describe these heights of knowing and their association with the prophets and the perfect sages. The first path of theoretical reasoning, alone, is indeed limited, and combined with Rāzī's focus on apodictic conclusions, likely resulted in his arrival at skepticism in the last decades of his life, as Shihadeh has noted, "with respect to the efficacy of rational reflection in metaphysics."[117] Rather than

[116] These passages resulted in conflicting interpretations by Janos and Shihadeh on the role and limits of theoretical reasoning. On this debate, see Janos, "Intuition, Intellection, and Mystical Knowledge: Delineating Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Cognitive Theories" and Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."
[117] Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," 109.

abandoning theoretical reasoning, however, Rāzī elsewhere couples intellectual perfection with spiritual purification and receptivity. We turn now to examine the framework of the spiritual path, which is fundamentally related to Rāzī's understanding of cosmology and angelology.

Chapter III: Rāzī's Cosmology and the Mystical Path

Introduction

In a statement in an introductory section of the *Maṭālib* that precedes a description of the *miʿrāj* of the human soul, Rāzī hints at the importance of comprehending angelology for further metaphysical inquiries. He writes, "We say: the rational human soul is positioned on the last rank of abstracted holy existence, and you will know the truth of this premise (*muqaddima*) when you comprehend the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the degrees of angels and their ranks."[1] It is Rāzī's understanding of cosmology, and most importantly the existence and function of the angels of revelation as they relate to the celestial intellects and souls of the philosophical tradition, that provides us with the key framework for examining the mystical path to knowledge.

A close reading of the *Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* indicates that Rāzī believed in a hierarchy of existence, beginning with God and proceeding to the celestial spirits and bodies and subsequently to the sublunar realm and human beings. The celestial beings exist in degrees, according to Rāzī, with the highest having no relationship with the realm of corporeality and being only occupied with worship of God, while ontologically lower levels of these beings are associated with specific celestial spheres. Through these various levels of entities flows what Rāzī most often terms "lights." These perfecting "divine mercies" are received by the celestial beings, who in turn transmit them to the prophets and the rest of humanity.

In this system, to be and to know are intertwined. For the highest level of celestial beings, to know is to exist, and to exist is to know; there is no existence for them that is separate from desire for, and awareness of, the divine. It is the mandate of this hierarchical existence that each subsequent level strives for self-perfection, and seeks to perfect what it encompasses. The

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 51.

perfection of humanity is the task of the ontologically lower levels of these celestial beings, an end achieved through conveyance of prophecy and inspiration to certain gifted individuals. The human soul has potential not to surpass these celestial beings, but to reach them, as it sheds its attachments with the bodily world and perfects itself through knowledge. This is the task of the human soul in this life, and the hope for the next: that it might join its celestial kin as they simultaneously know and exist in their awareness of the divine.

In his works, Rāzī primarily calls these celestial beings "angels" (*al-malāʾika*). Certainly in his qur'anic exegesis *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, he refers to them by no other name. In the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī grants the reader details of the existence and qualities of angels as well as a straightforward explanation of what is meant by the term. Further, there are sections of Rāzī's discussion of angels that show that not only do these beings influence events in the sublunar realm, but that they also play a pivotal role in the conveyance of divine revelation to prophets, who subsequently convey revelation to the rest of humanity.

Rāzī effectively joins the philosophical theory of purely spiritual beings with traditional Ashʿarite atomism, dividing the world into the material realm that consists of atoms and accidents, and the immaterial, which includes not only God but also spiritual beings (including jinn, demons, and angels). The human being lives squarely at the crossroads of these two worlds, possessing an immaterial soul that manages a material body. As such, the human being may appeal to these unseen forces to produce extraordinary events in the sublunar realm through a combination of physical and spiritual purification, knowledge, and spiritual exercises.

The human soul is, according to Rāzī, of the same genus as the angels; it is the task therefore of the human being to fix her spiritual gaze on that which is good, pure, and immaterial, and to prepare herself to join her celestial kin. The human being is not alone in this

task, and is aided by a flow of divine mercies through the degrees of angels to the masses of human beings by way of human prophets. Further, the knower can access these levels of being on her own; through spiritual exercise, her soul can rise through the levels of beings and experience this intelligible reality even before her soul separates from her body in death.

In this chapter, we will begin by discussing Rāzī's identification of the angels of revelation with the celestial spheres and planets. We will then discuss proofs that Rāzī produces to establish the existence of these spiritual beings, explore the various types of spiritual beings that Rāzī describes, and discuss the existence of the Universal Soul. This philosophical hierarchy of beings parallels Rāzī's position that the celestial angels are superior to the prophets, as it regards these beings as unequivocally superior to even the highest echelons of humanity.

In the eighth volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī transitions from discussions of prophetic miracles to an exploration of the various types of magic, the most efficacious of which are connected to these celestial beings. We will explore these types of magic as well as Rāzī's discussions of the theoretical foundations of astral magic, and the spiritual and physical requirements for the successful practice of magic. Finally, we will consider the relationship between Rāzī's understanding of cosmology and human perfection, by which the human being attains eternal felicity.

Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā are the most important sources of influence for Rāzī. We begin therefore with a discussion of these thinkers insofar as their conceptions of cosmology are similar to, or distinct from, that of Rāzī. Notable points of divergence that arise in comparison with the Ashʿarite and *falsafa* traditions include Rāzī's omission of the Active Intellect as defined by the *falsafa* tradition, his robust incorporation of the Universal Soul into his cosmology, and his assertion of both the efficacy and, implicitly, the permissibility of magic

(most notably astrology). Taking these points as guiding principles, we will discuss Neoplatonic and Hermetic influences on Rāzī's cosmology, including: *The Theology of Aristotle* and al-Shahrastānī's account of (pseudo-)Empedocles; the Corpus Hermeticum; and the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān as well as the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ as sources that synthesize these influences prior to Rāzī. These major influences upon Rāzī's views, including the *falāsifa*, al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite school of thought, Neoplatonism, and Hermeticism as well as the Ṣābiʾans and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, will be discussed thoroughly and individually in sub-sections at the end of the chapter.

1. Terminology

Rāzī follows predecessors associated with philosophical and theological schools of thought in signifying celestial intellects and souls by a number of names, including "celestial spirits" (*al-rūḥāniyyāt* or *al-rūḥāniyyūn*) and "the angels" (*al-malāʾika*). The identification is not merely linguistic but also conceptual; Rāzī is effectively merging the existing philosophical understanding of the inner workings of the universe with revelatory texts. Among other perceived heresies, Ibn Taymiyya censures the Philosophers for this identification; he writes, "The philosopher-logicians held ignorant views, such as: the angels are the Ten Intellects, they are pre-existent and eternal, and the intellect is the lord of all beings beneath it."[2]

Following this trend in the philosophical tradition, Rāzī is also explicit in his terminology and identifies "angels" with celestial intellects and souls. After citing what he notes are the traditional proofs (that is, proofs drawn from revelation and hadith) for the superiority of angels

[2] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians*, trans. Wael B. Hallaq (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33.

in the last section of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī sets out to give the reader evidence for this stance. As for the "intellectual and philosophical proofs," Rāzī writes:

> Know that what is intended by "angels" is celestial intellects (*al-ʿuqūl al-falakiyya*) and the celestial souls (*al-nufūs al-falakiyya*) that are with celestial bodies. And everything that is in the lower world in relation to them is like the center in relation to the circle, like the drop in relation to the sea, like the flame in relation to the sun.[3]

Here, Rāzī explicitly identifies the celestial intellects and souls with the angels of revelation. This identification is supported by additional subsequent descriptions that detail the differences between human beings and angels. Rāzī writes that there is no comparison between human beings and angels as far as their essence, knowledge, power, and freedom from deficiency are concerned. Firstly, these celestial souls and intellects are essentially abstracted from corporeality and its relations, while human beings are not. Secondly, angels are simple essences that are free of the multiplicity that occurs due to matter and form; the human being, however, is composed of soul and body. Thirdly, Rāzī writes that the composition of the human being is slack and subject to disunion, whereas the bodies of these spirits are the eternal celestial bodies that are free of change or rupture. Fourthly, human beings are caused by the overflow of existence to and through the angels, which Rāzī writes are the "lofty causes" of human existence. Fifthly, angels bear greater resemblance to the divine than do human beings. And finally, angels are only in need of God and nothing else, though this need itself is infinite.[4]

Given Rāzī's explicit identification of the angels of revelation with the celestial souls and intellects, as well the conceptual overlap of their descriptions, the reader can reasonably assume that a reference in the *Maṭālib* and other texts of Rāzī's corpus to the angels is simultaneously a

[3] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 421.
[4] Ibid., vol. 7, 422-423.

reference to these celestial beings. In order to analyze and describe Rāzī's cosmology in this dissertation, such terms as "the spiritual beings" (*al-rūḥāniyyāt* or *al-rūḥāniyyūn*) and "the angels" (*al-malāʾika*) have been taken to signify the same objects.

2. Discussions of the Existence of Celestial Beings

In a number of works, Rāzī divides existence into contrasting categories in order to greater understand the nature of being qua being.[5] There are at least two instances in which Rāzī employs this method in the *Maṭālib* in order to argue for, and analyze, the existence of angels/lofty spiritual beings. In the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*, he theorizes about existence based on that which affects, is affected, and which both affects and is affected. It is through this analysis that he posits God as that which purely affects, the material realm as that which is purely affected, and spiritual beings as that which both affect and are affected. He additionally proposes a matrix of that which is potentially vs. necessarily existent, and space-occupying vs. non-space-occupying by which he argues for the existence of non-space-occupying, contingent beings.

2.1 Division of the Material and Spiritual Realms

[5] We find that Aristotle employs the same method to establish the existence of the uncaused cause in *Metaphysics* Book Lambda. Aristotle begins Book Lambda by dividing existence into three categories: the first that is perceptible and everlasting, the second that is perceptible and destructible, and the third that is motionless and unchangeable. It is by proceeding through an analysis of these categories that he seeks to prove the existence of an uncaused cause that is motionless and unchangeable, the sole being belonging to the final category of existence. These conceptual distinctions as well as the method of argumentation are inherited by the Islamic philosophical tradition. See Arist. *Metaphysics* XII.1, 1069a.

In a section of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* entitled "On the Classes of Spirits," Rāzī proposes categories of beings based on whether they produce or receive an effect.[6] While certain sections of the *Maṭālib* are explicitly devoted to considering the various opinions of different groups of thinkers on a given issue, this section is one in which Rāzī primarily gives his own opinion on the matter, and the introductory sentences of each subsection are almost entirely written in the first person plural. By analyzing existence through these categories, he posits God as that which only affects, spiritual beings who both receive and produce effects, and a material realm that is purely affected without producing an effect. The schema broadly parallels the philosophical conception of existence as flowing from a divine Creator, through intermediary beings, to finally produce matter (which is incapable of further production). After positing the existence of spiritual beings, Rāzī explores the degrees of these beings and associates them with various aspects of the physical universe.

Rāzī states that reality can be divided into four conceptual categories based on producing and receiving effect. The first category is that which produces effect but cannot be affected; the second is that which is affected but cannot produce an effect; the third is that which can *both* produce and receive effect; the fourth, that which can *neither* produce nor receive effect. The first category, that which affects and is absolutely unaffected by the rest of existence, is occupied solely by God. God is the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi*). Rāzī understands the necessity of existence to apply to all of the attributes of God, positive or negative, and views change as subsequently impossible for God (a position much in

[6] The same section is found with only minor modifications in Rāzī's *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*. Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ wa-sharḥ quwāhumā*, ed. M. Ṣaghīr Ḥasan Maʿṣūmī (Islamabad, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute, 1968), 12–19. For a full translation of this section, see Appendix V.

line with previous theologians and philosophers). Were God or any one of His attributes to be conditioned upon anything outside of Himself, then that which is necessarily existent would rely upon that which is only contingent (which is a contradiction). God and God's positive and negative attributes are necessarily existent, by virtue only of Himself, and God does not receive effect from anything outside of Himself. Because all that is other than God is contingent, all else relies upon God as the sole necessarily existent, either directly or through the mediation of other beings.

The second category, being that which is affected but does not affect, is occupied solely by matter (*al-hayūlā*). Rāzī writes, "Matter of the corporeal world represents parts that cannot be further subdivided."[7] Matter contains no attribute in itself, but rather is receptive to attributes and states; by itself, matter is "abstracted receptivity and obedience," and purely receives effect.[8] While God is the most noble of all as that which only affects, matter as that which only receives effect (and which is therefore closest to non-existence) is the lowest stratum of all existence.[9] It should be noted that while Rāzī employs the term *hayūlā*, he distinguishes between that which it signifies in philosophical thought (namely the matter presupposed by the theory of hylomorphism), and what it signifies for him. The sixth volume of the *Maṭālib* is devoted to questions related to matter and Rāzī refutes hylomorphism in the last sections of that volume. He certainly does not deny that matter (*hayūlā*) exists, but understands it here and elsewhere to be

[7] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 14.
[8] Ibid., vol. 7, 14-15.
[9] Rāzī's association of activity with God and passivity with matter (the lowest level of existence, and thus the farthest from the good) parallels Ibn Sīnā's description in the *Shifāʾ* of that which is in act (*bi-l-fiʿl*) being good and that which is in potency (*bi-l-quwwa*) being either evil or that from which evil arises. Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing: a Parallel English-Arabic Text = al-Ilahiyyāt min al-Shifāʾ*, trans. Michael E. Marmura, Islamic translation series (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 143.

individual parts that do not subdivide (as per the Ashʿarite hypothesis of atomism).[10] He notes that these particles alone do not have any attributes, but instead are receptive to attributes and states.

The third category that Rāzī posits comprises those beings that both affect and are affected, namely, the intelligible world of spirits and souls. While Rāzī argues succinctly here (and in an extended fashion elsewhere) that God can produce multiple effects and is the only *true* cause, he still posits the existence of:

> The spiritual world as an intermediary between the divine world and the corporeal world, not in space or place, but in nobility and rank. In the sense that it is affected by the divine world, it is lower; in the sense that it affects the world of bodies, it is higher and nobler. There is no doubt that a degree of the spirits act as intermediaries between these two degrees.[11]

Rāzī terms the "spirits and souls" collectively "the spiritual beings" (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*), and begins by describing the loftiest group of these spirits. He writes:

> The first level, which is the highest and most exalted, consists of those who are drowning in the light of the majesty of God Exalted, a complete drowning, such that they do not free themselves from that drowning in order to manage the world of bodies, for their food is unity (*al-tawḥīd*) and their drink is veneration (*al-taqdīs*) and their sociability is declaring God above comparison (*al-tanzīh*). They drown in the light of the majesty of God exalted and do not occupy themselves with anything outside of God. And those are the angels who are close [to God] (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*).[12]

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[10] Rāzī's later works (including the *Maṭālib* and *Sharḥ ʿuyūn al-ḥikma*) as well as many middle works (including the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn* and the *Muḥaṣṣal*) affirm atomism over the Aristotelian/Avicennan theory of hylomorphism. For an extended analysis of atomism and hylomorphism in the *Maṭālib*, see ʿAdī Setia, "Atomism versus Hylomorphism in the Kalām of al-Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: a Preliminary Survey of the *Maṭālib al-ʿāliyah*," *Islam & Science* 4, no. ii (2006): 113–40.

[11] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 17.

[12] Ibid., vol. 7, 17-18.
The phrase "the angels who are close [to God]" (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*) is in reference to the 172nd verse of Sūrat al-Nisāʾ: "Neither the Messiah, nor the angels who are close [to God], would disdain to be a servant of God. God will gather together all those who disdain of God's worship, and are arrogant." (Q 4:172). The phrasing of this passage also echoes a section of al-Shahrastānī's account of the "people of the spiritual beings" (*aṣḥāb al-rūḥāniyyāt*), referring to a

Rāzī adds that this level of spiritual beings includes degrees to which there is no limit in perfection and deficiency; just as the lights of God are without limit, so too are the "knowers in their cognition" (*al-ʿārifīn fī l-ʿirfān*) also without limit.[13] "There is no description for this division of the spiritual beings except drowning in the divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ilahiyya*) and annihilation (*al-fanāʾ*) in that eternal majesty."[14] The sages of metaphysics, writes Rāzī, called these same spiritual beings "the pure intellects" (*al-ʿuqūl al-maḥḍa*) because their understanding and cognitions were so powerful as to make them like that which they grasped.

Although the reception of effect is most apparent in these spiritual entities, they still affect that which is below them through the emanation of "great effects" (*āthār ʿaẓīma*) either upon the lower celestial spirits or upon the celestial bodies.[15] The effect, writes Rāzī, is similar to the emanation of light from the sun. Some of the more deficient entities perfect themselves through those ontologically loftier beings that are perfect, just as the moon receives light from the sun and subsequently emanates that light upon the lower world.

Beyond these beings is the second division of spirits who turn their gaze to the governance of the world of bodies. Rāzī writes that the greatest of bodies is the throne (*al-ʿarsh*), and that the spirit associated with this body is therefore the greatest of those spirits who are linked with the corporeal world.[16] Rāzī terms this spirit "the Greatest Spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-aʿẓam*),

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subsect of the Ṣābiʾans. Introducing this group, he states that they believe that "the food and drink [of the spiritual beings] is veneration (*tasbīḥ*), sanctification (*taqdīs*), jubilation (*tahlīl*), glorification (*tamjdīd*), and praise (*taḥmīd*), and their sociability is in remembering (dhikr) God, and obedience to Him." Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥusayn al-Tijāriyya, 1948), vol. 2, 66.

[13] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 18.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] The divine throne is referred to twenty-one times in the Qur'an. God is the Lord of the Throne (Q 9:129; 17:42; 21:22; 23:86; 23:116; 27:26; 40:15; 43:82; 81:20; 85:15). God sits upon the

also called, in philosophical terminology, "the Universal Soul" (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*) due to its association with the throne.[17] Further, he writes, "All that occurs inside the throne is like a part or a branch of it. So too are the souls that manage those bodies like branches and fruits of that soul."[18]

Rāzī then continues to describe the degrees of spiritual entities. Moving to the second level of souls, he describes the soul that governs the pedestal (*al-kursī*). He notes that one should understand this term to refer to the eighth sphere, for just as the pedestal contains various degrees from low to high, the stars are concentrated within the eighth sphere.[19] Therein the various bodies of the stars range from small to large, increasing in greatness to the very first magnitude at the height of the eighth sphere. He notes, "There is no doubt that each one of these stars has characteristics and effects, and only God knows them."[20] Rāzī follows Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī in ascribing souls not only to the planets but also to the stars; in contrast with Ibn Sīnā, Abū al-Barakāt viewed not only the planets but also the stars as alive and ensouled.[21] The third

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throne (7:54; 10:3; 13:12; 20:5; 25:59; 32:4; 57:4), which is encircled by (Q 39:75) and borne by angels (Q 40:7; 69:17). In one verse, the throne is said to be located above the waters during creation (Q 11:7). Regarding this physical location, one may also look to a verse on the pedestal (*al-kursī*) that describes the pedestal as containing water and resting on the wind (Q 1:11). The image of God separating bodies of water below and above the dome of the sky is also found in Genesis 1:6.

[17] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 19.

[18] Ibid.

[19] The identification of the throne and pedestal with the highest spheres of the Greek planetary model was common. There was a tendency to identify the throne with the ninth sphere (*al-falak al-aṭlas*), and to identify the pedestal with the eighth sphere (that is, the sphere of the fixed stars). We find this identification both in Muṭahhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī's (10th century) *Kitāb Badʾ al-khalq wa-l-tārīkh* and, after Rāzī, in Ījī's *Mawāqif* (14th century).
Anton M. Heinen, *Islamic Cosmology: A Study of as-Suyūṭīʾs al-Hayʾa as-saniyya fī l-hayʾa as-sunniyya* (Wiesbaden: In Kommission bei F. Steiner Verlag, 1982), 59, 77–81.

[20] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 20.

[21] Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University

level of souls, then, is associated with the planets: first with Saturn, then with the rest of the bodies of the planets, ending with the moon. After these levels comes those souls that govern the sphere of ether, and then the sphere of air. Then proceed those that govern the terrestrial globe, divided into four divisions: the seas, the deserts, the mountains, and the populated areas, as supported by evidence from revelation.[22]

Rāzī states that it is impossible to conceive of the existence of the final category, that is, an existent that neither affects nor is affected. If existence is either necessarily existent, or contingent, then it must necessarily either affect (as the necessarily existent does) or be affected (as the contingent must be to exist). Rāzī believes that the existence of an entity that neither affects nor is affected is impossible.

2.2 The Spiritual Beings: Contingent and Non-Space-Occupying

The matrix of affecting/receiving effect divides reality into ontologically distinct material and intelligible realms. Rāzī fills in the contours of this division through another matrix that categorizes beings based on modality (whether they are necessary or contingent) and spatiality. In explicitly positing spiritual beings that do not occupy space, Rāzī is confirming the existence of non-spatial spiritual existences as posited by the philosophical tradition that falls firmly outside of the bounds of Ashʿarite atomism. At the same time, he maintains that the lower, ontologically distinct material realm is characterized by that atomism.

Press, 1992), 156.; Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma* (Hyderabad, 1938), vol. 3, 157, 167.

[22] Rāzī also noted this division of terrestrial spirits in the first section of the seventh book, writing that these kinds of spirits (that is, a spirit of the sea, of the mountains, of the rain, and so forth) were established by the prophets and acknowledged by those who work with talismans. Ibid., vol. 7, 10.

This matrix is primarily derived from what Rāzī previously sought to demonstrate about the divine. Rāzī sought to establish in the first volume of the *Maṭālib* that God is the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi*). Additionally, Rāzī spent sections of the second volume of the *Maṭālib* seeking to prove that God is not a body nor in a body, nor does God occupy space or exist in a place. The rest of existence must be ontologically different from God; while some aspects of existence may share God's accidental attribute of not occupying space, God is the only being that essentially necessarily exists.[23] Rāzī subsequently considers that which is contingent and space-occupying (*mutaḥayyiz*), and that which is contingent and does not occupy space (*ghayr mutaḥayyiz*).

While Rāzī has gone into further depth on space-occupying existences in other works, here he writes that the category is self-evident, for these are the existences that are witnessed in the terrestrial realm with which the human being (herself a space-occupying, contingent being) comes into contact on a daily basis. He quickly shifts to that which is beyond daily experience and addresses those contingent beings that are non-space-occupying.[24] Those existents that are non-space-occupying are called, "in the terms of the Philosophers (*fī iṣṭilāḥ al-falāsifa*), 'the separates' (*al-mufāraqāt*), and in the terms of another group, they are called 'the spirits' (*al-arwāḥ*)."[25] These he further divides into two groups: one that is entirely unconnected to bodies through either modes of comportment or management (*al-taṣarruf wa-l-tadbīr*) and the second that relates to bodies in these ways. The first group is what the philosophers termed "the

[23] The importance of understanding God as the Necessarily Existent for Rāzī with reference to Ibn Sīnā's works is explored in Shalahudin Kafrawi and Sunan Gunung Djati, "The Notion of Necessary Being in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Philosophical Theology," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 125–33.
[24] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 228-9.
[25] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 7.

abstracted intellects" (*al-ʿuqūl al-mujarrada*). These beings are entirely disconnected from bodies, and do not engage with the bodily realm. They are either beyond giving their attention to the corporeal realm due to the perfection of their essences, or are incapable of doing so. Rāzī notes that this division of beings is alluded to in the Qur'an ("And how many angels in the heavens, whose intercession will be of no avail" (Q 53:26)).

The second group of spirits that Rāzī posits here are those that are abstracted from corporeality in their essences and do not dwell in bodies, but are related to bodies through management and modes of comportment. Rāzī states that of these, some manage celestial bodies (*al-ajsām al-falakiyya*), and others manage elemental bodies (*al-ajsām al-ʿunṣuriyya*). Rāzī acknowledges that there may be spirits associated with bodies beyond those that the human being is capable of observing; thus human understanding is limited to exploring spirits associated with observable celestial and terrestrial bodies.[26] This sentence signals a shift in his remarks from the presentation of reality in broad strokes as he understands it, to consideration of various opinions on the details of the question of spirits.

Before addressing various opinions, however, he speculates that the whole system of planets and spheres is like one great body. He likens the planets to the hearts of the spheres, and the connections between them to those that link the heart, the brain, and the rest of the limbs. Further, he speculates that, like the body, the universe may have one soul from which emanates faculties that govern each of its parts. "It is not unlikely that specific souls emanate from the universal soul of the sphere, each one related to a particular part of the sphere."[27] Here, Rāzī posits the existence of the Universal Soul but explores it in further detail elsewhere in the text.

[26] Ibid., vol. 7, 8.
[27] Ibid., vol. 7, 9.

Thus, Rāzī begins this seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* by positing this class of existents, namely, beings that are contingent, created by God, and yet do not occupy space and are not therefore part of this sublunar realm. Of these, some are entirely unconnected to the corporeal world, and some are connected to bodies through management and modes of comportment. Of these that are connected to bodies, some manage celestial bodies, and others manage elemental bodies.

The *Maṭālib* is by no means the only work in which Rāzī employs this matrix to categorize and analyze existence. In the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, Rāzī employs the same matrix (potentially vs. necessarily existent, space-occupying vs. non-space-occupying). There, he acknowledges that while the majority of the philosophers posit the existence of non-space-occupying beings other than God, most theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) deny their existence because such entities would challenge God's supremacy. Rāzī dismisses this argument as weak, implying that he agrees with the philosophers on the existence of such beings.[28] This same matrix as well as the theologians' objection (without his own criticism) is repeated in both the *Muḥaṣṣal* (likely written before the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*) and in the *Maʿālim* (likely written after).[29]

In his *Tafsīr al-kabīr,* Rāzī examines existence using this matrix in his exegesis of the phrase "God of the two worlds" (*rabb al-ʿālamayn*) of Sūrat al-Fāṭiḥa. His explanation of that which occupies space (*mutaḥayyiz)*, more extensive in his *Tafsīr*, is in agreement with traditional atomism. His analysis of that which is non-space-occupying, however, aligns with the

[28] Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Aḥmad Saqqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, 1986), vol. 1, 22-23.
[29] See Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʻulamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ṭaha ʿAbd al-Ruʿūf Saʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1978), 92–93; Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Uṣūl al-dīn, wa-huwa al-kitāb al-musammā Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1984), 33.

philosophical understanding of spiritual beings as non-space-occupying entities. In the *Tafsīr*, he goes as far as to describe the various types of spirits that are non-space-occupying. There are those that are lowly spirits, which are either good (the jinn) or evil (the demons). Beyond these, there are lofty spirits, which are either associated with bodies (the spirits of the planets) or not associated with bodies (those being the "pure, holy spirits"[30]). Here and in the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī fully integrates the philosophical understanding of non-space-occupying spiritual essences (which include not only the souls of the planets, but also human souls) with traditional atomism.[31]

2.3 The Spiritual Beings: Eternal or Temporal?

Thus, Rāzī posits a hierarchy of existence beginning with God, the purely metaphysical, to the lowest, purely material level of existence. These beings receive "divine mercies" from God, and subsequently relay divine effects to the material realm. Yet are these beings temporally created with God, or pre-eternal with the divine?

We must first note that Rāzī's positing of a series of intermediary causes does not necessitate a belief that God *created* the world through an emanation of one mediating cause after another. In the fourth volume of the *Maṭālib,* Rāzī explicitly considers Ibn Sīnā's assertion that God, as an absolutely simple being, cannot directly produce a complex effect*,* and rejects it entirely.[32] These arguments emerge as well in Rāzī's commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt,* in

[30] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 229.
[31] For an extended analysis of this point, see Kaoru Aoyagi, "Spiritual Beings in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Cosmology, with Special Reference to His Interpretation of the Miʿrāj," *Orient* 41 (2006): 145–61. I am also grateful to Aoyagi's article for noting the various texts in Rāzī's corpus in which he explores this matrix of potentially vs. necessarily existent, and space-occupying vs. non-space-occupying.
[32] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 4, 397.

which Rāzī objects to Ibn Sīnā's understanding of emanation from God as consisting of, necessarily, an initial abstract intellect, then a series of intellects/souls/spheres which lead to the sublunar realm.[33] His objections to this argument, however, are *not* a rejection of the existence of a hierarchy of intermediary causes, which play an important role in his own understanding of cosmology as described in the *Maṭālib*. Rather, his objections to Ibn Sīnā's emanatory scheme should be interpreted strictly as a theological point relating to creation; God, for Rāzī, is not limited to directly producing a simple and singular substance, but is rather the Creator of all that exists in its full variety and multiplicity.

However, whether God is the Creator of all temporally or purely ontologically is not clear in Rāzī's corpus. Rāzī's position on the eternity of the world is not explicit in the *Maṭālib*, and is complicated by errors in the edited text. For instance, in the fourth volume, in the first part of the book devoted to the question of the eternity of the world, the editor has changed the title of one of the subsections to read, "The Fourth Premise: that the holy books establish the creation of the world"[34] whereas one representative manuscript dictates the opposite, namely: "The Fourth Premise: that the holy books do *not* contain any declaration (*taṣrīḥ*) that establishes that the world is created with its matter (*mādatihi*) and its form (*ṣūratihi*) together."[35] The printed edition retains, however, the content of the chapter, which conveys Rāzī's reticence to dismiss the eternity of the world based on revelation. Rāzī discusses various Qur'anic verses, and raises such objections as the notion that God may have created in the sense of assembling pre-existent matter, or may be called the "First" in an ontological rather than temporal sense. Ultimately, he

[33] Nicholas Heer, "Al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī on Ibn Sīnā's Theory of Emanation," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge, Studies in Neoplatonism, v. 5 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 111–26.
[34] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 4, 29.
[35] MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 140r. Emphasis added.

states:

> It is established from these statements that there is no expression in the Qur'an nor in the Torah that indicates by its declaration that these essences (*dhawāt*) were created after they were nonexistent, or subject to generation (*kāʾina*) after they were pure negation (*nafy maḥẓ*) and absolute privation (*salb ṣirf*). There is no doubt that these two books are the greatest of the holy books, and since these books are void of the statement on this issue, that makes one believe that this matter has reached a great degree of difficulty… And it is established as we said, that the greatest Prophets, God's prayers be upon them, were silent on this matter, which indicates that it has reached a degree of difficulty that is beyond the capacity of human minds.[36]

Rāzī is certainly willing to discuss the creation or pre-eternity of the world at great length, but it seems likely that he himself has not committed to taking a stance on the question. He relays a story about Galen's final position on the matter of the eternity of the world that is telling of his own view. On his deathbed, Galen states to his students that they should write of him that he neither knew whether the world is created or pre-eternal, nor whether the soul is a mixture or something else. Rāzī praises Galen's profession of ignorance of these matters upon his deathbed (prescient of his own *waṣiyya*), saying, "This is the best proof that that man was righteous, and a seeker of truth. For discussion on these issues reaches a degree of difficulty such that most minds vanish in it."[37] Ibn Taymiyya confirms that Rāzī refrains from rejecting the eternity of the world, and states in *al-ʿAql wa-l-naql*: "It is said that Rāzī and others like him profess that there is nothing in the transmitted authority (*samʿ*) that states that God was alone and then began the creation of things from nonexistence. In fact they say something farther reaching (*ablagh*) than that, as he states in *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* and other books of his."[38] If Rāzī believes that the eternity of the world is neither confirmed nor negated in revelation, then there is no theological

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[36] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 4, 32-33.
[37] Ibid., vol. 4, 27.
[38] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (Riyadh: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1979), vol. 6, 325.

reason for him to refrain from incorporating eternal spiritual essences into his cosmology.

In fact, in a section of the eighth volume on talismans, Rāzī posits a pre-eternal spiritual power, as well as pre-eternal circular motion of the spheres, to support the existence and influence of celestial spiritual beings. Rāzī writes that according to the Philosophers and the Ṣābiʾans, talismans produce miraculous results by linking "active celestial powers" with "receptive earthly powers."[39] Given that magic therefore depends on the existence of such "active celestial powers," he seeks to offer what he terms "intellectual" and "rhetorical" evidence for both the existence of such forces and for their influence upon the sublunar realm. The section is uncharacteristic in that it does not offer multiple viewpoints, but instead only seeks to substantiate the validity of this magic through logic and philosophical evidence. This is not a practical manual on the practice of magic (as is *al-Sirr al-maktūm*), but rather an exploration of the theoretical foundations underlying the function of magic, including the forces that allow for its operation.

The intellectual evidence that Rāzī offers addresses the topic of causation. Everything that occurs must either be caused by something that is also temporal (*ḥādith*), or by something that is pre-eternal (*qadīm*). If it is also caused by something temporal, then this results in an infinite regress, for the same question arises as to the cause of *that* temporal cause, and so forth. One can avoid this infinite regress either by asserting that everything was created at one moment (a point that Rāzī notes has already been refuted in a previous volume), or by asserting that everything is preceded by something else that goes back to a very first existence.

[39] This notion of active celestial forces and receptive earthly forces is also found in the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ. The Ikhwān write that talismans are intrinsically related to the judgments of the stars (*aḥkām al-nujūm*) as well as the flow of power from the Universal Soul, as explicated in the fifty-second epistle on magic.

Rāzī writes that this latter assertion – that each cause is preceded by another until it reaches a very first cause – allows for two possibilities. The first is the notion of a pre-eternal, everlasting spiritual existence that shifts constantly from intelligible to intelligible. It is in accordance with these successive perceptions and forms that events occur in this world. This spiritual existence must be something other than God, for whom change is impossible. "It is thus established," writes Rāzī, "That the notion of the existence of lofty spirits that govern the states of this world is necessary. Thus, the attempt to produce something strange in this world cannot be performed without appealing to those spirits."[40] In short, it is these eternal spiritual beings that account for the succession of events in this world, and act as a mediating force between the first existence that is eternal, unchanging, and the ontological cause of all existence (i.e. God), and the temporal events and transient beings in the world of generation and decay. This proof is exceedingly short, is presented in the first person plural, and is not preceded by reference to any particular group of thinkers, nor is it followed by any objections. There is nothing in the text that indicates that this is not Rāzī's opinion on the matter, as supported by the credence he gives to the operation of talismans and astral magic.

The second way in which this chain of secondary causes is conceivable is through eternal bodily motion that is neither generated nor does it decay. Only circular motion can be eternal, as motion that moves along a straight line must at some point cease before reversing direction (given that the universe is taken to be spatially finite). "This indicates that the first proximate principle for the occurrence of events in this world is the circular motion of the celestial bodies."[41] This circular motion must be pre-eternal, otherwise it too would rely on another

[40] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 150.
[41] Ibid., vol. 8, 151.

temporal cause, again giving rise to infinite regress. Rāzī adds that although all the celestial bodies rotate in this eternal circular motion, the variety of events that are produced stems from differences in the nature and essence of their bodies. "What we have said is thus established**,** that the principles of the events that occur in this world are nothing but the various planetary conjunctions."[42] The movements of the planets serve as intermediary causes that fundamentally influence events in the sublunar realm.

One possible source that informs Rāzī's understanding of the eternity of the celestial spirits and their influence on worldly events is Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Mabādiʾ al-kull bi-ḥasab raʾy ʿArisṭāṭālis al-faylasūf*, a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book Lambda. Alexander asserts that divine bodies are simple, and are each composed of a soul and a natural body. They possess a desire to imitate the First Cause, and therefore move in eternal and continuous circular motion.[43] The First Mover (*al-muḥarrik al-awwal*) is therefore the cause of this singular and continuous movement of the divine body, which is generated by this desire.[44] The eternal movement of the celestial bodies in turn produces generation and decay in the sublunar realm, in accordance with the power (*quwwa*) of the heavenly bodies and the diversity of those bodies and movements.

Alexander's *Mabādiʾ* also speaks of an eternal spiritual power that mediates between the First Cause and the rest of creation. He states that "a certain spiritual power penetrates the whole world and holds its parts together."[45] This celestially mediated power is the cause of the unity

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[42] Ibid., vol. 8, 152.
[43] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 56–57. Cited quotations are taken from Genequand's translation, which is presented with facing Arabic text.
[44] Ibid., 68–69.
[45] Ibid., 112–13.

and continued existence of the world, which Alexander characterizes as continuous, eternal, and imperishable, and which he likens to a city being ruled by one authority. The First Cause "preserves [the world's] arrangement and order by a spiritual power (*quwwa rūḥāniyya*) which penetrates all parts of it which deserve that it should penetrate them according to what [the ruler] thinks, not the people…this is the cause of their duration and permanence, and of their remaining in the place proper to them."[46] The governance of this universe, therefore, stems from God, the First Cause, by mediation of a spiritual power that subsists in the motion of the celestial bodies; it is this celestial motion which "preserves this new fresh and young world and grants it eternity and lack of decrepitude for all time."[47]

Alexander of Aphrodisias was also likely influenced by the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo*, a text which Rāzī may have read in Arabic translation. This text also speaks of an eternal divine power (*quwwa*) which preserves the equilibrium of the universe. The author asserts that it is not fitting that God should manage the universe directly; rather, it is His power that moves the heavens and the rest of the universe, and that is "the cause of the salvation of things and their basic principle."[48] However, given that Rāzī employs the term "a spiritual existence" (*mawjūd rūḥānī*) rather than a "power" (*quwwa*), it seems most likely that he has Alexander's *Mabādiʾ* in mind.

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[46] Ibid., 114–15.

[47] Ibid., 122–23.
Regarding this eternal spiritual power, Rāzī may have been influenced directly by Alexander of Aphrodisias' text, or have inherited the concept of spiritual effusion through the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and the Hermetic tradition. This concept of an underlying spiritual power, insofar as it is found in the Hermetic tradition and the corpus of the Ikhwān, will be addressed later in this chapter.

[48] David Alan Brafman, "The Arabic 'De Mundo': An Edition with Translation and Commentary" (Duke University, 1985), 195.

Given that Rāzī posits a pre-eternal spiritual power that mediates between God and the rest of creation as well as a pre-eternal circular movement of the heavens, in addition to the fact that he nowhere explicitly rejects the eternity of the world, it appears possible that he believed that at least a portion of these spiritual beings are pre-eternal with God. If he did subscribe to this position, it is at radical variance with traditional Islamic theology.

3. The Universal Soul

Rāzī does not devote any one chapter to the celestial being that he terms at various points the "Universal Soul," the "soul of all," and "the greatest spirit." The concept arises, however, when he details the various levels of spiritual beings. He is consistent in describing the Universal Soul as encompassing all of the spheres and souls that are beneath it, with those further spirits being like "the part of its parts," or "the branches of its branches." It is the spirit of the throne of God, as referred to in revelation. Although Rāzī describes other spirits which are closer to God that are in no way associated with the bodily realm (being neither attached to bodies, nor having any cognizance of the bodily realm existing beneath them in rank), the Universal Soul is the first spirit in the causal hierarchy that occupies itself with the bodily realm. In order to understand what Rāzī identifies as "the Greatest Spirit," let us examine three separate passages that refer to the Universal Soul (two from the *Maṭālib* and one from the *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*).

3.1 The* Maṭālib *on Talismans

In the seventh section of the fifth chapter of the seventh volume *Maṭālib* entitled "On transmitting the discussions of those who deal with talismans (*aṣḥāb al-ṭilasmāt*) regarding the attributes of the lofty celestial spirits," Rāzī states that masters of the talismanic art appear to

believe that each sphere has a universal soul which manages that sphere, and that many spirits branch from that origin.[49] They ascribe a spirit to the throne, which, he writes, is the "Universal Soul" (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), a being that emanates effects upon all bodies existing in that sphere. Despite the plurality of effects, this Universal Soul is similar to a singular, unified soul that governs a body through a variety of faculties that are associated with various parts of the body. Like the faculties of a body, spiritual beings that are associated with every aspect of the sublunar realm stem from the Universal Soul.

Rāzī offers evidence from the Qur'an to support this interpretation. Explaining the verse "The day the spirit and the angels stand in rows" (Q 78:38), Rāzī writes that "the spirit" here signifies the soul that manages the whole body of the throne. The branches derived from this soul are connected to the parts of the throne, which is indicated by His saying: "And you will see the angels surrounding the throne, singing the praise of their Lord" (Q 39:75).[50]

Here, Rāzī is offering a coherent theory to which he subscribes elsewhere in the text. He does not attribute it to any particular thinker, instead implying that the physical manufacture and use of talismans and the theory behind their efficacy relies on the existence of a Universal Soul that encompasses the subsequent lower souls. In the eighth volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī affirms the efficacy of talismans and connects their actions with the celestial spiritual beings whose effects cause the succession of events in the sublunar realm. Although Rāzī rejects worship of a

[49] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 387.
[50] Rāzī also refers to verse Q 39:75 as evidence of the offshoots from the Universal Soul in the second section of his *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*. al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, 17.

certain spirit in order to produce effects,[51] he does later confirm that appealing to specific celestial spirits is one of the effectual and implicitly permissible types of magic.[52]

3.2 The Maṭālib *on the Soul of All*

A pertinent section that discusses not only the Universal Soul, but also its place in the entire hierarchical scheme to which Rāzī openly subscribes in the *Maṭālib*, occurs in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*. Rāzī states:

> My preferred position (*al-mukhtār ʿindī*) is that the celestial soul is an essence that is abstracted from the body and its connections. That said, it is characterized by particular perceptions and desires, as well as by universal perceptions and desires. It recognizes its God, and its aim in these movements is the worship of its God, that is, its Creator and Governor. Given this assumption, puzzles and doubts disappear. A number of issues branch from what we've mentioned: That which is called "the soul of all" (*nafs al-kull*) is the soul of the greatest sphere (*al-falak al-aʿẓam*). That is so because the rest of the spheres exist inside the greatest sphere, and they are like the parts of the greatest sphere. And their souls are like the faculties branching from the soul of the greatest sphere, just as the faculties branching from the rational soul exist in each one of the specific limbs as the effects, traces, and branches of the essence of the rational soul. It is established by what we have said: that the governance of the Truth Exalted of the world of bodies begins from the greatest sphere, which is the throne. And that beginning occurs by mediation of that soul that is the celestial soul. As for the rest of the celestial and elemental souls, they are its effects, branches, and children. This is indicated in the famous supplication, that is, his saying (peace be upon him): "O Lord, I beseech you at the junctions of your greatness, on the supports of your throne." That which is meant by the junctions of greatness is the essence of that Universal Soul and its branches, and that which stems from it is the parts of the throne.[53]

Here, Rāzī reveals how he conceives of the celestial system. The Universal Soul or the "soul of all" is the soul of the outermost sphere, which encompasses all inner spheres, and thus all bodies

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[51] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 388.
[52] Magic and the celestial spirits will be addressed later in this chapter. On appealing to celestial spirits to produce miraculous effects, see Ibid., vol. 8, 145.
[53] Ibid., vol. 7, 355.

and souls related to bodies. This sphere is represented by the throne of God in revelation. The governance of the world begins at this Universal Soul, which serves as a mediator between the corporeal world and the divine. Nowhere does Rāzī attempt to prove this belief; it is, perhaps, beyond the ability of the intellect to prove the existence and function of the Universal Soul, yet he believes that it exists, encompassing all that is beneath it.

3.3 The Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ *on "the greatest soul"*

Finally, just as has been recounted in the first sections of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*,[54] Rāzī in the same way divides creation into four conceptual categories based on affecting and being affected in the second section of the *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*. Here, too, he includes a description of "the greatest soul" that is in harmony with his descriptions in the *Maṭālib*. He writes:

> Just as the greatest of existents on the bodily horizon is the throne, so too is the most powerful of the spirits associated with managing bodies the spirit that governs the sphere of the throne (*kūrat al-ʿarsh*). It is not unlikely that it is that which is called "the greatest spirit," nor is it unlikely that it has faculties and branches that exist within that sphere, and that those branches have yet other branches. The indication of those branches is His saying: "They will carry the throne of your Lord above them on that day, eight of them" (Q 69:17). And the indication of the branches of the branches is His saying: "And you will see the angels surrounding the throne, singing the praise of their Lord" (Q 39:75).[55]

Here, we find the same description of the Universal Soul: it is the spirit that governs the sphere of the throne, and which possesses further faculties of its own soul that branch inward to the rest of the universe.

[54] Ibid., vol. 7, 17.
[55] al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, 17.

4. The Spiritual Beings and the Human Being

4.1 Angels and the Hierarchy of Beings

Given the strict hierarchy of spiritual beings that Rāzī has outlined in his cosmology, as well as the delineation between the spiritual and corporeal realms (with the human person straddling the two as a corporeal being possessing an abstracted rational soul), it is important that Rāzī assert that these celestial spiritual beings are superior to the human soul. It is inconceivable in such a system that prophets be superior to the celestial beings, as these supernal beings are causes not only of the succession of events in the lower world, but also of revelation and inspiration as spiritual mediators between God and the corporeal world.[56]

Rāzī presents his views regarding the superiority of angels in the last section of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* entitled "On the discussion regarding whether the angels are superior to human beings." He begins by stating that the reader should "know that whoever knows what the angel is and its attributes would not permit his mind to delve into this discussion. Yet the majority of people think that angels are birds that fly in the heavens; for this reason, they debated this issue."[57]

While Rāzī here expresses disdain for this position, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) later erroneously states in *al-Ḥabāʾik fī akhbār al-malāʾika* that Rāzī's opinion on this issue has flipped. Al-Suyūṭī claims that Rāzī stated that prophets are superior to angels in the *Kitāb al-*

[56] Whereas Ibn ʿArabī also incorporates the Universal Soul into his cosmology and describes its relation to the First Intellect as that of Eve to Adam, Rāzī nowhere likens these hypostases to this primeval union. Given his understanding the cosmic hierarchy, the relation of the Universal Soul and the rest of the "celestial angels" to even the highest ranks of humanity is one of absolute superiority.

[57] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 405.

Arbaʿīn and the *Muḥaṣṣal*,[58] but changed his position in his *al-Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn* (one of his latest works). The question of the superiority or inferiority of the prophets to the angels is an intellectual debate that appears to have begun in the 10th century and that continued at least through the 13th century. Al-Suyūṭī notes that the position that celestial angels are superior to prophets is held by the Philosophers, the Muʿtazilites, and certain Ashʿarite thinkers including Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1016), Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), al-Hākim (d. 405/1014), al-Ḥalīmī [al-Naysābūrī] (d. 403/1012-1013), and Abū Shāma [al-Maqdisī] (d. 665/1268).[59] Alternatively, al-Suyūṭī states that the opinion that the prophets are superior to angels is that of the majority of the Ashʿarites, as well as of the Shiʿīs.[60]

Rāzī indeed writes that he believes that the angels are superior to human beings in the *Maʿālim*, employing the same arguments that he states in the *Maṭālib* (including notably that the spheres are the bodies of the angels and the planets their hearts). However, this argument in the *Maʿālim* is significantly briefer than the discussion in the *Maṭālib* and is not itself the focus of the chapter, but rather arises as a digression of a discussion on prophecy.[61]

Upon closer examination of the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, however, we find that al-Suyūṭī is mistaken in saying that Rāzī states his preference for the traditional Ashʿarite position that prophets are superior to angels in this text. Oddly, many of the points that al-Suyūṭī raises later in his chapter in support of the superiority of angels are taken verbatim from the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*.

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[58] In the *Muḥaṣṣal*, Rāzī does recount the debate on the superiority of the prophets, but focuses on relaying the arguments of the *falāsifa* on the issue. While the heading of the section declares the superiority of the prophets over the angels, his position in the body of the section is unclear. al-Rāzī, *Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, 221-23.

[59] Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī and Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Saʿīd ibn Basyūnī Zaghlūl, *al-Ḥabāʾik fī akhbār al-malāʾik* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), 203.

[60] al-Suyūṭī and Zaghlūl, 207.

[61] See al-Rāzī, *Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, 107–8.

Rāzī does acknowledge, as al-Suyūṭī states, that the position that the prophets are superior is that of the Ashʿarites and the Shiʿīs, while the converse is the opinion of the Philosophers, Muʿtazilites, and certain Ashʿarites including al-Bāqillānī and al-Ḥalīmī.[62] Though Rāzī begins by presenting the traditional view of the superiority of prophets, the majority of this section of the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn* argues for the superiority of angels. The *Maṭālib* in fact raises, and rephrases, many of the same points that he has stated in the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn.* Thus in the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, the *Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn,* and the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī aligns himself with the view that celestial angels are superior to prophets, an opinion that he recognizes to be that of the Philosophers and the Muʿtazilites against that of the majority of Ashʿarites.

In the *Maṭālib,* Rāzī begins by producing the arguments of those who claim that the prophets are superior to angels.[63] Many of these points are identical in content to what he raised in the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*. After a brief consideration of these points, he responds one by one in the third person plural. The points he raises here reveal much about how he conceives the nature of angels to be, as well as their relationship to human beings.

Regarding the point that Adam was more knowledgeable than the angels, Rāzī responds that he was only more knowledgeable than the earthly angels, but not more knowledgeable than the celestial angels.[64] It is also clear, he states, that angels are more powerful than human beings,

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[62] al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 177.

[63] Their position rests primarily on evidence from revelation. For instance, God commanded the angels to bow to Adam, who must therefore be superior to them. Further, God made Adam the vicegerent (*khalīfa*) of himself, that is, that he was granted sovereignty and must be therefore more noble than the rest of creation. Adam was also more knowledgeable than the angels, for God taught Adam all of the names and told them to the angels. al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 405-6.

[64] Ibid., vol. 7, 408. Rāzī also holds that the *celestial* angels were not in fact commanded to bow to Adam, as they would bow only to God. He cites as evidence the last verse of Sūrat al-Aʿrāf, which states, "Those who are near to your Lord do not disdain to worship Him. They exalt Him, and prostrate before Him" (Q 7:206). Ibid., vol. 7, 407. His division between the "earthly angels"

and further, that unlike human beings, they do not desist from worshipping God for even a moment.[65] They can be described by perfection, power, capability, and knowledge.[66] Their obedience is more continuous than human beings, as evidenced by the qur'anic verse "They praise [God] night and day and do not slacken" (Q 21:20).[67] Rāzī clarifies, "For virtue is nothing if not drowning in the worship of God, diligence in His remembrance (*dhikr*), and delight in His praise. If these concepts are truly continuous, then [angels] must be greater in their virtues."[68] Later in the same section, he expands on the same point: "[Angels] are ever-persevering in their work… their food is glorification [of God], their drink is worship and jubilation, their sociability is the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God, their joy is in the work of God."[69] He paints a picture of beings that are powerful, possessing far greater knowledge than human beings, and whose existence consists of the continuous worship of God.

Further descriptions of angels are given in a series of proofs on the subject. Rāzī notes that the angels are the messengers of God that are sent to the prophets, and that the messenger is more virtuous than the rest of the community.[70] Further, he adds, the angels are more god-fearing

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and the "celestial angels" may be driven by a desire to maintain the superiority of the angels without contradicting numerous verses in the Qur'an that explain Iblīs' falling into disfavor as the result of his refusal to obey God's command that the angels bow to Adam.

[65] Ibid., vol. 7, 410.

[66] Ibid., vol. 7, 411.

[67] Razi's assertion that these celestial spirits are of the highest state of obedience can be traced as well to al-Kindi's assertions in *On the Prostration of the Outermost Body and its Obedience to God* (*Fī l-ibāna ʿan sujūd al-jirm al-aqṣā wa-ṭāʿatihi li-llāh ʿazza wa-jall*). Al-Kindi begins with elaboration on the ways in which physical bowing and various kinds of obedience (*al-ṭāʿa*) are linked based on observation. He subsequently asserts that the body that is furthest from the world is alive and rational, and that it is obedient by its own will. al-Kindī, *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-falsafiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1950), 244–47.

[68] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 411.

[69] Ibid., vol. 7, 424.

[70] Ibid., vol. 7, 412.

than human beings, citing evidence from the Qur'an to this effect, and additionally, that they are not only greater in power and capability, but also in knowledge (*ʿilm*).[71] In another proof, he cites qu'ranic evidence to the effect that the world of spiritual beings is nobler, loftier, more perfect, and more virtuous than the world of corporeal beings; therefore, the greatest of God's creations is the world of spiritual beings, and the world of corporeal beings is incomparable to the perfection and majesty of that spiritual world.[72]

Rāzī asserts that the knowledge of angels is superior to that of human beings, both by employing traditional evidence (qur'anic verses) and through what he calls "intellectual, philosophical proofs." Through the latter, he asserts that unlike human beings, the knowledge of the angels is free from distraction, forgetfulness, and error. Further, their knowledges are "ever acquired, present understandings (*ʿuqūl mustafāda ḥāḍira dāʾiman*)," whereas the knowledge of human beings is intermittent and successive.[73]

In a subsequent comparison of the intellectual ability of the human being with that of the angels, Rāzī terms the power or efficacy of the "intellective faculty (*al-quwwa al-ʿāqila*)" as its light (*nūr*). In human beings, the light of the intellective faculty is weak. "Yet as for the celestial souls and abstracted intellects, they are too lofty in their essences than to even be called lights (*anwār*)."[74] The human being can hardly be compared with the celestial beings. Their pure knowledge far outstrips that of human beings, and the light of their intellective ability cannot be compared to that which is located in the human soul. "As for their cognitions: they are the

[71] Ibid., vol. 7, 413.
[72] Ibid., vol. 7, 417.
[73] Ibid., vol. 7, 423.
[74] Ibid., vol. 7, 427.

perfect, easterly intellections that are elevated above the shadows of the corporeal faculties, and the dark stains of the natural faculties, the nutritive, the digestive, and the defensive."[75]

Despite the embellished language, and the reference to the spiritual beings purely by the term "angels," the content of the descriptions of these beings corresponds with the various degrees of spiritual entities described in the beginning of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib.* As Rāzī has stated previously, there exist both lofty and lowly spiritual beings (what Rāzī in this section terms "celestial" and "earthly" angels), with the higher entities being associated with the celestial realm. Of these beings, some are associated with celestial bodies, while others are abstracted beings that the Philosophers term "pure intellects." These are the loftiest beings that are drowning in "holy cognitions" and which are in a state of pure actualized knowing of the divine. In other words, as Rāzī has elaborated in this section, these beings are ever worshipping the divine, and their pure knowledge and brilliant intellectual faculty far outshines those of the human being. As the highest level of spiritual beings do not manage bodies, they are, as Rāzī says of the angels, unsullied by the shadows of corporeal faculties. Finally, Rāzī states that the angels are messengers of God to the Prophets, implying ultimately that revelation is transmitted to the highest ranks of humanity by mediation of the celestial spiritual beings.

4.2 Angels and Human Action: Magic and Miracles

We have established that Rāzī believes in an interconnected universe that consists of both visible and hidden forces that stem from a lofty series of celestial beings. He also theorizes that if one understands the ways in which causes relate to receptive material, it is possible to appeal to forces underlying reality in order to produce desired ends. Appealing to hidden forces not only

[75] Ibid., vol. 7, 428.

explains prophetic miracles, but also represents the theoretical foundation of magic (*al-siḥr*). These sections on magic are included in the eighth volume, which, according to a representative manuscript, addresses "prophecy and what relates to it."[76] For Rāzī, magic and miracles are one in the same operation, and can be wielded by purified souls who have achieved a certain degree of knowledge. As such, miracles cannot separate the prophet from other practioners of magic.[77] Thus, Rāzī follows al-Ghazālī in noting the near impossibility of distinguishing between magic and miracles and therefore positing instead that the prophet must be recognized by his message.[78]

At the foundation of both magic and miracles is the operation of celestial beings whose actions and effects govern the succession of events in the sublunar realm. Rāzī writes, "The celestial spiritual beings are surrounded by the divine secrets (*al-mughayyabāt*), knowing of things to come. For they are, in the language of revealed law (*al-sharīʿa*), 'readers of the preserved tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*)'. And in the language of philosophy (*al-ḥikma*): they are the

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[76] MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, 355v.
This section is another example of perhaps intentional manipulation of the text in the edited edition, which states instead that the eighth volume is entitled only "On Prophecy," and the first part of the book "On the Establishment of Prophecy through Miracles." Not only is this subtitle not to be found in the manuscript, but it is also at cross-purposes with the content of the book, which seeks to establish that prophecy cannot be proven by miracles but must rather be validated by the nature of the message of the prophet. For a discussion of prophecy in the *Maṭālib* and other work as well as influences upon the development of this perfectionist theory of human virtue, see Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 109–53.

[77] Rāzī expresses this same sentiment in the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, in which he objects to the recognition of prophets due solely to their production of miracles by an appeal to principles of this miraculous power found in Ibn Sīnā. "Evil sorcerers" are also capable of producing miraculous events, with the difference then between them and prophets "being only that the Prophet summons [followers] to good acts, while the sorcerer summons to evil acts; and the difference between good and evil is known by abstraction in the mind." al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 597. On al-Ghazālī's views on the verification of prophecy, see Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist: The Universal Rule for Allegorically Interpreting Revelation (al-Qānūn al-Kullī fī t-Taʾwīl)," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī: Papers Collected on his 900th Anniversary*, ed. Georges Tamer, vol. 1, Islamic philosophy, theology and science, volume 94 (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2015), 89–120.

[78] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 194–201.

causes of the events in this world."[79] In the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, Rāzī makes the same assertion: angels are spiritual beings that are aware of all that will be and all that has come to pass, knowledgeable of hidden secrets and forever beholding the preserved tablet.[80]

Even in the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, primarily a theological work, Rāzī associates the angels with the planets: "the spheres are like their bodies, the planets like their hearts, and the angels are like spirits (*arwāḥ*)"[81]—that is, the angels act as the spirits that animate the bodies of the planets. In the *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*, too, he declares that it is the configurations of the planets and spheres that produce different states in this world. It is a position to which he appears to have subscribed at an early stage, as evidenced by his authoring *al-Sirr al-maktūm*, a book that addresses both the theory and practice of magic, early in his career.[82]

4.3 Types of Astral Magic

In the eighth volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī explores topics related to prophecy and magic, which are intricately connected to the effects of the celestial spheres. In the third part of the eighth volume, which addresses magic (*al-siḥr*) and its divisions, Rāzī begins with a division of magic into ten types. Three of these types are explicitly related to the existence and operation of celestial spirits, namely: magic associated with celestial states; powers derived from the imagination of a purified soul; and powers attained from specific celestial spirits.

The most powerful and most effective magic, writes Rāzī, is "magic that is based on the conditions of astrology (*aḥkām al-nujūm*)." Regarding this type of magic, he writes:

> It has been established by philosophical evidence that the principle of the

[79] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 424.
[80] al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, vol. 2, 196.
[81] Ibid., vol. 2, 197.
[82] Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 8.

> occurrence of events in this world is that of celestial patterns and planetary conjunctions. Esteemed experiments in astrology, in addition to this evidence, strengthen this premise. Additionally, planetary experiments indicated the specialization of every one of the moving planets with specific things in this lower world. Each one of them possesses particular tastes, spirits, and configurations, as well as minerals, plants, and animals.[83]

Rāzī writes that this magic treats the conjunction of an acting force with that which is receptive to the act. Rāzī is exceedingly brief in describing this type of magic, but here he writes that knowing these celestial forces and how they interact with various aspects of the sublunar realm allows one to appeal to these celestial forces and produce certain desired effects. In acknowledging the authenticity of this type of astral magic, Rāzī is not at odds with the philosophical tradition, for Ibn Sīnā also acknowledges the manipulation of active and passive celestial and earthly forces by means of the talismanic arts.[84]

The second type of magic posited by Rāzī is that which is performed due to the power of imagination (*al-wahm*) and the purification of the soul. This type, too, is predicated on the existence of, and interaction with, celestial spirits. Of this type, he writes:

> It is established in the science of the soul that rational souls are of the same genus as celestial spirits, and are born of them. It is as if they are drops of those seas, or candles of those candles. Undoubtedly, they must have an effect and a power. If the rational soul turned its gaze from attention to the other sides, and stayed

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[83] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 143.
Similarly, the second century CE Julianas's *Chaldaean Oracles* states that every celestial being (including deities associated with the planets) has a natural representation (*symbolon)* in the animal, vegetable, and mineral world, and that the powers of the celestial beings could be invoked by placing a particular *symbolon* in the image of a celestial deity. Tamara M. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (New York: Brill, 1992), 87.
Additionally, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ note that the association of each planet with a particular metal can be traced to the Ṣābiʾans. These astral-mineral connections are also subsequently noted in the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, an 11th century text on magic and astrology attributed to Malama ibn Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī that drew extensively from the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ. Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *On Magic: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 52a. Part I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17.
[84] Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300* (London: Warburg Institute, 2000), 162.

> attentive to only one goal and one demand, its power would strengthen, as would its effect. It would then become capable of producing strange events in this world. There is one last reason for this: namely, that when it is in a state of purity and [spiritual] exercise, it is drawn to the celestial spirit that is its perfect nature, and its original father. From that perfect nature, there comes a power to the essence of the soul. This cause strengthens its character, and its effect becomes greater.[85]

The power of the human rational soul stems from its being of the same genus as the celestial spirits, whose effects largely determine the succession of events in the sublunar realm. If the rational soul focuses on one goal, it can produce miraculous effects. This power is further strengthened by the celestial spirit to which the individual soul is bonded, and from which it draws power in order to strengthen its effect.

This type of magical production is likely influenced by Ibn Sīnā's theories regarding the prophet's production of miracles. Not only is the prophet in possession of an extraordinary intellectual faculty, but he has also attained a degree of perfection in his imaginative and motor faculties that is beyond other human beings. Through his imaginative faculty, the prophet is able to receive influences from the celestial spheres through visions and dreams and therefore access truth regarding past, current, and future events. The motive faculty of his soul has also become so advanced that it is able to move not only his own body, but other bodies as well, accounting for the prophet's physical miracles.[86] The powerful human soul (prophetic or otherwise) can produce change in its own body as well as others. It can also heal other bodies, or make them fall

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[85] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 144.
The Arabic Plotinus also characterizes the perfecting effect of the intellect on the soul as paternal. "The intellect is the perfecter [of the soul], just as the father is for the son. The father is the rearer of the son, and the perfecter of him." ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Aflūṭīn ʿinda al-ʿArab* (al-Kuwayt: Wakālat al-maṭbūʿāt, 1977), 109. Additionally, this formula of spiritual father/spiritual son is particularly popular in Hermetic material. Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 83.

[86] Gutas, "Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Rational Soul," 422.

ill, and can manipulate elements, turning something into fire or earth, or summoning rain.[87]

Finally, the fifth category of magic that Rāzī connects with the celestial world is that which consists of seeking help from the celestial spirits in order to produce miracles. He writes:

> We have shown that most groups of people in this world agree on the existence of these spirits, and that they have a great effect on this world. Some of them said that it is possible to seek help from them by specific means, and if that connection occurred, then the power to perform miracles was attained.[88]

Here, it is not the purity of the soul that produces events, but connection with celestial forces. Although Ibn Sīnā explains veridical dreams and intellectual perfection through such conjunction (in his philosophy, with the Active Intellect), this celestial bond is absent from his account of miraculous actions. Ibn Sīnā rather notes that successful production of miraculous events (which go far beyond the Evil Eye, the limit of the magic of the sorcerer) is due purely to innate virtue magnified by spiritual and bodily purification.[89]

4.4 Spiritual and Physical Prerequisites for Practice

Rāzī links the practice of magic not only with intellectual discernment and empiricism, but also to spiritual and physical purification that allows for mystical reception of revelation and inspiration from the celestial realm. In addition to discerning the effects of the planets by way of deduction (*qiyās*) and empiricism (*tajriba*), Rāzī posits a third path: "The way of revelation (*wahy*) and inspiration (*ilhām*)."[90] He writes:

> Tanklūshā [the Babylonian] said of Dhawānāyi, the master of human beings, that when he fully purified his soul and exercised his mind, celestial forms appeared to him that are beyond description. Know that you do not see a religion or sect

[87] Ibn Sīnā, *Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text): Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb Al-Shifāʾ*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 199–203.
[88] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 145.
[89] Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West*, 160–61.
[90] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 160.

> whose principles are not mostly built upon tradition and forbearers. It is not unlikely that it would be the same for this science.[91]

Past authorities offer evidence for revelation through self-purification and spiritual exercise. Rāzī notes that all traditions are the same in this; as in any religion or sect, the experiences of predecessors must also be taken into account when theorizing about astral magic.

Rāzī elaborates on this type of mastery in the following section. Before confirming that for some of a blessed predisposition, great advances can be made in this science, he issues prerequisites and warnings. First, he cautions that if anyone doubts the truth of these matters, they cannot benefit from them. The human spirit can only cooperate with the celestial spirits if they are convinced of the truth of these actions.[92] Further, the celestial spirits are able to observe what is in our hearts, and know if we are trustworthy. He warns that one must persevere in the pursuit of knowledge of this difficult science, citing a quote from (pseudo-)Aristotle that recounts his own occupation "day and night" with this science as well as his perseverance and belief in its efficacy despite difficulties.[93]

Human beings vary in their natures, with some who are predisposed to this science and others for whom advances in it are nearly impossible. He writes:

> Know that success in this science requires the human being's departure from the limit of humanity and entrance into the world of angels, as well as the perfection in everything dear—even more so in the most perfect of perfections and the highest of levels. One need not believe that everyone is in fact suitable for this science; if a person studies this science and yet derives no benefit from it, he should not take that as proof that the science is invalid.[94]

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[91] Ibid.
[92] A similar sentiment is stated regarding the practice of talismans in *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*. The text notes, regarding the practice of talismans, that one working in this art must not only be knowledgeable but also sure of the efficacy of his actions; doubt must not enter his work. Maslamah ibn Aḥmad Majrīṭī, *Kitāb Ghāyat al-ḥakīm fī al-arṣād al-falakiyyah wa-l-ṭalāsim al-rūḥiyyah wa-l-tanjīm*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍāʾ, 2008), 21.
[93] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 162.
[94] Ibid., vol. 8, 163.

The following condition that Rāzī lists further supports this statement. He writes that one must reach perfection in order to be effective in the practice of this science. "It has been established that the rational souls are of the same genus as the celestial spirits and therefore affect [other souls] (*muʾaththira*). If this craft is perfected, then complete power over spirits and bodies is acquired."[95] He warns of people being frightened by the science, and of the possibility that one man could gain power over the whole world due to his skill.

Other conditions cited here include that the practice must be performed at night when the sun does not overwhelm other spirits and the outer senses do not overwhelm the inner sense, to which attest both Hermes and (ps.-)Aristotle.[96] Further, the more receptive a person is to good and purity, the more that person's actions are perfected. Here, the preparation of body and soul for the practice of magic manifests the link between physical and spiritual purification. Philosophy—and magic as philosophical practice— is a way of life for Rāzī, in the same sense as Hadot theorized regarding philosophy as a *bios* for philosophers of antiquity.[97] Rāzī writes of the daily intake of the practitioner as another level of self-purification; he who seeks to perfect this science must be vegetarian and should also limit intake of bread, salt, and vegetables, for limiting enjoyment of food allows the soul to separate from this-worldly desires and to return to its original nature (*fiṭra*).[98] Manipulating spiritual forces, and appealing to celestial beings, is not

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., vol. 8, 164.
[97] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (New York: Blackwell, 1995), 100.
[98] In an invocation to his "complete nature" (*al-ṭibāʾ al-tāmm*, a term that Rāzī also employs to refer to a celestial being that is linked to a particular set of human beings), Suhrawardī also stresses the importance of vegetarianism as well as spiritual and physical purity in order to ensure that the summoning is efficacious. Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination: A New Critical Edition of the Text of Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, c1999), 83.

a matter to be taken lightly or to be used for ignoble ends. One should never use the spirits for base goals, writes Rāzī, but rather for dear and great purposes.

Finally, the one who produces these acts must combine four traits. They first is that they must be knowledgeable of theological sciences because the soul achieves a kind of power through this knowledge. Secondly, they must be knowledgeable of three divisions of the science of the stars (*ʿilm al-nujūm*), namely: 1) the condition (*al-hayʾa*) of the skies and the earth, "for knowledge of this will pull his spirit to the loftier side"[99]; 2) the constellations, such that they know the positions of the planets; 3) astrology (*ʿilm al-aḥkām*), knowing the effects of the planets both in solitary states and in conjunction.[100] Thirdly, the master of this craft must be knowledgeable of the science of ethics, knowing what is virtuous and what is blameworthy, such that they can purify their soul of what is blameworthy. Lastly, the soul must be alive, not deadened; that is, when something appears to it from the world of spirits, it must be truly affected by it—strengthened, yearning, trembling, humbled, it should react in fullness to the power of the experience. Finally, dignified, solitary, and pure in body and soul, the person must pursue this science in solitude in order to achieve mastery.[101]

4.5 Human Perfection and the Celestial World

Rāzī writes in the *Maṭālib* that angels are superior to all human beings, including the

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[99] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 165.

[100] The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ divide the science of the stars (*ʿilm al-nujūm*) in the same manner, that is, into: mathematical astronomy (*ʿilm al-hayaʾ*); astronomical charts (*al-zījāt*) and almanacs; and astrology (*ʿilm al-aḥkām*). Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-khillān al-wafāʾ* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2008), vol. 1, 114.

[101] The Ikhwān similarly note that only one who is well-grounded in knowledge, has attained a high degree in cognitions, and who has been granted inspiration (*ilhām*) from God can access the hidden knowledge of astrology. Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, vol. 4, 285.

prophets. They are the mediators between God and human beings, with God's light and perfection emanating through them to humankind. It is they who transmit revelation to the prophets, and knowledge to the rest of humanity. The greatest task of the human being is to perfect his soul and to join the lowest ranks of angels; Rāzī even implies that this is a process that will eventually come to completion, with all souls existing in fully "present" knowledge. Angels aid human beings in this task, and human felicity is reliant on conjoining with these spirits and preparing themselves through the "light" that emanates from these celestial souls.

Rāzī's fourteenth "traditional" proof of twenty in the last section of the seventh volume speaks both of the nobility of the angels and of their role as mediators between God and human beings. The verse that Rāzī cites as evidence states, "The messenger believed, as did all the believers, in what was sent to him by his Lord, that is, in God, and His angels, and His books, and His messengers" (Q 2:285). Rāzī interprets these four truths to be levels of existences that are arranged according to nobility. He writes:

> God Exalted is the spring of light and perfection and mercy. And the mediators are the angels, and the receivers of that mercy are the prophets and the messengers. This indicates that the most virtuous of all existences in nobility and rank is God Exalted, then the degrees of the angels, and after them in nobility are those benefits and lights that are the scriptures. And at the last of the ranks are the human spirits that, when those benefits and lights reached them, attained felicity through them, and the virtues of whom were perfected because of them.[102]

Beings, Rāzī writes, exist in ontological degrees of nobility and knowledge. God's perfecting knowledge (represented by the symbol of light) flows through the upper degrees of the angels to human beings through the revelatory scriptures.

The angels' role as mediators is emphasized in the next proof, which comments upon the qur'anic verse that states, "God witnessed that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and

[102] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 418.

those possessing knowledge" (Q 3:18). For Rāzī, the fact that "angels" precede "those who possess knowledge" in the verse indicates that "the knowledge of the prophets belongs to the group of human beings, and it reached them from the emanation of the lights of the angels. For they are the roots, and the human beings are the branches."[103] He finds further evidence of this in Q 33:56, which states, "God and His angels confer blessings upon the prophet." "This is an indication," writes Rāzī:

> That the lights of felicities, while they appear from the seas of the mercy of God Exalted, cannot reach the human souls except by mediation of the angels. For every virtue and excellence that reaches humanity, its seas and origins are with the angels, and its selected drops reached humanity.[104]

Angels are privy to a vast sea of mercies and light from the divine, and through them, human beings are able to access a portion of that perfection.

In a subsequent part of the same section (the last of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*), Rāzī expands on the assertion that the angels' knowledge is superior to that of human beings. The following points are succinct and enigmatic, and the first two speak to the role of the angels as mediators in the flow of knowledge to human beings. He writes:

> The first [reason for their superiority is that] their knowledges (*ʿulūm*) are effective (*fiʿliyya*), while the knowledges of human beings are affected (*infiʿāliya*). The second: they are the emanatory causes of the knowledges of human beings, and the cause is more perfect than the caused.[105]

Rāzī implies that the knowledge of these celestial beings is simultaneously self-perfecting, and perfecting of those souls below them, that is, of human beings. It is the role of human beings to ascend this ladder of being, to perfect their minds and separate themselves from materiality. While the knowledges of the angels are free of negligence, forgetfulness, and error, human

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, vol. 7, 423.

knowledges are subject to these. "Their knowledges are acquired, present intellects, whereas human knowledges are not so; rather, human knowledges are, for the most part, not present, but rather occur haltingly and intermittently. When one pays attention to some knowledges, the rest are fleeting."[106] The angels exist in a state of constant, ever-present knowing, without the cognitive limitations that human beings experience.

Rāzī implies in the *Maṭālib* that it is the task of human beings to perfect their souls in order to join the lowest ranks of angels. Rāzī writes enigmatically that "every day, there occurs a knower (*ʿālim*) among the souls. And all [souls] will become equal to the souls that are present (*ḥāḍira*) in knowledges and cognitions. Yet those holy celestial spirits are not like that."[107] This remark seems to imply that all human souls are increasing in knowledge and, one by one, are approaching the ranks of angels, the knowledges of whom are already "present."[108] It is the greatest goal of the human being to perfect his/her soul and ascend to the lowest level of angels, joining these celestial soul-kin in their ever-present knowledge and continuous worship of the divine.[109]

The angels aid humankind in this task of self-perfection. The actions of these celestial beings are always good, stemming from "the emanation of lights from God," while the choices of humankind are always mixed, being swayed by both lofty and lowly influences. Yet the "inclination [of human beings] to goodness occurs because of the aid of the angels, and their

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] The characterization of the angels as "present" in their knowledge, a state which human beings aspire to attain, brings to mind Ibn Sīnā's description of the human rational soul's state of perfection in *On the Rational Soul*. In that state, the soul contains all intelligibles present in it in actuality with no need to acquire them. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 71.
[109] Rāzī also describes the soul (*al-nafs*) as "of the essence (*jawhar*) of the angels" in the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, and therefore exalted beyond "bodies and accidents." al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 613.

guidance."[110] Taken to the logical conclusion, human beings rely upon these celestial beings for the attainment of their own felicity and self-perfection. Rāzī writes:

> The felicities of these human souls after death lies in them conjoining with [the celestial spiritual beings], preparing themselves with an atom of the atoms of their light. It is established that every perfection of these human souls, at their start and finish, their beginning (*mabdaʿ*) and return (*maʿād*), is dependent on the discharge of an atom of the atoms of perfection upon them from that world.[111]

Rāzī adds that even the prophets are dependent on revelation for cognitions and knowledges**,** which, as he has previously noted, is conveyed by mediation of the angels**.** Prophetic knowledge is acquired from the angels, and it is the angels too who aid the prophets against their enemies.[112]

The same arguments are found in a corollary section of *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*. The text is similarly forthright on the causal relationship between connection with the angels and felicity of the soul. Rāzī interprets the verse "O, serene soul, come back to your Lord well-pleased and well-pleasing, and enter [among] My servants" (Q 89:27-29) to mean that the human soul reaches perfection through connection with the angels. "The state of perfection of the separated souls from this world is to join his servants, and the first of the servants are the angels. So His saying 'O serene soul' is an address to all of the human spirits, and the servants who they shall join are the angels."[113] He shortly thereafter states unequivocally: "If it were not the case that the world of the angels is more noble, then the connection of human spirits with them (*ittiṣāl al-arwāḥ al-bashariyya bihim*) would not be a cause (*sabab*) for the felicity (*al-saʿāda*) of these human spirits."[114]

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[110] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 425.
[111] Ibid., vol. 7, 426.
[112] Ibid.
[113] al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, vol. 2, 195.
[114] Ibid., vol. 2, 196.

It further appears that Rāzī believes that various celestial spirits are responsible for the perfection of certain groups of human rational souls. Rāzī describes multiple relationships between different human beings and different celestial beings, following Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī in ascribing a single celestial soul as the cause of a distinct class of human souls, with variations between human beings stemming from these various distinct supernal causes.[115] In a section in the eighth volume on miracles, Rāzī concludes the section by noting various implications of his own assertion that the rational soul is a unitary substance that cannot be subdivided into faculties.[116] Of these implications, he writes:

> We showed (*bayyannā*), the rational souls are of many species and various groups, and for every group of them there is a celestial spirit (*rūḥ falakī*) that is the cause of their existence and the guarantor of the goodness of their states. That celestial spirit is like the origin (*aṣl*), source (*maʿdin*), and wellspring in relation to them, and they named it the complete nature (*al-ṭibāʾ al-tāmm*). It is not impossible that it is that complete nature that reveals [to these souls], at one point in a state of sleep, at another in a state of wakefulness, and at a third time by way of inspirations (*ilhāmāt*). It is also not impossible that it is that complete nature that is capable of taking various forms according to a particular body, which is its tool in all of its works.[117]

Rāzī has expressed this same sentiment when exploring the magic produced by the focus of a purified human soul. Namely, he writes that "when [the human soul] is in a state of purity and [spiritual] exercise, it is drawn to the celestial spirit that is its perfect nature, and its original father. From that perfect nature, there comes a power to the essence of the soul. This cause strengthens its character, and its effect becomes greater."[118] Evidently, Rāzī posits relationships between various groups of human souls and different celestial beings that are responsible for

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[115] Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 156-57; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma*, vol. 2., 388-91.
[116] We will explore this assertion of the unity of the soul, which surfaces at various points throughout the *Maṭālib*, in the next chapter of this dissertation.
[117] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 136.
[118] Ibid., vol. 8, 144.

strengthened miraculous actions, visions in sleep and wakefulness, and, finally, divine inspiration (*ilhām*).

Rāzī views the angels of revelation as another term for celestial intellects and souls that are either entirely unrelated to the corporeal world, or that manage celestial bodies (with the greatest of these being the Universal Soul). It is therefore the celestial spiritual beings (that is, the intellects and souls of the celestial spheres) that aid the human being in his attainment of perfection and felicity. The light of God reaches the highest ranks of humanity through the mediation of these celestial beings, and the prophet, through divine revelation that is granted by way of these beings, seeks to perfect the rest of humanity. The human rational soul is of the same genus as these angels, and can therefore access the perfections that flow through that intelligible realm. Upon death, one who has attained a high degree of perfection in life will join these ranks of celestial beings.

5. Sources and Influences

Rāzī's citation of sources serves as an initial guiding principle for our examining specific previous thinkers as points of reference. Rāzī is forthright in citing quotations and points of view of a variety of thinkers and traditions, looking far beyond the bounds of traditional Ashʿarite or even Islamic thought for wisdom. For instance, Rāzī is explicit in listing his sources in sections on the celestial beings and magic, and includes quotations and references to such authorities as the Ṣābiʾans, Hermes, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and the *falāsifa***.** Other sources of note that Rāzī cites

on astral magic include: (pseudo-)Aristotle[119]; Ṭumṭum al-Hindī,[120] a legendary figure whose teachings were transmitted by Khalaf al-Barbarī (d. 13/634)[121]; Tanklūshā the Babylonian (al-Bābilī)[122] and Abū Dhāṭīs the Babylonian (al-Bābilī)[123]; ʿUmar bin Farkhān al-Ṭabarī,[124] a 9th century Persian astrologer; Muhammad bin Jābir al-Battānī,[125] a 9th-10th century astronomer/astrologer of Ṣābiʾan origin; and Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allah bin Ḥayyān,[126] a legendary pupil of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq whose writings are connected to the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān, and the corpus of whom (which is largely devoted to alchemy) was likely assembled singlehandedly, or by a group of intellectuals, in late 9th/early 10th century.[127]

It is of course both nearly impossible and certainly impractical to discuss every cited thinker in Rāzī's corpus. I therefore begin by discussing points of similarity and divergence with

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[119] Ibid., vol. 8, 162, 164.
References to magic, rooted in pseudo-Empedoclean principles of love and mastery, are found in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Theology of Aristotle*. Additionally, pseudo-Aristotelian texts on astrology, talismans, and other forms of magic were to be found in Arabic at even the early stages of the translation movement. The *Kitāb al-Ustuwwaṭās* (also called *al-Isṭamākhīs, al-Isṭamāṭīs*, *al-Ustūṭās*, etc.), for instance, is a text on the manufacture of talismans that includes the secret names by which to summon angels/spiritual forces of the planets and which was purportedly translated by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, who attributes it to Aristotle but roots it in the Hermetic tradition. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʾa in the thirteenth century notes an additional forty titles of works of Aristotle not to be found in a comprehensive list produced by Ptolemy, the majority of which address the production of talismans that appeal to the spiritual forces of the planets. These works too derive authority from both Hermes and Aristotle, and may also have roots in the traditions of the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān. See Charles Burnett, "Arabic, Greek, and Latin Works on Astrological Magic Attributed to Aristotle," in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, ed. Jill Kraye and W. F. Ryan, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 11 (London: Warburg Inst., Univ. of London, 1986), 84–96.
[120] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 172.
[121] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, third edition, s.v. "Geomancy," by Emilie Savage-Smith.
[122] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 172.
[123] Ibid., vol. 8, 195.
[124] Ibid., vol. 8, 172.
[125] Ibid., vol. 8, 173.
[126] Ibid., vol. 8, 180, 181.
[127] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, s.v. "D̲jābir b. Ḥayyān," by P. Kraus and M. Plessner.

al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā/the *falsafa* tradition; these thinkers are the two poles that define Rāzī as a thinker. Much of Rāzī's work as an Ashʿarite philosophical theologian represents the fruition of impulses first generated by al-Ghazālī; a comparison of any point with al-Ghazālī is necessary to understand not only Rāzī's innovations, but also the intellectual origins of his positions and contentions. Ibn Sīnā, on the other hand, is the thinker with whom Rāzī most engages throughout his corpus. Rāzī wrote commentaries on a number of Ibn Sīnā's works (namely *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt, Kitāb al-Najāt*, the *Kulliyyāt* of *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb*, and *ʿUyūn fī l-ḥikma*), and devotes much his other works (including most notably *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* and *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*) to responding, critiquing, and digesting Ibn Sīnā's ideas. No discussion of influences on Rāzī would be complete without first examining these two thinkers.

After considering similarities and differences between Rāzī's cosmology and the views of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā on these topics, three key points of divergence become evident. The first is Rāzī's dismissal of the existence of the Active Intellect as the final intellect of the sublunar realm as postulated by al-Fārābī and subsequently affirmed by Ibn Sīnā. The second point of variance, much in line with this rejection, is an emphasis on the Universal Soul that is largely absent from al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā's cosmology, though it is evident in certain texts of al-Ghazālī. Finally, we find in Rāzī a fascinating affirmation both of the existence of magic and, implicitly, the permissibility of its practice. Examining the question of astrology, for instance, we find that Rāzī is at utter variance with both al-Ghazālī and the *falsafa* tradition on not only the theoretical soundness of the science of astrology, but also the permissibility and even teleological efficiency of its practice.

These points of variance indicate the significance of pre-*falsafa* Neoplatonic texts, the Hermetic corpus, and previous thinkers and trends that synthesize these two intellectual strains

for the development of Rāzī's cosmology. Certain Neoplatonic accounts, including the *The Theology of Aristotle* and the account of (pseudo-)Empedocles in al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal,* help us to better understand Rāzī's cosmological scheme and his descriptions of the Universal Soul. We can look to general themes and beliefs found in the Corpus Hermeticum to theorize which points Rāzī may have taken directly from Hermetic texts circulating in his time, in particular insofar as they describe the practice of astrology and other forms of magic, the luminous flow of knowledge from God through the celestial spheres, and the import of knowledge and contact with the celestial beings for the perfection of the soul. Finally, sources such as the beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans and the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ represent influences that synthesized Hermetic and Neoplatonic beliefs, and which may also have been instrumental for the formation of Rāzī's own remarkably syncretic cosmology.

5.1 The Falāsifa

Al-Rāzī's division of spiritual beings between those that are unconnected to bodies and those that manage celestial or terrestrial bodies likely derives in part from the system of celestial intellects and souls as developed by the foundational Islamic philosophers al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. These thinkers also identified these celestial intellects and souls with the angels of revelation. The Arabic philosophical tradition also presents an understanding of human perfection that is achieved through knowledge and linked to the celestial intellects and souls, and Rāzī's conception of human perfection resonates with these concepts. However, Rāzī's cosmology varies in two significant ways. The first is that Rāzī nowhere affirms the existence of the Active Intellect of the philosophical tradition, that is, the final intellect in the chain of intellects that produces forms and allows for abstract cognition. Secondly, whereas Rāzī argues

for the soundness and practical efficacy of astrology, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā both criticized certain aspects of its theoretical underpinnings and ultimately were skeptical of the value of its practice.

Aristotle's assertion in *On Generation and Corruption* that the heavens' movement governs growth and decay in the sublunar realm[128] formed the scientific basis for causally linking the movement of the heavens with worldly events. Further, though it is unclear whether Aristotle viewed the planets as bodies directed by souls, the later commentary tradition took for granted that he endorsed the ensoulment of the heavens.[129] Thus, to be found in the inherited Greek philosophical tradition was both the view that the celestial planets and spheres are causes of generation and corruption in the sublunar realm, and the conception of these celestial objects as bodies managed by souls. Beginning with al-Kindī (d. ca. 260/873), we also see an impulse to support these scientific truths with revelatory verses, locating evidence for such theories in the Qur'an and simultaneously illustrating the truth of revelation by linking it with the current scientific understanding of reality.[130]

While nowhere does al-Kindī identify these celestial beings as the angels of revelation, the notion is to be found passingly in al-Fārābī, then with increasing frequency and intentionality in Ibn Sīnā. In *The Political Regime* (*Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya*), al-Fārābī notes that each

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[128] Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* II, 336a33-336b15.
[129] Damien Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in al-Fārābi's Cosmology* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 128.
[130] Al-Kindī writes, for instance, in *Fī l-ibāna ʿan sujūd al-jirm al-aqṣā* that the rotation of the celestial spheres represents the obedience of these beings to the divine. Specifically, he views the movement of the outermost sphere – a living being that gives life to the sublunar world—as a sign that it is carrying out God's acts of creation. The entire treatise seeks to explain the verse Q 55:5 ("…and the stars and the trees prostrate themselves"). The notion is also to be found in Q 22:18 (Do you not see that to God bow whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth as well as the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the animals and many of the people?).

being of this series of secondary causes (that is, the separate intellects or *al-thawānī*) should be termed spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyūn*) or angels (*al-malāʾika*).[131] In *The Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous State* (*Mabādiʾ ārāʾ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*), he writes that systems of piety—whether employed virtuously or cunningly for ignorant ends – will include a supreme being who is assisted by "spiritual beings" (*rūhāniyyīn*).[132] Additionally, included in such theoretical opinions of religion outlined in the first sections of *Kitāb al-Milla* (*The Book of Religion*) are descriptions of God, the creation of the world and its parts, and "that which describes the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyūn*), their ranks in themselves, and their stations in relation to God."[133] Though Janos dismisses the few instances in which al-Fārābī openly identifies the separate intellects with angels as "not reflect[ing] a systematic attempt to adapt philosophical cosmology to an 'Islamic' template,"[134] the passing identification nevertheless represents the beginning of a trend in Islamic philosophy and theology.

Ibn Sīnā identifies the celestial intellects and souls as angels in his *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* as well as the *Miʿrāj nāmeh.* He writes in Book 10 of the Metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ* that the first level of being that proceeds from God is that of the "abstract spiritual angels" (*al-malāʾika al-rūḥāniyya al-mujarrada*), which are the intellects (*ʿuqūl*). Next are those spiritual angels that are called souls – these are the active (or "practical," as opposed to "theoretical") angels (*al-malāʾika al-*

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[131] Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Farābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya al-mullaqab bi-Mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt*, ed. Fawzī Mitrī Najjār (Beirut: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kathūlīkiyya, 1964), 31–32.

[132] Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Farābī, *On the Perfect State (Mabādiʾ ārāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah)*, trans. Richard Walzer (Chicago, IL: KAZI Publications, 1998), 304. Walzer notes that these spiritual beings "correspond to the inferior Greek gods or demons (*angeloi theioi te kai agathoi*) who rule and look down upon all our actions." Ibid., 493.

[133] Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Farābī, *Kitāb al-Milla wa-nuṣūṣ ukhrā*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), 44.

[134] Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in al-Fārābi's Cosmology*, 28.

ʿ*amaliyya*).[135] Ibn Sīnā further interprets the angels encountered in Muhammad's *miʿrāj* in the *Miʿrāj nāmeh* as representing the celestial spheres and intellects. Following Muhammad's ascent by way of the ladder (*miʿrāj*) after journeying on the mystical creature Burāq (that is, according to Ibn Sīnā, the Active Intellect), he passes through a series of heavens and is greeted by various angels, each of which represents one of the celestial spheres.[136]

The Intellect as expressed in the *Theology of Aristotle* and the less influential *The Book of the Pure Good* (*Liber de Causis/Kalām fī maḥḍ al-khayr*) was interpreted by al-Fārābī and subsequently by Ibn Sīnā to be the first in a series of intellects. Al-Fārābī describes God as the proximate cause of the existence of the celestial intellects, while these are causes of the existence of celestial bodies.[137] The celestial bodies are managed by celestial souls, which exist as part of the celestial spheres; they are like the form of the celestial sphere, with the celestial body being the substrate (*mawḍūʾ*). Despite inhering in matter, the celestial souls are conceived by al-Fārābī to effectively be intellects; they too are purely rational and contemplate the intelligibles, and al-Fārābī is explicit in saying that this activity makes them "intellects in their essences."[138] The celestial souls contemplate three objects of thought, namely: God; the separate intellect responsible for its existence, which al-Fārābī conceives to be both its proximate efficient and final cause; and its own essence (*dhātahā*).[139] The ten separate intellects (*al-ʿuqūl al-mufāriqah*), are entirely immaterial and do not inhere in any body; as such, they are pure intellects. The first nine separate intellects are termed the secondary causes (*al-thawānī*), while the last intellect is

[135] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 358.
[136] Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sina)*, 130–32.
[137] Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in al-Fārābi's Cosmology*, 82.
[138] Ibid., 130.
[139] Ibid., 137.

called the Active Intellect.[140] The contemplation of the first nine intellects is twofold: each contemplates God and its own essence, and thus produces another intellect and sphere, together with its soul. The final Active Intellect differs in that it contemplates God, *all* of the previous separate intellects, and its own essence.

Ibn Sīnā largely follows al-Fārābī's cosmological system, and writes in the *Shifāʾ* that the plurality of existence cannot proceed from God unmediated, for God is purely simple. Rather, plurality arises with the creation of the first intellect and its cogitation. In Ibn Sīnā, the contemplation of the intellects is threefold rather than twofold. The first intellect apprehends three objects: itself as contingent within its own bounds; itself as necessarily existent as it is produced through the First (God); and the First.[141] Plurality is a result of a complex subject and multiple objects of cogitation. From this first intellect that is of triadic identity proceed three subjects. Insomuch as this first intellect apprehends God, there proceeds another intellect beneath it. Insomuch as it intellectually apprehends itself, there proceeds the form of the outermost sphere, namely, the soul of that sphere. And through its being contingent proceeds the corporeality of the outermost sphere.[142]

The differences between the celestial intellects and celestial souls can also be found as expressed through symbolism in Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*. In this text, the narrator meets an enigmatic sage, Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, who describes a journey that is filled with fantastical and bizarre descriptions. The text is an extended allegory, but was translated into Persian with an accompanying commentary either within Ibn Sīnā's lifetime, or shortly after his death. *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* describes a journey from the ontologically lowest levels of existence to the highest. Each

[140] Ibid., 174.
[141] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 330.
[142] Ibid., 331.

ontological level, from pure matter to celestial intellects and souls, is expressed through symbolism, until he reaches the King (God) whose "beauty is the cover of His beauty, [whose] manifestation is the reason for His concealment, [whose] revelation is the source of His hiddenness."[143] The servants that are closest to the King represent, according to the Persian commentary, the celestial intellects and souls.[144] In the story, there are two classes of people associated with the King. The first group (the celestial souls) attend to building the kingdom; their castles are lofty and constructed of a material that is not the same as that of other realms, for it is nearly indestructible. The subsequent class of people (representing the intellects) consists of those who serve the court in unwavering obedience, and who are allowed the privilege of witnessing the face of the King. These too exist in degrees, each occupying a bounded position. The nearest of these to the King is the father of all the rest; through him is produced the speech of the King and His decrees. Thus in *Ḥayy*, the intellects are described as one class of being, and souls another. Souls are associated with the bodily realm, while intellects attend only to the divine. These intellects too exist in degrees, with the highest being the first intellect as described in the *Shifāʾ* - the father of all the rest.

Though Rāzī defines the "pure intellects" as the angels who are close to God that exist beyond the spiritual realm, this may very well describe an ontological rather than a spatial hierarchy. His descriptions of these angels appears to involve a twofold cognition, as in the system of al-Fārābī; they are drowning in the cognition of God, and are only cognizing the divine and, presumably, their own existence. Next in this ontological hierarchy come the celestial souls,

[143] Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash Suhrawardī, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn (Egypt: Muʾassasat al-Khānjī, 1958), 53.
[144] Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, Bollingen Series 66 (New York Pantheon Books, 1960), 370.

which are associated with specific celestial spheres, as in the philosophies of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Beyond these, however, Rāzī posits additional spiritual entities – spirits associated with specific climes, as well as jinn and demons—which are not accommodated in these philosophical systems.

There is significant resonance, however, between the vision of human perfection as outlined in these sections of the *Maṭālib* and that of the philosophical tradition. Ibn Sīnā in *On the Rational Soul*, a short treatise that was likely his last work,[145] also explicitly states that the perfection and subsequent felicity of the human rational soul occurs through knowledge of, and action for, God, and that this state of perfection brings about a similarity between the human rational soul and the celestial intellects. In a state of perfection, the human rational soul can summon the intelligibles "to presence" whenever it desires to do so, without needing to acquire them. Further, the human being must seek to balance the four elements within their body in order to develop these traits and best receive divine effluence (that is, divine inspiration) as mediated through the Active Intellect (also called the "angel" in revelation). In a state of balanced temperament and purification, the human being receives this emanated knowledge through the celestial beings and, upon separation from the body in death, will become similar to the abstracted intellects.[146] Although the mechanism of perfection – that is, the Active Intellect of the philosophical tradition—is not present in Rāzī's system, Rāzī does echo the process of self-perfection and felicity through knowledge that is mediated by celestial beings, and the human being's subsequent actualization of potential angelic nature.

There are two striking points of variance between Rāzī and the Arabic philosophical

[145] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 67.
[146] Ibid., 73–74.

tradition. Firstly, conspicuously missing from Rāzī's schema is the Active Intellect of the *falsafa* tradition, that is, a final intellect of the sublunar realm that bestows form and allows for abstract human cognition. Rāzī briefly addresses the theory of the Active Intellect in the fourth volume in a discussion of the emanation of creation as posited by the Philosophers. There, he points out the inconsistencies in the doctrine; he raises the objection, for instance, that there is no logical reason why the continued threefold production of intellect/soul/sphere should cease with the production of the Active Intellect rather than continue ad infinitum.[147] In the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*, only one short chapter touches on the Active Intellect, and Razi does not appear to subscribe to the concept. The chapter is entitled "Examination of two branches of thought on the intellects and souls," and in it he primarily treats the number of celestial spheres and accompanying intellects that has been posited by his predecessors. The first sentence mentions the Active Intellect, an eleventh posited intellect, but does not elaborate on its function nor address the veracity of its existence. He merely states:

> It is commonly accepted that the number of intellects is ten; that is, the first intellect, then the nine intellects in accordance with the number of spheres. There are some who say that the number is in fact eleven, for they establish another intellect for the whole elemental world. And this intellect is the governor of the states of this world, and they named it the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*).[148]

None of the linguistic markers signaling agreement with the statement are present in the text, and the overall absence of discussion of the theory here and throughout the *Maṭālib* indicates that Rāzī has dismissed the possibility of the existence of the eleventh Active Intellect altogether.[149]

A second point of divergence is Rāzī's view of astrology. Whereas Rāzī accepts the

[147] See al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 4, 395-6
[148] Ibid., vol. 7, 383.
[149] Shihadeh also notes that Rāzī rejects the theory of the Active Intellect in his monograph. See Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 42. Rāzī's early dismissal of this theory is also noted by Bilal Ibrahim; see Ibrahim, "Freeing Philosophy from Metaphysics."

theoretical foundation for the practice of astrology and argues that the science is ultimately sound, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā both raised objections to its practice. Although astrology remained a popular practice throughout medieval Islamic history and was accepted by a range of intellectuals as efficacious, its scientific validity was put into doubt by many scholars of various domains, including both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.[150]

Though al-Kindī wrote treatises on astrology and fully embraced the science, al-Fārābī sought in a number of works to distinguish between that which he believed to be theoretically sound in the science of the stars (*ʿilm al-nujūm*), namely mathematical astronomy (what he termed *ʿilm al-ʿnujūm al-tʿalīmī*), from the largely invalid science of astrology (*ʿilm aḥkām al-nujūm*). Al-Fārābī does not reject celestial causation (which he believed to be substantiated by Aristotle), but rather argues against the notions that: physical properties (such as heat and coldness) can be ascribed to the planets and stars; planets are symbols that warn of impending events that will occur necessarily; and that celestial effects always and necessarily occur.

[150] On the range of intellectuals who objected to the practice of astrology despite its otherwise broad acceptance, Saliba notes, "One finds among the attackers [of astrology] theologians, jurists, philosophers, mathematicians, and even astronomers, as well as others. In this context, I can only list the names of those who have written against astrology in order to illustrate the intellectual spectrum to which they belonged. From the grammarian al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (c. 786), to the poet Abū Tammām (d. 850), to the philosophers al-Fārābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), to the mathematician Uqlīdisī (c. 952), to the logician scholar and politician ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī (d. 1001), to the astronomer Bīrūnī (c. 1050), to the encyclopedist, theologian and jurist Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), to the Ashʿarite theologians al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), to the historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), and to the Ḥanbalite theologian Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350). Even those who could defend astrology in some respects, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), had to attack it on other occasions." George Saliba, "The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society," *Bulletin d'études Orientales* 44 (1992): 47. To this list we may add Maimonides, who categorically rejected astrology as scientifically false and religiously forbidden, despite it having gained wide acceptance amongst many of his peers. See Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Maimonides' Repudiation of Astrology," in *Maimonides and the Sciences*, ed. R. S. Cohen and Hillel Levine, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, v. 211 (Dordrecht ; Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2000), 131–58.

Further, al-Fārābī argues that human will is not determined by the celestial objects, a variable that renders astrological prediction largely ineffectual.[151]

Ibn Sīnā takes up many of these same points in his *al-Radd ʿalā aḥkām al-nujūm.* Like al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā rejects the notion that certain planets have specific properties, particularly as they are simple bodies that are not made of the four elements (but are rather eternal bodies composed of ether). He adds that there is no absolute happiness or absolute misery; rather, these are relative experiences that are entirely dependent on particular circumstances—so how can a planet cause one or the other exclusively? He also dismisses the association of Idrīs with astrology (which he views as contradicting the message of Muhammad, and prophets cannot contradict each other), as he maintains that it is only the prophets and saints who have access to knowledge of the future, not practitioners of astrology. [152] Ultimately, he concludes that astrology is theoretically groundless as it is based on conjecture, and although the celestial planets (which possess intellects and souls, and which are angels) emit specific effects (though they do not determine *all* events in the world), it is impossible for human beings to know or predict these effects.[153]

Rāzī's position on astrology appears to have shifted during his career. In his *Munāẓarāt*, Rāzī notes that al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, as well as al-Masīḥī, agree that astrology is an "ill-founded science," and concurs with them wholeheartedly. His praise for these thinkers is quite remarkable; he states, "Those are the most eminent philosophers and the most excellent scholars, and they all agreed in censuring this art. The people of our own time even if they have achieved a

[151] Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in al-Fārābi's Cosmology*, 49–50.
[152] Ibn Sīnā, *Réfutation de l'astrologie*, trans. Yahya Michot (Les Éditions Albouraq, 2006), 26–27.
[153] Ibn Sīnā, 36–38.

high standard of excellence, in comparison to them, are as a single drop is to the ocean, and as one torch is to the moon."[154] In later works, however, including naturally *al-Sirr al-Maktūm* as well as *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm* and *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, Rāzī shifts his views and affirms not only the validity of astrology but also its permissibility. In both the *Maṭālib* and the *Jāmiʿ*, he responds to the philosophers' refutations of astrology.

In the eighth volume of the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī addresses objections to the validity of astrology in a section entitled "Clarification that comprehension of the principles of the science is exceedingly difficult." The first problem that he presents is that it is difficult for human beings to attain knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of all of the celestial objects (*nirāt al-falakiyya*). First of all, human sight is limited, and cannot perceive planets/stars that are at a great distance from earth. Yet the fact that we cannot perceive them should not be taken to mean that they do not exist. Given this reality, the number of planets as well as the number of stars cannot be known. Any failure of astrology therefore is not due to invalidity of the science, but rather due to shortcomings of human perception, as well as the difficulty of understanding the nature of a planet based on its effect. Additionally, to the objection that there is no logical basis for associating a certain effect based on the color of the planet, Rāzī instead suggests an empirical approach to discerning the effect of a planet or configuration. That is, that one should note events in the world, and after gathering sufficient empirical evidence, analyze the data for celestial patterns. Despite its shortcomings, Rāzī maintains the validity of the science itself and, most importantly, the veracity of the existence of celestial beings and their influence upon the sublunar realm as a combination of particular celestial effects with receptive sublunar matter.[155] Further, in addition to addressing

[154] Kholeif, "Controversies in Transoxiana," 56.
[155] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 158.

the theoretical basis for astrology and responding to objectors, Rāzī includes lengthy discussions of technical aspects of both astrology and the use and manufacture of talismans in the last sections of the eighth volume of the *Maṭālib*.[156]

In his Persian encyclopedia of science entitled *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm*, which classifies astrology, geomancy, and incantations/amulets (*ʿazāʾim*) under the mathematical sciences, and talismans and alchemy under natural philosophy,[157] Rāzī also responds to the objections raised by Ibn Sīnā in *al-Radd ʿalā aḥkām al-nujūm* in his entry on astrology (*aḥkām al-nujūm*), without naming the source of these objections. He writes that while the bodies of the planets themselves are "pure good" (*khayr maḥẓ*), their effects can be either good or bad depending on whether they are interacting with simple or complex bodies; in short, these are not absolute characterizations of these planets in isolation. Further, Rāzī acknowledges here that the planets themselves are neither hot nor cold, dry nor humid, for the planets are simple bodies and are thus beyond the four elements. Instead, these descriptions of hot/cold, dry/humid are based on their effects on the world of generation and decay.

Rāzī's division between the celestial beings that are associated with bodies, and those that are not, can be seen to derive in part from the Arabic philosophical tradition's distinction between celestial intellects and celestial souls. Further, Ibn Sīnā also describes human perfection as being achieved through contact with a celestial force – in this case, the Active Intellect—insofar as this allows one to receive an emanation of divine knowledge. There are also, however,

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[156] Discussions include, for instance, planetary conjunctions that signal affluence, power, or prophecy, and the employment of talismans for the sake of love or animosity. Ibid., vol. 8, 167-196.

[157] Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Sāʾin al-Dīn Turka Isfahānī (1369–1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran," 2012, 212.

significant points of variance. First of all, Rāzī does not appear to subscribe to the Active Intellect as it is described by the philosophical tradition—a point that has significant implications for his understanding of epistemology. Secondly, unlike both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, Rāzī argues that astrology is both efficacious and beneficial.

5.2 Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School

In certain texts, al-Ghazālī, like Rāzī, identifies angels with the celestial souls and intellects and appears to subscribe to the Neoplatonist hierarchical schema of the universe. He also portrays the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul as conveyers of divine knowledge to human beings. However, he rejects astrology, talismans, and other forms of magic as impermissible and blameworthy sciences (though the knowledge of the stars, not employed to this end, is perfectly acceptable).

Al-Ghazālī employs the term "angels" in certain texts to signify the celestial souls and intellects.[158] In *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī l-manṭiq*, a book devoted to Aristotelian logic, al-Ghazālī notes the philosophical valence of the "celestial angels" (*al-malāʾika al-samāwiyya*); these, he writes, are the souls of the planets. The "angels who are close [to God]" (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabīn*) are the active intellects (*al-ʿuqūl al-faʿʿāla*), which are entirely free of matter and relations to matter and are moved only through desire (*al-shawq*).[159] While the *Miʿyār* aims to grant the reader a philosophical lexicon and as such does not necessarily represent al-Ghazālī's own views, we find that he appears to subscribe to this understanding of angels as the intellects and/or souls of the planets in other works. In the *Mishkāt al-anwār*, for instance, al-Ghazālī adopts the hierarchy of

[158] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 243.
[159] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī l-manṭiq*, ed. Ahmad Shamseddin (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2013), 281–82.

intellects and celestial souls of the Arabic philosophical tradition. In this text, each being that moves each celestial sphere of the heavens is called an "angel." Various levels of the most advanced seekers (those "veiled in sheer lights"[160]) approach an increasingly authentic understanding of reality. The first realize that God is above all comparison with creatures, whereas the second group comes to understand that there is a multiplicity in the heavens and that each heaven is moved by an "angel."[161] Yet this second group believes God to be the mover of the furthest celestial body. The third goes beyond these, recognizing that the mover of this furthest sphere is an angel whose movement represents worship and obedience. Yet these believe that God moves all by command. For the fourth type (who are succeeded in al-Ghazālī's description by groups of Sufis and prophets), divine mystery is achieved that, al-Ghazālī writes, cannot be unveiled. This type of seeker has shifted his gaze from the heavens, to that which moves the furthest heavens and commands their movement, to God, who "originates the heavens, the furthest celestial body, and the one who commands moving the heavens."[162] Thus in the *Mishkāt,* we find that al-Ghazālī not only follows the Neoplatonic ordering of existence as articulated by the philosophical tradition, but also that he terms these celestial intellects and souls "angels."[163]

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[160] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights = Mishkāt al-anwār*, trans. David Buchman, 1st ed., Islamic translation series (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 50.
[161] Ibid., 51.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Whether al-Ghazālī in fact abandoned traditional Ashʿarite cosmology in favor of that of Ibn Sīnā and the philosophical tradition is a matter of contention. Richard M. Frank argues that this is the case, and maintains that al-Ghazālī views the actions of the celestial beings as true secondary causes that not only entirely determine events in the sublunar realm but also therefore make God's performance of miracles (as disruptions of the natural order of events) impossible. However, Frank writes that God orders these celestial beings directly – that is, their existence is not rooted in a series of emanations, but rather by direct and willful placement. Further, each aspect of the world and succession of events – as these represent the best of all possible worlds— has been predetermined by God's knowledge. Michael E. Marmura, however, disagrees with this

Additionally, Rāzī may have formed his concept of the Universal Soul through reference to al-Ghazālī's summaries of philosophical doctrines in his *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī l-manṭiq*. Al-Ghazālī's *Miʿyār* gives definitions for various philosophical terms, including the "soul of all" (*nafs al-kull*) and the "intellect of all" (*ʿaql al-kull*).[164] The explicit purpose of the text is two-fold: firstly to instruct the reader on the methods of theoretical inquiry, and secondly to clarify the terms employed in the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*.[165] Al-Ghazālī first describes the intellect and its various states, beginning with the division between the theoretical intellect (which receives the universal essences of things, insofar as they are universal) and the practical intellect (which is responsible for the soul's movement towards that which it desires). This practical intellect "can be strengthened through exercise and striving (*al-riyāḍa wa-l-mujāhada*) and persistence in resisting the desires (*al-shahwāt*)" – a notion that aligns well with Sufi concepts of asceticism, and to which Rāzī wholeheartedly subscribes.[166] Of the "intellect of all," al-Ghazālī writes that it has two meanings depending on what is meant by "all." The first, and most appropriate, is that it is the intellect of the whole world, that is, it is all beings that are abstracted from matter and that are moved only by desire, ending with the Active Intellect. The second meaning of the word "all" is the furthermost sphere, the ninth sphere that moves all the spheres beneath it. This sphere is signified by the qur'anic throne (*al-ʿarsh*). In this sense, the "intellect of all" is that essence

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analysis and argues (often based on the same primary texts) that al-Ghazālī never rejected traditional Ashʿarite cosmology. See Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, 22–47; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 10–11.

[164] al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī l-manṭiq*, 26–27.

[165] As for sources of the *Miʿyār,* al-Ghazālī is primarily influenced by Ibn Sīnā. He also uncharacteristically employs al-Fārābī's works, namely *al-Qiyās al-saghīr* and *al-Maqūlāt*. For extended analysis of al-Ghazālī's source material, see Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazzālī's Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-manṭiq: sources avicenniennes et farabiennes," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 69 (2002): 39–66.

[166] al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī l-manṭiq*, 287.

that is abstracted from matter, which moves this sphere through causing desire for itself (*tashwīq lī nafsihī*).[167] The "soul of all" (*nafs al-kull*), al-Ghazālī writes, is all non-bodily essences that govern the celestial bodies, with its relation to the "intellect of all" being analogous to the relation of our own souls to our intellects. Al-Ghazālī also writes that this "soul of all" is "the proximate principle of the existence of natural bodies whose station in the acquisition of existence comes after the intellect of all."[168] In both cases, the "soul of all" parallels the "intellect of all" and is the mediating link between the intellect and corporeal existence. Rāzī appears to combine these two definitions of the "soul of all" as detailed in the *Miʿyār.* The Universal Soul, according to Rāzī, is both the soul of the outermost sphere (the ninth sphere that is signified by the qur'anic throne), and that soul that contains all the subsequent souls within it as extensions of itself.

Al-Ghazālī's *al-Risāla al-laduniyya*, increasingly considered by scholars to be authentic, also describes revelation as proceeding from the Universal Intellect, and inspiration from the Universal Soul. The treatise as a whole treats the eternal nature of the human rational soul, its separation from the body upon the death of the body, and the importance of knowledge for its self-perfection. Al-Ghazālī was certainly impacted by the philosophical tradition in the development of this cosmology, but both he and Ibn Sīnā may also have been influenced by such sources as those that recount the beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans, Hermetic material, Greek philosophy (including pseudo-Aristotelian and pseudo-Empedoclean texts), and the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (themselves a blending of these various influences).

[167] Ibid., 282.
[168] Ibid., 283.

Al-Ghazālī also portrays the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul as mediators of divine knowledge between God and human beings. In *al-Risāla al-laduniyya,* al-Ghazālī writes that self-purification allows the human being to access an emanation of revelation (*waḥy*) from God through the Universal Intellect, and inspiration (*ilhām*) through the Universal Soul.[169] Once God has accepted this soul by His providence, this revelation is taught by the Universal Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*) to the holy soul (the purified human soul), with all knowledge and all forms being engraved upon it by the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*).[170] This way of revelation, however, has been closed, for it is purely the way of the prophets (the last of whom was Muhammad). However, the way of inspiration (*ilhām*) is still possible for human beings, according to al-Ghazālī. This universally accessible divine knowledge is what is meant by "mystical knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-ladunī*), as opposed to that "prophetic knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-nabawī*) which is conveyed solely to the prophets.[171] This inspiration entails instruction (*tanbīh*) from the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*) to the particular soul (*al-nafs al-juzʾiyya*). While it is the Universal Intellect that grants prophecy, it is the task of the ontologically inferior Universal Soul to convey divine inspiration to one whose soul is purified. When God "shut the door of revelation (*waḥy*)…He opened the door of inspiration (*ilhām*)."[172] While this knowledge is granted through the Universal Soul, it is purely by the will of God that it is conveyed to a certain person. If God wishes to bless a person, "He lifts the veil between [the person's] soul and the

[169] It is possible that al-Ghazālī was influenced by the Ikhwān on this point. They too describe a connection between the Intellect and prophetic revelation in the domain of the occult, and between the Soul and those individual souls that are predisposed to receive its emanation. Pierre Lory, "La magie chez les Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44 (1992): 154. For a discussion of inspiration and revelation in al-Ghazālī and its Avicennian background, see Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 64–80.
[170] al-Ghazālī, *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 248–49.
[171] Ibid., 249.
[172] Ibid., 250.

soul that is the tablet (*al-lawḥ*), and there appear to it the secrets of some of the creations (*al-mukawināt*) and the meanings of those creations are engraved upon it…Whoever has not reached this stage is no sage, for wisdom is one of the gifts of God Exalted."[173] As in ps.-Empedocles, the soul's learning of universal knowledge is in fact a remembering of what it once possessed and from which it is now separated. The fall is expressed in terms of health and sickness; some souls have become corrupted (*fasada*) while others that access revelation and inspiration are cured of this pollution.[174]

However, whereas Rāzī affirms not only the efficacy but also the permissibility of magic, al-Ghazālī rejects it outright.[175] In his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī groups astrology with magic and talismans and rejects them as sciences that are blameworthy. While knowledge of the movements of the stars and their causation of events in the sublunar realm is not itself reprehensible, the employment of that knowledge in an attempt to predict particular future events is beyond the ability of the ordinary human being; instead, it is a miracle reserved for prophets (such as Idrīs). Yet for the common people, al-Ghazālī views astrology as not only harmful to the practitioner and others, but also as a useless science that is rooted in ignorance and speculation.[176] However, he is careful to note that it is not against religious law to recognize the causative effects of the celestial planets and stars. Yet, in accordance with Ashʿarite occasionalism, one must also recognize that these celestial objects are not themselves actors that

[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 251.
[175] Al-Ghazālī does state in *al-Risāla al-laduniyya* that all knowledge is noble in itself. He gives the example of knowledge of magic; while magic is false (*bāṭil*), even the knowledge of that subject is noble in itself. Ibid., 240.
[176] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 2010), vol. 1, 29-30.

produce autonomous effects, but are rather subordinate to the management of God the Creator.[177] Even upon recognizing the causative force of celestial objects, one must still reject the practice of astrology if it is employed to predict particular events.[178] However, noting *universal* effects stemming from the movements of the heavens, which are indeed causes of that which occurs on a broad scale in the sublunar realm, is permissible and further represents a reason for wonder at the marvel of God's creation.[179]

In recognizing a theoretical basis for astrology insofar as he acknowledges that celestial objects do produce causal effects in the sublunar realm (whose actions nonetheless are created by God), al-Ghazālī is in fact one of the more lenient of the Ashʿarite thinkers on the topic of astrology. Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) in his *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* refutes the Aristotelian concept of causality in favor of traditional Ashʿarite occasionalism. He rejects the science of astrology, for astrologers assert that the celestial bodies are the causes of the succession of events in the sublunar realm.[180] Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 1233) in his *Abkār al-afkār* and its abridgment, *Ghāyat al-murām fī ʿilm al-kalām*, also refutes astrology. In addition to rejecting the planets as true causes based on an examination of them as contingent (and not necessarily existent), al-

[177] Whereas al-Ghazālī is careful to note that it is God who creates (*khalaqa*) the actions of the planets, such meticulous statements are absent from Rāzī's accounts of the effects of the celestial spheres. While Rāzī does qualify that whatever is affected by the celestial spirits is only possible by the will and power of God, the statement itself is formulaic and can be found in other standard astrological texts. He adds that however powerful these spirits may be (and particularly so in comparison with human beings), God as the First Cause is always superior. On this point, he states, "For they are in need of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence in their essences, and in their attributes, and that which is needed is always more virtuous, more elevated, and more powerful than that which needs." al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 392.
[178] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, vol. 4, 117.
[179] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 243–44.
[180] George Saliba, "The Ashʿarites and the Science of the Stars," in *Religion and Culture in Medieval Islam*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh, Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conferences 14 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 80–85.

Āmidī notes there is no evidence that the planets in fact cause events in the sublunar realm. Rather, their configuration may simply be part of God's custom; God is the true cause of all that occurs, and all else is simply a pattern determined freely by the divine.[181]

Certain Neoplatonic texts of al-Ghazālī's corpus may very well have influenced the development of Rāzī's cosmology, particularly insofar as al-Ghazālī focuses on the existence and role of the Universal Soul, and does not appear to subscribe to the Active Intellect of the *falsafa* tradition. However, al-Ghazālī's resistance to magic and astrology, much in line with the traditional Islamic theological view of magic, indicates that Rāzī looked to sources far beyond both al-Ghazālī and the *falsafa* tradition.

5.3 Neoplatonism in Rāzī: Plotinus and pseudo-Empedocles

Rāzī's schema of ascending degrees of spiritual beings, with the upper echelons being entirely disconnected from the material realm, is rooted first and foremost in the tradition of Neoplatonism. His focus on the Universal Soul, and his dismissal of the Active Intellect as posited by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, also indicate that his particular strand of Neoplatonism derives not from the *falsafa* tradition but from what he would have considered to be the original Neoplatonic texts and accounts. We find these foundational descriptions of the Neoplatonic schema and extended explanations of the Universal Soul both in *The Theology of Aristotle* and al-Shahrastānī's Neoplatonizing account of (pseudo-)Empedocles.

Plotinus' *Enneads*, the IV-VI sections of which were roughly translated into Arabic as *The Theology of Aristotle* in the 9th century by al-Kindī's translation circle, is a foundational source for Rāzī's broad understanding of the types of spiritual beings. Broadly speaking, Rāzī

[181] Ibid., 87–88.

has posited three classes of spiritual beings: the highest class that is closest to God and is entirely disconnected from the material realm, being neither situated in a body nor concerned with the comportment of bodies; a middle class consisting of celestial spiritual beings that are associated with specific bodies; and the third class of terrestrial spiritual beings that are associated with specific bodies. One can go further to divide these beings into two categories: those that are entirely unconnected from the material world and only contemplate themselves and the divine, and another group of spiritual beings that are connected to the world of bodies.

The first group of spiritual beings exist in a state of pure knowing, and are entirely unrelated to bodies. This category correlates to the celestial intellects as theorized by the Islamic philosophical tradition and is informed by Plotinus' concept of the Intellect. Of the series of hypostases, the *Theology* states:

> Our goal in this book is principally to discuss of Divine Sovereignty and explain it; that this Sovereignty is the First Cause, and that eternity (*al-dahr*) and time (*al-zamān*) are under It[s power]; that It is the cause of causes, and their Creator through a certain kind of creation; that the luminous power flows from it over the Intellect, and from [the Divine Sovereignty] by mediation of the Intellect over the universal, celestial Soul; and from the Intellect by mediation of the Soul to Nature; and from the Soul by mediation of Nature to things that undergo generation and decay.[182]

The First Principle/the One is the highest ontological being, which produces the Intellect; the Intellect in turn produces the Soul; and Nature is the last rational principle that is ontologically prior to that which occurs under generation and decay. This fourfold pattern forms the background of the text and drives the interpretation of subtler points in the *Enneads*.[183] In the *Theology*, as in the *Enneads*, the Intellect, an everlasting entity that is in everlasting activity,

[182] Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'Arab*, 6.
[183] Cristina D'Ancona Costa, "Porphyry, Universal Soul and the Arabic Plotinus," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, March 1999, 63–64.

does not concern itself with the sensible world. Conceiving of Aristotle's prime mover as the *second* hypostases, the Arabic Plotinus writes that it is the Intellect rather than the One that is thought thinking itself. The Intellect is/contains the forms of all existence, and its contemplation of existence is a contemplation of itself (performing an operation of cognitive identity).[184]

Rāzī's subsequent spiritual beings are associated with celestial and terrestrial bodies. These manage specific bodies, and it is the movements of the celestial spirits that produce events in the sublunar realm. These spirits correlate with the Neoplatonic concept of the Soul, which produces and orders the sensible world. Rāzī also posits a Universal Soul, which echoes the language of the *Theology of Aristotle*. The Arabic Plotinus presents the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya)*, also called at various points the intellectual soul and the "soul of all" (*nafs al-kull*), as a hypostasis that exists between the Intellect and the souls of lower rank.[185] This Universal Soul manages "the universal body" in a "universal intellectual way."[186] While the Arabic Plotinus also implies that the Universal Soul is a separate entity from the planets and the stars, the spatial relation between it and the rest of the celestial entities is unclear in the text.[187] Rāzī's description of the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*) as encompassing the celestial bodies, like extensions of its own body, parallels the description in the *Theology of Aristotle* of the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*) as managing the universal body.

The *Theology of Aristotle* is only one of a number of sources that may have informed Rāzī's Neoplatonist schema. We find not only the same hierarchical schema of God/Intellect/Soul/Nature, but also the Universal Soul's relationship with human beings, detailed

[184] Lloyd Gerson, "Plotinus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2014.
[185] D'Ancona Costa, "Porphyry, Universal Soul and the Arabic Plotinus," 68.
[186] Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'Arab*, 91.
[187] Ibid., 104.

in al-Shahrastānī's (d. 548/1153) account of pseudo-Empedocles in his *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*.[188] The connection between historical material attributed to Empedocles and the account in al-Shahrastānī is complicated by the fact that al-Shahrastānī most likely subscribed to Nizārī Ismāʿīlism, though he professed to be an Ashʿarite[189]; with limited access to his source material, it cannot be said for certain whether certain Neoplatonic beliefs attributed to Empedocles in his text (some of which are not to be found in other extant doxographies) were not a product of al-Shahrastānī's Ismāʿilī leanings, or that these ideas attributed to Empedocles had not previously developed a life of their own in Ismāʿilī circles. In fact, over a century earlier, al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381/992) noted in *al-Amad ʿalā l-abad* that the Ismāʿilīs (al-Bāṭiniyya) declared themselves to be followers of Empedocles.[190] Regardless of the origin of these doctrines or the unity of the figure of ps.-Empedocles in the Arabic textual tradition,[191] we know that Rāzī read *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* before writing his autobiographical account of his debates in Transoxania (which took place in the late 1180s),[192] as he mentions this work and evaluates it (albeit unfavorably) in that account.[193] Rāzī may have found inspiration in al-Shahrastānī's account of Empedocles, or directly in Ismāʿīlī materials that were themselves influenced by pseudo-Empedoclean materials.

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[188] The concept of the world soul is also briefly mentioned in al-Shahrastānī's account of Plato (the last of the seven Greek sages), in which he notes that God first created the Intellect, then the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*) by mediation of the Intellect. Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, vol. 2, 147.

[189] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, s.v. "al-Shahrastānī," by G. Monnot.

[190] Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ʿĀmirī, *al-Amad ʿalā al-abd*, ed. Everett K Rowson (Beirut: Dār al-Kindī, 1979), 71.

[191] For a detailed discussion of the Arabic Anbaduqlīs and "the myth of Pseudo-Empedocles," which maintains that the Empedocles of the Arabic tradition is entirely distinct from that of genuine materials, see D. De Smet, *Empedocles arabus: une lecture néoplatonicienne tardive* (Brussel: KAWLSK, 1998).

[192] Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 320.

[193] See Kholeif, "Controversies in Transoxiana," 63.

On Empedocles, al-Shahrastānī extensively copies from the *Kitāb Amūniyūs fī ārāʾ al-falāsifa* (*The Book by Ammonius on the Opinions of the Philosophers*), a paraphrase of a lost Late Antique doxography that interprets pre-Socratic philosophy through a Neoplatonic lens. Al-Shahrastanī's account contains additional material that was likely taken from a longer, now lost version of the *Kitāb Amūniyūs* or from a shared source.[194] It should be noted that while Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī stated his preference in his *Munāẓarāt* for Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's (d. ca. 375/985) *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* over al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* (which he critiqued as largely unoriginal in content and biased in its treatment of his opponents' doctrines),[195] al-Shahrastānī's extant account of Empedocles is far more extensive than that of the abbreviated account of Greek and Islamic philosophers found in al-Sijistānī's work, the long version of which is no longer extant.[196]

Empedocles, classed as one of the seven masters of wisdom of the Greek tradition, is imbued with mystical associations in the *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*; according to al-Shahrastānī, "he lived at the time of the Prophet David, and went to him and received knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) from him. He also frequented Luqmān the Wise and acquired wisdom (*al-ḥīkma*) from him. Then he returned to Greece, and taught."[197] These prophetic associations are not found in the *Kitāb*

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[194] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, third edition, s.v. "Empedocles," by Daniel De Smet.
See Ulrich Rudolph and Pseudo-Ammonius, *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios: ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam* (Marburg; Stuttgart: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft; F. Steiner, 1989).
[195] Kholeif, "Controversies in Transoxiana," 61.
[196] The account of Empedocles in the extant short version of the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* is limited to brief biographical information, with little detail on his teachings beyond succinctly noting Empedocles' doctrine of the four fundamental elements and two principles, love (*al-muḥabba*) and strife (*al-ghalaba*), which are associated respectively with unity and division. See Muḥammad Ibn-Ṭāhir Abū-Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī as-Sijistānī, *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma: wa-talāt rasāʾil*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1974), 81, 83, 87, 105.
[197] al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, vol. 2, 126.

Amūniyūs, but are detailed in al-ʿĀmirī's *al-Amad ʿalā l-abad*.[198] In al-Shahrastānī, these credentials of having studied both with the Prophet David and the legendary sage Luqmān lend a particularly Islamic undercurrent to Empedocles' wisdom and imply not only sound philosophical acuity but also authentic access to, and conveyance of, knowledge of the divine.

Ps.-Empedocles, as relayed by al-Shahrastānī as well as the *Kitāb Amūniyūs,* subscribes to a series of hypostases. The first entity created by God is the "the First Element" (*al-ʿunṣur al-awwal*); this being gives rise to the Intellect (*al-ʿaql*), which produces the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*). Emphasis here is on God as a purely simple being that is the absolute creator of all; God is "pure knowledge, pure will, and goodness and power…He is the Creator of the intellectual, ideational, and imagined things, the Creator of things opposite and things similar."[199] Yet God is also said to create by mediation of the hypostases, producing the Intellect by mediation of the First Element, the Soul by mediation of the first two hypostases, and the rest of existence that is characterized by multiplicity through these initial simple beings.

This emanation of creation is described in al-Shahrastānī's account as a conveyance of pre-existent incorporeal forms from one hypostasis to the next. The First Element etches (*ṣawwara fī*) these forms into the Intellect, which conveys them to the Universal Soul, which then etches these emanated forms into Universal Nature. The individualized souls in this account experience both a fall and a rediscovery of origin. There are degrees of spiritual beings in the rest of compound existence (as opposed to the simple existences of the first hypostases); that which is closest to the intelligible realm is described as ontologically superior to the rest. "All that is lower is a husk of that which is higher, and that which is higher is its core."[200] When the Intellect

[198] Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ʿĀmirī, *al-Amad ʿalā al-abd*, 70.
[199] al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, vol. 2, 126-127.
[200] Ibid.

looks upon that which is generated in nature, which has no semblance to the intellectual world, it pours into these husks noble and good forms, that is, the forms of the souls that resemble the incorporeal, intellectual forms. These individualized souls are parts of the Universal Soul "like the parts of the easterly sun shining through the windows of the house."[201]

According to ps-Empedocles, the first hypostases is entirely simple in comparison to the Intellect, yet not so in relation to God (who is utterly simply); its essence is composed of love (*al-muḥabba*) and strife (*al-ghalaba*).[202] The third hypostases, the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), is characterized by the love (*al-muḥabba*) found in the first element. This is so because of the longing it felt when perceiving the goodness of the Intellect and desire for union with it.[203] This dichotomy is fully manifested in Universal Nature, which is characterized by strife (*al-ghalaba*). The individualized souls that are born into nature and experience the pleasures it offers must be reintroduced to their origin and aided in their ascent. When the Universal Soul witnessed their disobedience and state of deception by nature, it sent them "a part of its parts…to remind them of what they have forgotten, to teach them of that which they are ignorant, to purify them of that by which they were stained."[204] This particular soul is the prophet, "sent in every age of the ages" which employs both the characteristics of love and strife to encourage souls to break with the lower pulls of nature and make their ascent to the world of spiritual beings.

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[201] Ibid., vol. 2, 128.
[202] In recounting the doctrine of Empedocles, al-ʿĀmirī conversely attributes the dual nature of love and mastery to the Soul rather than the Intellect, with love (*al-muḥabba*) being that which accords with nature, and strife (*al-ghalaba*) being that which accords with the Intellect. The First Essence, that is, a hypostases prior to the Intellect, is absent from al-ʿĀmirī's account. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ʿĀmirī, *al-Amad ʿalā al-abd*, 81.
[203] al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, vol. 2, 128-129.
[204] Ibid., vol. 2, 129.

Ps-Empedocles also offers a vision of illumination emanating from God that allows for purification, ascent of the individualized souls, and reunification with the world soul, which may well have influenced Rāzī. Regarding the afterlife (*al-maʿād*), al-Shahrastānī relates a description of a chain of supplication, from the Soul to the Intellect and the Intellect to the Creator, answered by an emanation of light that flows from the Creator, to the Intellect, to the Universal Soul, to this world, ultimately illuminating the individualized souls. Of this blessed end, ps-Empedocles writes: "And the earth radiates with the light of its Lord such that the parts see their universality, and are freed from the trap and joined with their universality and take residence in their world, delighted and joyous; 'And he to whom God has not granted light, for him there is no light.'"[205] Remarkably, al-Shahrastānī, through the mouth of Empedocles, cites a Qur'anic verse to attest to this beatific vision. Whereas al-ʿĀmirī criticizes Empedocles' understanding of the afterlife (*al-maʿād*),[206] al-Shahrastānī implicitly endorses it.

Though Rāzī does not include the ps.-Empedoclean series of hypostases in his account (lacking the First Element as well as the Intellect), his description of the Universal Soul may have been influenced by the views of ps.-Empedocles as recounted in al-Shahrastānī. Ps.-Empedocles' description of God, too, as the creator of all that exists (albeit through intermediaries), as well as the division between ontologically inferior corporeal world and the higher spiritual beings, is echoed in Rāzī. As in Rāzī, the Universal Soul of ps.-Empedocles contains all individual souls, which are described as parts of it. The prophet, too, is sent to humanity by the Universal Soul to redeem individual fallen souls, and this prophetic soul is called a "part of the parts" of the Universal Soul (a phrase repeated word for word in Rāzī's

[205] Ibid., vol. 2, 131. The verse quoted is Sūrat al-Nūr, verse 40 (Q 24:40).
[206] Al-ʿĀmirī writes, "Empedocles got mixed up (*khallaṭa fī*) about the hereafter." Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ʿĀmirī, *al-Amad ʿalā al-abd*, 81.

account of the relation between Universal Soul and the rest of the individual souls). Rāzī focuses on the soul's ascent back to the spiritual realm, which is its original home; this reunion of the human soul with its loftier state echoes al-Shahrastānī's account of ps-Empedocles' doctrine of purification, rememberance of that which has been forgotten, and spiritual ascent.

5.4 Hermeticism

Rāzī's primary sources on magic include Hermes and (pseudo-)Aristotle. Given that his views of magic and astrology are at odds with al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Fārābī, we can look to the Corpus Hereticum as well as to thinkers who were influenced by Hermeticism as significant influences not only for Rāzī's view of theories and practices of magic but also for his cosmology as a whole and his understanding of the relationship between that cosmology, human knowledge, and human perfection.

Hermetic material first emerged out of Roman Egypt in the first century CE, during which anonymous intellectuals who claimed to be part of an ancient Egyptian tradition wrote treatises on science and philosophy in Greek (primarily in the form of dialogues). The texts center around the figure of the Greek god Hermes, who primarily manifests to instruct others. The tradition can be traced through Sasanian Mesopotamia, where there is evidence for a conscious association between magic and the name Hermes. Additionally, some of the Hermetic material was translated into Arabic through Middle Persian, including a number of astrological texts (such as *Kitāb Asrār al-nujūm* and *Qaḍīb al-dhahab*).[207] In the Islamic Empire, we find Hermes cited as an ancient authority beginning in the 8th century in the writings of Persian

[207] For a discussion of Hermes in Sasanian Iran, see Kevin Thomas Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23–63.

astrologers working in the ʿAbbāsid court (for example, we find references to Hermes in the writings of Māshāʾallāh, ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī, al-Fazārī, and Ibn Nawbakht).[208] In the 9th century, Hermes came to be viewed as an ancient philosopher (far older than the historical Hermetic writings); his revelations were said to have formed the beginning of science, and these he preserved for humanity through the great Flood.[209] In medieval Arabic texts, Hermes came to be understood as representative of three manifestations: the first, the antediluvian Hermes associated with the Egyptian god, Thoth, who received revelations from God and whose wisdom formed the beginning of science; the second, the Babylonian Enoch/Idrīs, a development that became common knowledge by the late 9th century; and the third, a sage who lived later in Egypt and authored the Hermetic texts in circulation in the Islamic Empire.[210] To the first was attributed the foundation of astrology and other sciences, and to the second, an ascent to the upper level of the cosmos where angels revealed to him the secrets of the celestial world.

There are a number of important elements that we find in Hermetic material which are then absorbed by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and subsequently by Rāzī. Rāzī may have accessed Hermetic material by way of the Ikwhān, directly through the Arabic Hermetic texts, or through both sources. Firstly, we find in Hermetic materials the notion of sympathetic powers that pervade the universe, unseen forces to which the human being may appeal to achieve certain

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[208] Ibid., 29.
[209] Ibid., 16.
[210] This trend begins as early as Abū Maʿshar (d. 886), whose no longer fully extant *Kitāb al-Ulūf* (*The Book of the Thousands*) is referenced as the source of the earliest extant account of this tripartite identity of Hermes by Ibn Juljul in his *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ*. Van Bladel argues that Abū Maʿshar transmitted the story of the two earliest Hermes from a no longer extant Arabic chronographic work that was based on Christian sources. The 4th century CE Alexandrian chroniclers Panodorus and Annianus transmit this dual identity from *The Book of Sothis* attributed to Manetho. As early as Annianus, Hermes came to be identified with Enoch (who Muslims identify as Idrīs). With al-Kindī, we find a third account of a more recent Egyptian Hermes, who he credits with authoring the Hermetica in circulation. Ibid., 121–63.

goals.[211] Proof of these interconnected powers is all around us; just as Rāzī notes the growth of plants through the power of the sun as evidence, for instance, so too does Hermetic material.[212] All phenomena, intelligible or sensible, are linked by these sympathetic powers or energies. In *The Egyptian Hermes,* Fowden succinctly summarizes the cosmological vision through which these powers run:

> God is one, and the creator of all things, which continue to depend on God as elements in a hierarchy of beings. Second in this hierarchy after God himself comes the intelligible world, and then the sensible world. The creative and beneficent powers of God flow through the intelligible and sensible realms to the sun, which is the demiurge around which revolve the eight spheres of the fixed stars, the planets and the earth. From these spheres depend the daemons, and from the daemons Man, who is a microcosm of creation. Thus everything is part of God, and God is in everything, his creative activity continuing unceasingly. All things are one and the pleroma of being is indestructible.[213]

Rāzī too speaks often of the sensible and intelligible world, which he may have found as evidenced in both contemporary philosophical and Hermetic materials alike. Rāzī also speaks of divine mercies that flow from God, to the angels (i.e., the "spiritual beings" or celestial planets), to the prophets and the rest of humanity– an image of divine emanation that becomes particularly meaningful when examined through the lens of Hermetic material.

Further, Rāzī follows Hermetic material and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ in focusing on the sun as the focal point of the universe rather than the earth. The model adopted by the Ikhwān and Rāzī is not heliocentric, but it does appear to seek a compromise between the strictly geocentric cosmological vision presented by the Islamic philosophical movement (and subsequently absorbed by such theologians as al-Ghazālī) and the heliocentric model presented in Hermetic

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[211] Though it seems most likely that Rāzī was influenced by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and by Hermetic materials on this point, it is also to be found in the concept of universal sympathy in Stoicism (itself a force of influence on Hermetic materials).
[212] Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 76.
[213] Ibid., 77.

texts. In the fourth volume of the *Maṭālib*, in a section devoted to arguing for the free will of God, Rāzī writes on the benefits of the sun and begins by explicating the configuration of the universe. He states that the three higher planets (i.e., Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) are created such that the movements of their revolutions are, together, equal to the movement of the sun, which is at the center point of the universe. So too, Rāzī states, is the central point of the lower planets (i.e., Venus, Mercury, and the moon) also the sun. Further, there are eleven spheres, five of which are above that of the sun, namely, the spheres of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, then the sphere of the fixed stars and the greatest outer sphere. Then there are five inside the sphere of the sun, namely that of Venus, Mercury, and the moon, then that sphere of subtle natures – of fire and water—and the dense sphere of water and earth. Of the lofty nature of the sun, Rāzī writes:

> In this way, it appears that the sun in relation to them is like the sultan in relation to the servant. And the rest of the planets move around it in a particular relation, in accordance with wisdom and benefit. We can even say that God created the sun in the sphere like a king in the world. The planets are like the soldiers of the king, the spheres like regions, the constellations like countries, the degrees like stopping points, and the particles like straits. Given that the matter is like this, it is necessary that its place be in the middle sphere, just as the house of the king must be in the center of the kingdom.[214]

The same analogy is found in the corpus of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, who also state that the sun is placed at the center of the universe just as the ruler's place is at the center of the city.[215]

Hermetic texts on magic (themselves a fusion of Greek with Egyptian and Babylonian elements, with significant influences from Stoicism) describe the role that the movements of the heavens play in the generation of events in the world, including the actions of human beings. The stars and planets effuse divine energies through the universe, and it is this complex network of

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[214] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 4, 331.
[215] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), 77.

cosmic sympathies that stipulate the procession of events. In these Hermetic astrological texts as well is to be found the notion that one may contemplate these celestial elements and interact with them in the moments when the soul rises beyond the confines of the body. Purification of the soul and separation from the body is therefore one of the goals of astrological practice. Contemplation of the stars is part of a sequence of learning; it is not possible to proceed to knowledge of God without knowledge of the celestial realm. Rāzī quotes Hermes on the ways in which to practice magic; at one point, he quotes Hermes on magic (*nīranj*) being most efficacious when practiced at night,[216] and later in the text, on the effects of the planets based on certain configurations.[217]

In Hermetic practice, reason can only guide the intellect so far, and beyond a certain point, the intellect must proceed alone. Further, Hermetic texts appear to distinguish between two types of knowledge. Gnosis–aligning most with Rāzī's use of *maʿrifa*—is the goal of episteme, "the cognitive transition that the 'way of Hermes' was designed to bring about."[218] This duality pervades Rāzī's works, as he speaks consistently of *ʿilm* and *maʿrifa* and of two paths: that of spiritual exercise (associated with *maʿrifa*), and that of theoretical inquiry (associated with *ʿilm*). As Rāzī has iterated again and again, knowledge of God's creation precedes knowledge of God. In Hermeticism, this seeking of knowledge about God is reciprocal; the human being wishes to know God, and God wishes to be known, thus bestowing power through a spiritual instructor by way of the divine intellect, *nous*.[219] In Rāzī's terms, God emanates a flow of "mercies" and "lights" that the human being receives by mediation of the angels, which allow for self-

[216] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 164.
[217] Ibid., vol. 8, 173.
[218] Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 101.
[219] Ibid, 104–5.

perfection and felicity. In Hermetic texts, the human being is said to possess a divine nature through which she may come to knowledge of God; thus, gnosis is to be gained not merely through knowledge of exterior creation, but also an inward diving towards self-knowledge.

The ultimate goal of self-purification and seeking of knowledge for the Hermeticists was the rebirth of the human soul, not in a body, but to freedom from the corporeal prison that is subject to the control of fate. Fate governs that which is material; it is only by pursuit of the immaterial and ultimately by liberation from materiality that the human being may free herself from fate.[220] The deterministic nature of the material universe in Hermeticism resonates with traditional Ashʿarite views on predestination and destiny, to which Rāzī subscribes in the *Maṭālib* and other works.[221]

Hermetic texts describe an effusion of divine energies through this cosmic system, which the human being receives and interacts with in moments of mystical ascent. As we have noted, Rāzī echoes this notion in describing a system of effusion of "atoms of light," "light of felicities," and drops from the "seas of mercy." Echoed in Razi as well is the Hermetic practitioner's goal of purifying the soul and separating from the body, an end that is to be achieved through the attainment of gnosis (what Rāzī primarily terms *maʿrifa*) by way of episteme (in Rāzī's terms, *ʿilm*). It is the human being's divine nature (which Rāzī emphasizes by noting that the human rational soul is of the same genus as the angels) that allows for this self-purification and ascent to the celestial realm.[222]

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[220] Ibid, 109.
[221] Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 37.
[222] While beyond the focus of this dissertation, there is evidence of a wider intellectual movement of Hermetic Neoplatonism in syncretic mystical-occult-philosophical-theological writings at the time of Rāzī. Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 560/1164-5) also viewed human souls as caused by celestial souls, to which they return upon death. *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* second edition, s.v. "Abū 'l-Barakāt," by Shlomo Pines. Further, Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl (d.

5.5 Hermetic Neoplatonists: The Ṣābiʾans and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ

5.5.a The Ṣābiʾans

Given the teleological importance that they were said to have granted to astrology, the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān as described by al-Shahrastānī and the Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ are an important influence for Rāzī's cosmology. Their descriptions of the spiritual beings, and the ascent of the healthy soul to the heavenly spheres, also resonate with Rāzī's account.

The Ṣābiʾans, along with certain Persian astrologers, were credited with possessing and transmitting works authored by Hermes (though historical evidence for such transmission beyond these later assertions is scarce).[223] The Ṣābiʾans are mentioned in the Qur'an as one of the protected groups (*dhimmī*) who are required to pay a poll-tax in the Islamic Empire. While the question of to whom exactly the qur'anic Ṣābiʾans referred at the time of the revelation remains a point of contention, by the time of al-Rāzī, the term had come to be identified with the

587/1191), roughly a contemporary of Rāzī, also writes of the "complete nature" (*al-ṭibāʾ al-tāmm*) and the "spiritual father" (*al-āb al-rūḥānī*) in his occult texts, including an "Invocation of the Complete Nature" (*Daʿwat al-ṭibāʿ al-tāmm*). Arguably, the concepts employed in this invocation are the same as that which is theorized in Rāzī's texts (indeed, Rāzī's *Maṭālib* may even aid in clarifying the nature of the object of Suhrawardī's address). He addresses his "spiritual father" who is entrusted with his care by God, who intercedes on his behalf in the process of his self-perfection. This being is clothed in "divine lights" and is of utmost perfection. He implores it to reveal itself to him (a mere "corporeal emanation") and "to mediate for me before the God of gods by the emanation of the light of mysteries, to lift from my heart the shadows of the veils by the right that He hath upon thee and His station before thee." Al-Suhrawardī, *The philosophy of illumination*, 83–84. While both Suhrawardī and Rāzī's understandings of the relationship between the human being and his "spiritual father" are evidently rooted in Hermetic material, certain biographical details along with these and other striking similarities in their cosmologies raise the possibility of a wider intellectual movement of increased syncretism and illuminationism in which both participated. They share for instance the same teacher of philosophy; Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl was also taught by Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī (about whom we still know very little), under whom Rāzī is said to have studied the "sciences of the ancients." Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 318–19.

[223] Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 66, 83–104.

inhabitants of Ḥarrān, a city in the southeastern region of modern day Turkey, the existence of which is attested to in records dating back to 2000 BCE. The link between the Ḥarrānians and the qur'anic Ṣābiʾans appears to have developed in the early 9th century; Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* records a story in which the Ḥarrānians self-identified as the Ṣābiʾans to the Caliph al-Maʾmūn in order to gain dhimmī status and avoid persecution.[224] Doubtless a factor in the acceptance of this identification was the association of Ḥarrān with Abraham (being the city to which Abraham and Lot came after they left Ur) as well as the place of origin of the wives of both Isaac and Jacob.

Our focus here, however, is not the historical development of the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān (described consistently as planet worshippers who performed ritual sacrifices), or the progression of their belief system (which came to integrate various elements of ancient Persian, Sumerian, Greek, and Islamic origins) but rather what beliefs attributed to the Ṣābiʾans may have impacted the development of Rāzī's cosmology.[225] The two most important sources for reconstructing the beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans are in fact both Ashʿarite theologians, namely, Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) and al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153).[226] Al-Kindī, too, was aware of the beliefs of the Ḥarrānians, in part due to his association with a number of renowned Ḥarrānians in Baghdād, such as Thābit ibn Qurra (d. 288/901), whose descendants (among them physicians, historians, and astronomers) preserved aspects of the Ḥarrānian religion for at least a century.[227] Additionally, the Ikhwān's epistle on magic grants the reader a summary of the beliefs of the

[224] Green, *The City of the Moon God*, 4–6.
[225] Tamara Green's *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Ḥarrān* is an excellent source, however, for one interested in the history, religion, and development of beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans as well as their portrayal in a variety of Islamic material.
[226] Green, *The City of the Moon God*, 134.
[227] Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 65.

inhabitants of Ḥarrān. Given that we know that Rāzī read the epistles of the Ikhwān and al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal,* we will limit our analysis to these two sources.

There are certain caveats, however, that must be considered when looking to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ for a genuine representation of the beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans. First and foremost, it appears that they integrated a number of the doctrines attributed to the Ṣābiʾans into their own belief system. Thus, we find a not unexpected attempt to Islamicize the doctrines of the Ṣābiʾans in their epistles.[228] Further, the Ikhwān identify Pythagoras as a monotheist who was a native of Ḥarrān, and maintain that the Ṣābiʾan doctrine was founded by Greek thinkers (namely Agathodaimon, Hermes, Homer, and Aratos, who Ibn al-Nadīm also lists as prophets of the Ḥarrānians).[229] As such, the representation of the (already decidedly syncretic) Ṣābiʾans in the *Epistles* is Islamicized, Grecized, and blended with Hermetic beliefs. Finally, Jan Hjärpe argues that much of the material that describes the beliefs of the Ḥarrānians can be traced to the 10th century, and may therefore detail not the beliefs of the Ḥarrānians in Ḥarrān, but instead those of the family of Thābit ibn Qurra. That is, it is not the beliefs of the traditional Ḥarrānians that are described in such sources as al-Shahrastānī and the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, but rather those of the Ḥarrānians of Baghdād whose philosophically inclined religion may well have differed from the traditions of Ḥarrān.[230]

What is particularly striking for our purposes is the resonance between Rāzī's cosmology as portrayed in the *Maṭālib* and many of the beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans as portrayed particularly by

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[228] For instance, whereas al-Shahrastānī writes that the Ṣābiʾans believed in a God that is at once both one in essence and multiple, being incarnated (*ḥulūl*) in celestial beings, the Ikhwān do not relate such a belief. Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *On Magic*, 47.
[229] Green, *The City of the Moon God*, 182.
[230] Jan Hjärpe, *Analyse critique des traditions arabes sur les Sabéens harraniens* (Uppsala: Skriv Service AB, 1972), 43–49.

the Ikhwān (and in many cases, adopted by them as well). Al-Shahrastānī details the beliefs of the Ṣābiʾans in *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* and categorizes them as one of the groups who believe in "spiritual beings" (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*).[231] Both al-Shahrastānī and the Ikhwān agree that the Ṣābiʾans believed in a Creator; however, al-Shahrastānī describes a God that incarnates within heavenly beings, while the Ikhwān relay no such doctrine. They agree, however, on the belief of the Ṣābiʾans in metaphysical spiritual beings that are pure in substance, station, and actions. Both assert the attachment of these beings to the planets, and that these beings are either essentially good (the angels) or evil (demons).[232] Further, the Ikhwān and al-Shahrastānī both write that the Ṣābiʾans believed that the sublunar world is formed by these spiritual beings' influences on the four elements, and a combination of universal effects arising from universal spiritual beings, and particular effects arising from particular spiritual beings.

The Ṣābiʾans, note both al-Shahrastānī and the Ikhwān, believed that matter is that which produces evil in this world. The human being is made up of a combination of the four elements as well as the vegetative and animal soul, yet also possesses the angelic soul by which he may approach the spiritual beings (the angels). While al-Shahrastānī's account relays a belief in metempsychosis, the Ikhwān relay instead one of spiritual retribution: the healthy soul ascends to the heavenly spheres, whereas the ill soul is trapped in the sphere of ether (the hottest of the

[231] al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, vol. 2, 61-106.

[232] Rāzī also cites the authority of the Ṣābiʾans, as well as "the *falāsifa*", on the existences of celestial spirits that are linked to effects in this world. He writes that they believe in an angel for mountains, another for the seas, a third for the rain, and a fourth for riches, a fifth that is the angel of death, and a sixth that is the angel of war and killing. On this point, he writes, concur not only the *falāsifa* and the Ṣābiʾans, but also the people of India, and practitioners of the talismanic arts; additionally, the existence of such a celestial world is mentioned in the revealed laws. Further, he cites their authority, along with that of the *falāsifa*, on the planets being alive and rational beings that are cognizant of all that happens in the sublunar realm. al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 50-51.

spheres) wherein it is either purified and allowed to ascend, or forced to descend to reincarnation. Both accounts note that astrology was invented for a double purpose: to ease life in this world, and to purify the soul to prepare for the afterlife.[233]

As Marquet notes, while the Ikhwān differ on such key points as divine incarnation, the eternity of the world, and the hierarchy of spiritual essences, they were deeply influenced by the doctrine of the Ṣābiʾans (already a syncretic representation of various Hellenic elements).[234] Similarly, through the Ikhwān and potentially al-Shahrastānī, Rāzī studies and absorbs the doctrines of the Ṣābiʾans and seems to incorporate their understanding of cosmology wholeheartedly into his own system. Among other ramifications, this understanding of reality allows for the existence and operation of astral magic, which Rāzī affirms without reservation.

5.5.b Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ

Many aspects of the cosmology discussed in the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ are echoed in Rāzī's *Maṭālib*. Like Rāzī, they combine philosophical concepts with revelatory language and locate the angels in the Ptolemaic celestial system, associated with celestial planets and spheres. The Ikhwān's focus on the Universal Soul and the absence of a final Active Intellect as developed by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā also correlate with Rāzī's descriptions. They combine elements of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism in ways that resonate with Rāzī's syncretism; the science of astrology is viewed with reverence, as it allows one to approach the celestial spiritual beings, and perfection of the human soul occurs by accessing an emanation of knowledge

[233] For the Ṣābiʾan beliefs as recorded by the Ikhwān, see Yves Marquet, "Sabéens et Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ I," *Studia Islamica*, no. 24 (1966): 35–80. For a succinct comparison of the accounts of al-Shahrastānī and the Ikhwān, see Godefroid de Callataÿ's introduction to Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *On Magic*, 47–50.
[234] Marquet, "Sabéens et Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ I," 106.

through the spiritual beings.

As in Rāzī, the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ identify the celestial intellects and souls with the angels of revelation. In *The Epistle on the States of the Spiritual Beings* (*al-Risāla fī kayfiyat aḥwāl al-rūḥāniyyīn*), angels are associated in various ways with the celestial spheres. The epistle notes that these celestial angels (the same beings that are described in the legal sciences) are called "the spiritual beings" in the philosophical tradition.[235] At various points in the text, the angels are described as movers of the spheres,[236] as emerging from a celestial body and spreading throughout the world,[237] or as simply residing in the realm of the spheres.[238] In the third epistle on astronomy, the angels are even described as once embodied human souls that became purified and, upon separation from the body, work to perfect other beings. Similarly, the jinn and demons are defined in that epistle as once embodied souls that were evil in life and focused on that which is sensual and worldly.[239] While the angels are described as relating to the celestial spheres in various ways (making a systematic description of their role in the Ikhwān's cosmology difficult), they are always spatially and ontologically associated with the celestial realm.

We also find the hierarchical Neoplatonic schema integrated into the belief system of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and the descriptions of the levels of being are remarkably close to what we find in Rāzī's corpus. Their *Epistle on the States of the Spiritual Beings* (*al-Risāla fī kayfiyat aḥwāl al-rūḥāniyyīn*) outlines a celestial system that contains celestial angels and spiritual beings that

[235] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-khillān al-wafāʾ*, vol. 4, 215.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., vol. 4, 216, 218, 222, 223.
[238] Ibid., vol. 4, 205, 209.
[239] Ibid., vol. 1, 142.

span the "presence of the throne" (*ladun al-ʿarsh*) to the center of the earth.[240] The first, rather than last, intellect is what the Ikhwān term the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*); as in Rāzī, a final intellect that allows for abstract human cognition that the philosophers term the Active Intellect is absent from their schema. The initial Intellect produces a second creation, the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), by way of its own desire (*shawq*) for the Creator.[241]

In the cosmology of the Ikhwān, the physical world is composed of eleven spheres, as well as twelve constellations. The first sphere is that which encloses all and which is moved by the Universal Soul. As in Rāzī, the sun is the focus of this celestial scheme and is like the "position of the heart in the body,"[242] while the enclosing sphere is like the head of the body. The angels, whom they remark that the sages called "the spiritual beings" (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*), are located in these celestial spheres. Among these are various degrees of "the angels who are close [to God]" (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*), a signification that is echoed in Rāzī. As in Rāzī's account, some of these angels are associated with the pedestal (*al-kursī*) that "encloses the heavens and the earth," others surround the throne (*al-ʿarsh*), and still others carry the throne (*al-ʿarsh*).[243] Each lower planet also emits "spiritual beings" or "angels" that flow throughout the earth; these produce specific effects in accordance with the characteristics of the planet.

The first sphere under the moon is that of ether, which conveys the light of the sun and its heat to the world and allows for the ripening and cultivation of crops. Under this sphere is that of *zamharīr*, which emits the coldness of winter, rain, and snow to the world.[244] Following this is the sphere of the air, which receives light and is illuminated, and which further nurtures life on

[240] Ibid., vol. 4, 225.
[241] Ibid., vol. 4, 212.
[242] Ibid., vol. 4, 214.
[243] Ibid., vol. 4, 216.
[244] Ibid., vol. 4, 226.

earth, preserves a balanced order, and conveys the effects of the higher spheres and planets. Then there is the sphere of water that surrounds the earth (from which rain is derived), then the terrestrial globe wherein live the prophets and the righteous, along with the rest of humanity.[245] Within the earth, there is the sphere of minerals, then that of plants, then animals, then the spheres of human beings in accordance with their ranks. Beneath these human souls are said to be "earthly angels" as well as the demons.[246]

These layers of sublunar spheres, while not elaborated on to this degree of detail in Rāzī's *Maṭālib*, are largely the same as that which he details in the *Tafsīr*. Rāzī describes the levels of angels in the context of a discussion on the incantation of God's protection (*al-istiʿādha*). Rāzī writes:

> Many people assert the existence of beings that are non-space-occupying and do not subsist in that which is space-occupying. They believe that these existences are abstracted from corporeality, are lofty and holy, and are beyond the management of bodies in a universal way. These they believe to be the angels who are close [to God] (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*)…which are followed by the spirits associated with governing bodies, the most noble of which carries the throne… and they think that the second level are those gathered around the throne (*al-ʿarsh*)…the third level being the angels of the pedestal (*al-kursī*)… the fourth level being the celestial angels, level by level…the fifth level being the angels of the sphere of ether… the sixth level, the angels of the sphere of air…the seventh level, the angels of the sphere of *zamharīr*; the eighth level, the spirits connected to the seas; the ninth, the spirits connected to the mountains; the tenth, the lower spirits that manage these bodies of plants and animals that are found in this world.[247]

[245] Ibid., vol. 4, 227.
[246] Ibid.
[247] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 76.

While the largely identical ordering of spheres does not necessarily mean that Rāzī has based his scheme on that of the Ikhwān, it does indicate at the very least that he and the Ikhwān referenced a common source or sources regarding the ordering of the celestial spheres.[248]

The epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ may have also influenced Rāzī in his development of the concept of the Universal Soul. The Ikhwān include a robust understanding of the Universal Soul and Universal Intellect in their cosmology.[249] The Neoplatonic chain of being to which the Ikhwān subscribe entails an emanation of creation from God to the Universal Intellect, to the Universal Soul and subsequently to Original Matter and Absolute Body (i.e., Secondary Matter).[250] The Universal Soul receives the forms from the Intellect, and in turn emanates them

[248] The word "*zamharīr*" is found in Q 76:13 and is understood to be an intense cold in contrast to the heat of the sun. We find the same sphere of *zamharīr*, surrounding the earth below a sphere of ether, in Suhrawardī's cosmology. See Thackston's introduction to Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash Suhrawardī and Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (Octagon, 1982).

[249] I have limited my focus to the Ikhwān because their schema of the universe, as well as their gravitation towards Hermetic beliefs and their integration of theories of magic into their cosmology, are most resonant with accounts of cosmology found in Rāzī. Further, Rāzī cites the authority of the Ikhwān explicitly in the *Maṭālib.* However, the Ismāʿilī philosophers broadly speaking made the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul (*kūnī* and *qadr*) foundational for their cosmology, though they debated how exactly these hypostases related to the rest of creation. Paul Walker's article "Universal and Particular Soul in Ismāʿilī Neoplatonism" details Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, Muhammad al-Nasafī, and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī's differing accounts of the relationship between individual human souls and the Universal Soul. Additionally, his monographs on al-Sijistānī and al-Kirmānī are excellent resources on the doctrines of these philosophers. See Paul Ernest Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Yaʻqūb al-Sijistānī* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul Ernest Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1999); Paul Ernest Walker, *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge, Studies in Neoplatonism, v. 5 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). For descriptions of pre-Fatimid Ismāʿilī cosmology, see Heinz Halm, *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[250] Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā*, 52.

to the rest of creation.[251] Fully incorporating the traditional philosophical understanding of the human being as a microcosm, and the universe as a whole as a macrocosm, they also describe the Universal Soul as the soul of the whole world that manages the spheres and moves the planets (all by the will of God).[252] In this system, the sphere of the sun is like the heart of the body, and the outermost sphere like the head of the body; for instance, powers are emitted from the universal soul to the sun that are then emanated to the rest of the world (a notion that we encounter in Rāzī's *Maṭālib* as well). These powers subsequently generate and sustain life in the sublunar realm.[253]

The incorporation of the Universal Soul into the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ's cosmology did not escape Ibn Taymiyya's attention. In *Bughyat al-murtād*, Ibn Taymiyya treats a hadith that speaks of the creation of the Intellect, which he accuses Ismāʿilīs of modifying and employing as a basis for both their cosmological schema as well as for their combination of divine law with peripatetic philosophy. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya writes that this idea became widespread after it was explicated in the books of the Ikhwān, and that their epistles were foundational for later thinkers (including al-Ghazālī, who subscribed to this concept in a number of his works but later rejected it).[254] In the course of exploring this heresy, Ibn Taymiyya extensively quotes al-Ghazālī's *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī l-manṭiq* on philosophical terminology, including the definitions of the Universal Intellect and the Universal Soul. He notes that this wedding of philosophical

[251] Ibid., 56.
[252] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-khillān al-wafāʾ*, vol. 4, 213.
[253] Ibid., vol. 4, 214.
[254] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Bughyat al-murtād* (Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1995), 180. Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge of al-Ghazālī's corpus is remarkably thorough and nuanced. For an account of the extensive quoting of al-Ghazālī and some of the more nuanced points relayed by Ibn Taymiyya about his corpus, see Yahya M. Michot, "An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya," *The Muslim World* 103, no. 1 (January 2013): 131–60.

meanings with prophetic terms (such as linking the qur'anic pen with the Universal Intellect, and the tablet with the Universal Soul) stems from Ismāʿilī sources (namely, the Qarmaṭīs, whom he calls "so-called philosophers," *al-mutafalsifa*), who themselves are influenced by the Ṣābiʾans and Magians (Zoroastrians).[255] Ibn Taymiyya censures these Ismāʿilīs as well as such Philosophers as Ibn Sabʿīn, Ibn ʿArabī, al-Shādhilī, and Ibn Sīnā on this point—that is, the interpretation of prophetic phrases through a philosophical lens. He cites such examples as understanding the divine "pen" (*al-qalam*) to be the Universal Intellect, the "preserved tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) to be the Universal Soul, and the angels to be celestial planets and spheres in *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*[256] and *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt*.[257] While Rāzī does not follow these exact linguistic trends—I have yet to come across, for instance, terminology that interprets the Universal Soul as the "preserved tablet"—he generally interprets prophetic phrases as conveying a scientific meaning. For instance, Rāzī locates the Universal Soul at the divine throne, and equates the heavenly angels with the celestial intellects and souls that the philosophers associate with each sphere.

Rāzī notes that the existence of the Universal Soul is implicitly linked with the operations of magic, and we find that this connection is noticeable in the epistles of the Ikhwān. It is implied in the fifty-second epistle of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ on magic (*al-siḥr*) that the Universal Soul's emanation allows for the existence and function of magic. Here, the planets are said to be angels of God who are responsible for managing the rest of creation, as well as "the preservation of the laws of the prophets by the execution of His orders (*aḥkām*) for His servants for their own good,

[255] Ibn Taymiyya, *Bughyat al-murtād*, 193.
[256] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn* (Lahore: Idārah-yi Tarjamān al-Sunnah, 1976), 280–81.
[257] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Ṣāliḥ Ṭuwayyān (Riyadh: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2000), vol. 2, 696.

and the preservation of their order in the best of states."[258] The Ikhwān note that only one who has attained a high degree of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and cognition (*maʿrifa*), who is attentive to the theological sciences, and who is aided both by God and inspiration (*ilhām*) can access the hidden knowledge of the effects of the planets, and their actions that affect all that is in this world of bodies, spirits, and souls. As in Rāzī, magic is by no means a dark art in the epistles of the Ikhwān, but rather a power of calculation and manipulation that stems from self-purification and divine grace.

As we find in Rāzī, the foundation of magic in the Ikhwān consists in the movements and effects of the celestial spheres, and in the flow of power from the Universal Soul through these celestial formations. The first part of this epistle is devoted to an exposition of astrology, implying that it is this flow of existence from the Universal Soul, through the various spheres, and to the sublunar realm that allows for the function of other types of magic beyond astrology. The study of talismans, for instance, is said to explicitly come after astrology and to be intrinsically related to it.[259] A power or faculty (*quwwa*) is said to emanate from the Universal Soul through the moving planets, then through the fixed stars, then into the four basic elements that then make up the minerals, plants, and animals.[260] "Know, O brother," the epistle states, "That the flow of powers of the Universal Soul in all the universal, particular bodies is like the flow of light of light from the sun and planets in the air, and the casting of its rays to the center of the earth."[261] The lower souls, that of plants and animals, do not represent a plurality of souls but rather extensions of the Universal Soul into the earthly realm – a notion that likely influenced

[258] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-khillān al-wafāʾ*, vol. 4, 180.
[259] Ibid., vol. 4, 287.
[260] Ibid., vol. 4, 285-86.
[261] Ibid., vol. 4, 286.

Rāzī in his conceiving of subsequent souls in the cosmos as parts of the Universal Soul, or branches of its branches.[262] In short, the power of the Universal Soul runs through the entire sublunar realm, a kind of organizational fabric that can be both discerned and appealed to by one who wishes to produce talismans that harness the power of specific planets, or to employ astrology to predict future events.

In their affinity for magic, the Ikwhān al-Ṣafāʾ are primarily following Hermetic trends. From as early as the late 9th century, the early Ismāʿilīs incorporated doctrines about Hermes-Idrīs into their belief system. They viewed Hermes-Idrīs as the founder of astrology, which he learned from the angels during his ascent to the upper levels of the cosmos. Though wary of the philosophical movement, the early Ismāʿilīs viewed the ancient foundational thinkers who established the sciences as divinely guided.[263] It is therefore unsurprising that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, an anonymous group of Ismāʾilī intellectuals, approached magic with a certain degree of reverence, and focused on astrology as foundational for the practice of magic. The theoretical basis for the practice of magic in the Ikhwān's epistles is the influence of one soul upon another, and eventually upon the body connected to that soul.[264] This explains not only the effect of the cosmos on the sensible world and the invocation of higher spirits, but also the training of animals, hypnotism, the evil eye, and the spiritual influence of prophets.[265]

Following the Hermetic tradition, the Ikhwān view astrology as a means by which the human being becomes closer to the spiritual beings; the two primary goals of astrology, they

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[262] Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: an Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ)* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 44.
[263] Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, 168–70.
[264] Rāzī cites the Ikhwān, for example, on their argument that, just as God created the rest of the world to be teeming with life, God made the celestial bodies alive and capable of perception and feeling. al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 343.
[265] Lory, "La magie chez les Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʾ," 152.

state, are to improve one's life in this world, and to purify one's soul for the afterlife.[266] In not only asserting the presence of magic in the sublunar world, but also affirming it as a sign of esoteric knowledge, the Ikhwān (and Rāzī) are in contradistinction with most thinkers of medieval Islam; the Muʿtazilites tended to categorically deny the existence of magic, while such thinkers as al-Ghazālī acknowledged its existence but dismissed its use as un-Islamic and morally reprehensible.[267]

The forty-ninth epistle of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *The Epistle on the States of the Spiritual Beings* (*al-Risāla fī kayfiyat aḥwāl al-rūḥāniyyīn*), contains many of these same ideas regarding human perfection and ascent to the celestial realm. Knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the actions of the spiritual beings can only be achieved after knowledge of one's own essence and how it operates within the body. This knowledge of spiritual beings encompasses knowledge of the upper world and the lower world, as well as knowledge of the Creator, His elevation above creation, and His actions. "The perfection of the human being is achieved with this knowledge, and by this it is possible for him to conceptualize by the angelic spiritual form, and his actions become those of the angels."[268] While the Ikhwān state that the human being must purify himself in both knowledge and acts, it is this holy knowledge that informs ethical action.

The universe for the Ikhwān consists of a strict hierarchy of beings, with one stratum linking to the next. "The last [degree] of the minerals is linked to the first of the plants, the last of the plants is linked to the first of the animals, the last of the animals to the first of the human beings (*al-bashar*); the last human being, to the first rank of the angels (that being the case if it is

[266] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *On Magic*, 50.
[267] Lory, "La magie chez les Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ," 148.
[268] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-khillān al-wafāʾ*, vol. 4, 198.

purified (*ṣafā*)).”[269] Human beings, straddling the divide between animals and angels, are capable either of ascent (*miʿrāj*), guided by the steps of practice (*ʿamal*) and the light of knowledge (*maʿrifa*),[270] or descent. As we examined previously, Rāzī speaks of the spiritual ascent of the human being through the same ranks of spiritual beings as explicated by the *Ikhwān* in his *Tafsīr*, and states explicitly that the human being is “the last of the ranks of the spirits (*ākhir marātib al-arwāḥ*)”[271] who is capable of joining the ranks of the angels.

Just as Rāzī speaks of lights and mercies emanated through the celestial beings, so too do the Ikhwān. In the discernment of good acts, the human being is guided by “the powers of his noble soul and his subtle spirit… and a spiritual power that is emitted from the Universal Soul.”[272] This spiritual power emitted by the Universal Soul is compared to the light of the sun; “The flow of the Universal Soul’s powers through all the universal and particular bodies is like the flow of light from the sun and the planets through the air, and the casting of its rays to the center of the earth.”[273] The Ikhwān go even further than this, saying that this spiritual power is the very source of the light of the sun; it is what allows for the formation of all that exists as well as its continued being. This power that spreads throughout the whole universe is:

> …the light by which the heavens radiate, which illuminates the spheres, which reaches the sun and is the luminous candle, the brilliant planet, the shining light, the lamp of burning lights…and from the light of the sun, it spreads in the air and the translucent bodies… and by this power, the forms of existing things descend and come to be in the circle of nature, preserved in matter. And by [this light], there is the good state of the world, its continuation and generation as it exists by the will of God.[274]

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[269] Ibid., vol. 4, 237-8.
[270] Ibid., vol. 4, 217.
[271] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 275-6.
[272] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ wa-khillān al-wafāʾ*, vol. 4, 237.
[273] Ibid., vol. 4, 286.
[274] Ibid., vol. 4, 224.

This spiritual power, stemming from the Universal Soul, pervades the universe and is the underlying force that allows for its continued existence. Rāzī appears to subscribe to this same underlying spiritual effusion by which the human being receives divine knowledge, a metaphysical stream of "light" that the human being can tap into in order to ascend to the celestial beings.

The goal of self-purification through knowledge and action is to actualize an innate angelic nature and to ascend to the rank of angelic celestial beings. This heavenly goal of ascent is stated unequivocally in the epistle; the Ikhwān write:

> Know that the benefit of the human being is in certain dualities: worldly and otherworldly, bodily and spiritually. If one has perfected those two areas, then he deserves the term "humanity" and has prepared himself for the reception of the angelic forms and for the transfer to the heavenly rank (*rutba*) when he separates from his body.[275]

After sketching out their cosmology for the reader, and linking the physical universe with levels of angels described in qur'anic language, the epistle states that reflection (*ta'ammul*) on what they have described will allow one to become "the angelic form (*al-ṣūra al-malakiyya*)," and to be freed of the "animal form and the beastly characteristic (*al-ṣūra al-ḥaywāniyya wa al–ṣifa al-bahīmiyya*)." Thus, O brother, write the Ikwhān:

> You will become one of the inhabitants of the heavens with your pure spirit and enlightened soul. Your form will become essential and spiritual, your spirit will become holy and intellectual, and your matter will become divine. At that point you will deserve the company of the angels who are close [to God], the dispatched prophets, and the pious martyrs.[276]

[275] Ibid., vol. 4, 251.
[276] Ibid., vol. 4, 217.

For the Ikhwān (as in the Hermetic tradition, and as echoed by Rāzī), perfection of the human being occurs through knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of metaphysical objects and results in an actualization of angelic nature for the human soul.[277]

Conclusion

The seeker of Rāzī's mystical path traverses a clear hierarchy propelled by spiritual devotion and divine grace. The framework is composed of elements from various traditions, and the clarity of the structure that is to be ascended aligns Rāzī with various trends of philosophical mysticism. Following a rich intellectual tradition of philosophers and theologians who identify the celestial spheres and planets with angels, Rāzī merges revelatory verses and religious tradition with astronomy and astrology to produce a cosmology that accounts for not only the succession of events in the sublunar realm but also revealed knowledge, human perfection, and spiritual felicity. He sets out proofs of the existence of spiritual beings who align with the philosophical tradition's assertion of the existence of entities that are non-space-occupying; of these, some manage celestial or elemental bodies, while others are beyond the celestial realm altogether and are "drowning in the divine cognitions." These celestial beings that are associated with various layers of the physical universe parallel the descriptions of celestial intellects and souls as detailed in the texts of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, as well as the cosmology outlined in the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ.

Rāzī also posits that the celestial beings move in eternal circular motion and describes the

[277] Further evidence, though expressed in a different conceptual framework, is to be found in the third epistle "On Astronomy." There the Ikhwān note that angels were once embodied souls that had purified themselves and became free of corporeality. Similarly, jinn and demons are said to be evil souls that separated from their bodies without having undergone self-perfection. Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, vol. 1, 142-3.

existence of an eternal spiritual force (positions that are rooted in Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*). Rāzī's opinion on the creation of the world *ex nihilo* is unclear in his corpus; however, he does appear to believe that the eternity of the world is neither confirmed nor negated in revelation. Given this admission, there is no religious reason for him to refrain from incorporating eternal spiritual essences into his cosmology.

While Rāzī does not describe a first originating intellect, he does explicitly subscribe to the theory of the Universal Soul. He locates the Universal Soul at the outermost boundary of the physical universe (at the ninth sphere, which represents the qur'anic divine throne) and describes it as the ontologically highest celestial being that is associated with a celestial body. He describes all subsequent souls as "parts of its parts" and "branches of its branches." The Universal Soul acts as the mediator between the sensible and the intelligible realms, and accounts in part for the existence and operation of astral magic. In subscribing to the Universal Soul, Rāzī is following Neoplatonic sources including *The Theology of Aristotle,* accounts of pseudo-Empedocles, Neoplatonic texts of al-Ghazālī's corpus, and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ.

Given his belief in this philosophical hierarchy of existence, it is important for Rāzī to assert the supremacy of angels/celestial beings over even the most extraordinary human beings. He contributes to this intellectual debate in numerous texts, and in each one, he confirms that the angels are superior to the prophets. In doing so, he aligns himself with a position that is taken by the philosophers and the Muʿtazilites against that of the majority of Ashʿarites. Additionally, his description of angels in these passages grants further evidence for his identification of the angels of revelation with the celestial beings described in his cosmology, as their ontology and function match his previous description of the spiritual beings.

Rāzī theorizes that these celestial beings produce specific events in the sublunar realm,

and that their forces account for the succession of events in this world. If one is pure in body and soul, and knowledgable of celestial forces, one can appeal to these forces to produce miraculous effects. Appealing to these unseen powers not only accounts for prophetic miracles, but also represents the theoretical foundation of magic (*al-siḥr*). The most efficacious types of magic draw power from the celestial beings, and these include magic associated with celestial states (such as the production of talismans), powers derived from the imagination of a purified soul and strengthened by conjunction with celestial beings, and powers attained from specific celestial spirits.

In the *Maṭālib*, magic is described not only as a genuine aspect of reality, but also, implicitly, as licit. Rāzī claims in the *Maṭālib* that the practitioner of magic must be pure in body and soul, and knowledgable of the craft as well as metaphysical truths, in order to be efficacious. Additionally, spiritual and physical purification (not limited to the prophets) allows for the mystical reception of revelation and inspiration from the celestial realm. Rāzī is explicit in citing sources for these theories of magic and celestial effluence, and includes references to the authority of the Ṣābiʾans, the Hermetic tradition, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, and the *falāsifa***.** Indeed, the influences of each of these intellectual traditions are evident in his cosmology. Particularly striking is Rāzī's incorporation of astral magic into his theories of celestial beings, which aligns him with the Hermetic tradition as reflected in accounts of the Ṣābiʾans and the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ. In this, his cosmology is in sharp contrast with the *falsafa* tradition (as represented by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā) as well as the Ashʿarite school of theology, both of which rejected the validity and permissibility of astrology.

Rāzī views the celestial beings as mediators between human beings, whose souls are of the same genus as the angels, and God. God's light, perfection, and knowledge flow through

these entities to the prophets and the rest of humanity. It is the greatest goal of the human being to perfect his or her soul, and to join the lowest ranks of these celestial kin. Angels aid human beings in this task, and human felicity relies on connecting with these beings and receiving an "atom of the atoms of their light." God's perfecting knowledge flows through this hierarchy, with the highest celestial beings existing in a state of perfect and present knowledge, while the human beings at the lowest rank of the hierarchy seek to perfect themselves by receiving divine knowledge through intermediary celestial forces. Additionally, Rāzī posits that certain celestial spirits are responsible for the perfection of specific groups of human rational souls (a belief rooted in Hermetic material and expressed as well by Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl). Sources that likely influenced the development of this concept of human perfection through celestial intermediaries include the Ṣābiʾans, Hermetic material, ps.-Empedocles, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, as well as al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā.

While our examination of the path of theoretical inquiry in the previous chapter led us to the conclusion that the process of knowledge formation in the rationalist path can be described as bottom-up and rooted in the empirical experience of phenomena, we may describe the reception and experience of knowledge through the mystical path as a top-down process. While the paths reinforce each other and in no way conflict, they do not traverse the same intellectual or spiritual planes, employ the same methods of access, or yield the same conclusions. Demonstrative knowledge achieved through syllogistic reasoning is the final result of a chain of inferences made possible through innate senses and cognitive processes, whereas the access to, and experience of, truths of abstracted beings is made possible through spiritual exercise and an effluence of divine mercy.

In the next and final chapter, we will examine the import of these paths to knowledge for the human soul. We will argue that, for Rāzī, knowledge of metaphysical matters, which is achieved to a greatest degree of perfection by the combination of both of these paths, perfects the human soul and allows for eternal felicity.

Chapter IV: Knowledge and the Soul

Introduction

Thus far, we have explored two ways to knowledge in Rāzī, namely that of syllogistic reasoning and of spiritual exercise and receptivity to the divine knowledge that is conveyed through the celestial, angelic realm. Yet what is the meaning of knowledge for the human being? What is its role in forming the nature not only of this life, but also, and most importantly, the next?

We cannot begin to address this question without first discussing how Rāzī conceives of the human being in his later works. In both the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr*, Rāzī shifts dramatically from traditional *kalām* anthropology to accept the philosophically aligned view of a non-corporeal soul. While he is influenced by Ibn Sīnā's view of the soul insofar as it is non-corporeal, his own view is not without critique and variation. Breaking away both from the Ashʿarite tradition and from the philosophical understanding of a tripartite soul, Rāzī posits that this soul is utterly singular and unified. Further, he asserts, in contradistinction to Ibn Sīnā, that the soul is able to perceive *both* particulars and universals even without the aid of the body. The absolute unity of the soul and its ability to perceive both particulars and universals allows Rāzī to assert a robust view of the soul's afterlife, one that is spiritual and that is characterized by perfected knowledge and absolute revelation as well as, potentially, connections with still-embodied souls.

The nature of the soul's afterlife is characterized by the knowledge it acquired and the spiritual orientation it practiced in life. The intellect may be perfected in life through theoretical inquiry and spiritual exercises, both of which result in a weakening of the body. The soul and body are utterly at odds; the pleasure of one denies enjoyment for the other, and the flourishing

of one weakens the state of the other. To partake in corporeal pleasures is to lower one's soul to the level of beasts, while to focus purely on that which is spiritual and intellectual is to raise oneself to the ranks of the angels. The knowledge gained and ethics achieved determine the soul's experience either of felicity or torment in the afterlife. For the enlightened soul, death entails release from the impediments of the body rather than the pain of losing that which consumed its attention in life. All knowledge that was demonstrated for it in life becomes necessary in the afterlife, and it accesses the world of the unknown without being obstructed by the body. Even in death, the disembodied soul may connect to those that are still embodied (which, being embodied, still access the tools of the body as well as sequential thought) to share knowledge and ethics, each reflecting the brilliance achieved in the other.

Rāzī methodologically employs the Qur'an to confirm conclusions that he has achieved through theoretical reasoning. This is not, however, the only role played by revelation, nor is it the most important. The Qur'an and other sacred texts represent a medium between the human and the divine that allows a great number of people who are not otherwise capable to correctly orient their souls away from the corporeal and towards the spiritual. The prophet, of perfect theoretical and practical faculties, is also able to perfect these faculties in his followers. Given the broad audience, revelation must speak in generalities rather than specificities, and must in fact forbid those incapable of doing so from delving into the specificities of its message.

It is perhaps the recognition of both the transcendent nature of the Qur'an and its warning against attempting to comprehend the details of divinity that produced the most existential anxiety for Rāzī as he approached his own death. We witness the particular struggle of both the highly rationalist and intensely pietistic thinker in his final years in the conclusion of *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā* and his final will and testament (*waṣiyya*). Yet both confessional

texts are not out of character with the thrust of his later works, which are in large part devoted to probing the limits of intellectual inquiry. Further, while the conclusion of *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā* is particularly striking given the overall argument of the text, a close examination of his *waṣiyya* shows it not to be a confession of repentance but rather an explanation of intent and an affirmation of the greatness of the divine that far transcends the human intellect. Rāzī writes that while he may have erred, he was always driven by a desire for truth and for knowledge of God. He does not bemoan the endeavor but instead recognizes his own shortcomings and, ultimately, the power of the Qur'an to recognize the majesty of the divine in a way that avoids the deficiencies of intellectual inquiry. The *waṣiyya*, thus, is an appropriate final text that brings together various tendencies evident in Rāzī's later works. Rāzi both praises the pursuit of knowledge and recognizes the utter limitations of human reason. He emphasizes the pious intent that has driven his life's work as well as the majesty of God and the import of revelation that transcends and, he prays, absolves his many errors. Ultimately, it cannot be viewed as a text that solely concludes but also one that anticipates and introduces, for if Rāzī is to be taken as sincere in his later works, then he believes that the true life of his soul is only just beginning.

1. The Nature of the Soul

The first key to understanding Rāzī's later views on the effect of knowledge on the soul is to understand what, in fact, the soul *is* for Rāzī. The characteristics of souls, human and otherwise, are explored in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*. It is there that we find Rāzī's adjudications on arguments regarding the nature of the human soul, and through analysis of his arguments we may posit four fundamental characteristics of the human soul as conceived by Rāzī. His view of the soul ultimately aligns in many key points with that of Ibn Sīnā, particularly

as outlined succinctly in *On the Rational Soul.*[1] While Rāzī does not state that the soul is a self-subsistent substance (*jawhar*^{an} *qāʾim*^{an} *bi-dhātihi*), he does echo Ibn Sīnā in its being abstracted (*mujarrad*) from corporeality, employing the body as a tool (*ʾāla*) during life, and surviving the body's death to either experience a spiritual state of felicity (*saʿāda*) and pleasure (*ladhdha*) or suffering (*shaqāwa*) and pain (*ʾalam*).[2] Yet this alignment with the philosophical tradition is not without critique and innovation, particularly on the singularity and unity of the soul as well its knowledge of particulars. Ultimately, Rāzī conceives of the soul in his later works as: 1) non-corporeal and non-space-occupying; 2) singular and unified; 3) cognizant of both universals and particulars and responsible for all movements of the body; and 4) surviving the death of the body.

1.1 The Soul is Non-Corporeal

Rāzī's later works participate in, and no doubt help to propel, what Wisnovsky terms the "Avicennian turn" in Islamic theology. While his earliest *kalām* work, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, is representative of classical Ashʿarite thought and conveys a traditional understanding of the makeup of the human person as a sum of atoms and accidents as characteristic of both the Ashʿarite and Muʿtazilite schools, the later *Maṭālib* and *Tafsīr* argue unmistakably for the non-corporeality of the human soul as the true essence of the person.[3] Though Rāzī's later works

[1] Rāzī was well aware of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy of the soul, as indicated not only by his engagement with Ibn Sīnā in the *Maṭālib* but also by his extended discussions of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy in the *Mabāḥith*. On the Avicennian sources of Rāzī's points in the *Mabāḥith*, see Jules Janssens, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Soul: A Critical Approach to Ibn Sīnā," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 3–4 (July 2012): 562–79.
[2] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 70; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 196.
[3] On *Uṣūl al-dīn,* which is unpublished but available in the manuscript MS Beirut, American University of Beirut Library, 297:R27kA, see Ayman Shihadeh, "Classical Ashʿarī

embrace atomism and shift to a full rejection of hylomorphism,[4] he melds this corporeal realm that comprises the matter of the sublunar realm and the makeup of the physical celestial bodies with a non-corporeal spiritual reality in which the true essence of the human person participates. This aligns Rāzī's basic understanding of human anthropology with the philosophical rather than theological tradition. Unlike al-Fārābī, for whom (in some texts) only the souls that achieve abstract conceptual thought by the aid of the Active Intellect reach a state of immateriality and thus immortality, Rāzī follows Ibn Sīnā in asserting that all human souls are incorporeal.[5] Rāzī's very phrasing echoes Ibn Sīnā's, for he conceives the soul to be "abstracted from matter" (*mujarrad ʿan al-jismiyya*), the same phrase that Ibn Sīnā employs in *On the Rational Soul.*[6]

This question of the soul's corporeality is of paramount importance to Rāzī, with consideration of various viewpoints spanning roughly one-hundred pages in the printed edition of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib*. In the section that introduces the various arguments on the matter, Rāzī allows for three possible views on the soul as the expression of the true reality of the person. The soul may be understood to be: 1) a body; 2) an accident that penetrates the body; 3) or neither of these two, being neither a body nor an accident in the body.

The first possibility is that the soul/essential self (*nafs*) is a body, which may be the case either if it is: 1) this specific body; 2) a body that is entwined with (*mushābik^{an} fī*) this body; or 3) something outside of this body (this last possibility being a view that he immediately

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Anthropology: Body, Life and Spirit," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 3–4 (2012): 433–77 as well as his forthcoming article (written in 2011), Ayman Shihadeh, "Al-Rāzī's Earliest Kalām Work," in *Theological Rationalism in Medieval Islam: New Sources and Perspectives*, ed. G. Schwarb, L. Muehlethaler, and S. Schmidtke (Peeters, 2018).

[4] See Setia, "Atomism versus Hylomorphism in the Kalām of al-Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."

[5] Michael E. Marmura, "Soul: Islamic Concepts," ed. Lindsay Jones, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005).

[6] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 74; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 199.

dismisses as not held by any group). Rāzī writes that the majority of people as well as most theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*) hold the first possibility to be the case—namely, that the soul is in fact this specific body. As for the second sub-view of the position on the soul being corporeal, which posits that the soul is a body entwined with this body, he offers various possibilities. These include such theories as the pure materialist view of the soul being born of the four elements of the body, Ibn al-Rawāndī's position that the soul is an indivisible part that is located in the heart, or that the soul is a subtle, luminous physical substance that is within the body.[7]

Rāzī quickly dismisses the possibility that the soul is an accident in the body as entirely irrational. It is his treatment of the third possibility that the soul is neither a body nor an accident in the body that is the most in-depth of the three, and which he ultimately takes as his own. In the *Maṭālib,* Rāzī attributes the position that the human soul is "an abstracted substance that is neither space-occupying, nor does it subsist in something space-occupying" not only to the "sages of metaphysics" (*al-ḥukamāʾ al-ilāhiyīn*) and "many of the people of the religious community" (*ʿahl al-milla*) but also to members of the Shīʿa, the Muʿtazila, and the "people of the Sunna" including al-Ghazālī, who was "absolutely certain of this teaching and had great

[7] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 35-6.
This characterization of the soul as a subtle, luminous substance within the body likely refers to al-Naẓẓām's (d. ca. 854) theory of the soul being a subtle material substance diffused throughout the body. While Jaffer argues that Rāzī in fact subscribes to this view and connects his own position to that of al-Naẓẓām, thus endorsing a materialist doctrine of the soul, I have found no evidence that this is the case in my reading of the *Maṭālib* or the *Tafsīr* (and certainly not in the section on which Jaffer focuses, Rāzī's exegesis of Q 17:85). Rāzī certainly believes it to be a view worthy of consideration, but ultimately rejects entirely that the soul is corporeal in any manner in his later works. As such, the soul cannot interpenetrate the body; Rāzī insists that the soul is neither this body nor any other kind of body, luminous or otherwise, associated with it. On Jaffer's argument, see Tariq Jaffer, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Soul (al-nafs) and Spirit (al-rūḥ): an Investigation into the Eclectic Ideas of Mafātīḥ al-ghayb" 16 (2014) and Jaffer, *Razi*, 169–213.

conviction in it."[8] Additionally, Rāzī writes, "most of the verifiers (*al-muḥaqqiqīn*) of the Sufis" subscribed to this view of the soul.[9] This list of those highly esteemed individuals and groups who view the soul as non-corporeal is the first clue that it is this view to which Rāzī subscribes, as is later confirmed by Rāzī's in-depth discussions of the soul.

While his position is evident particularly in the ordering of his discussion in the *Maṭālib*, it is stated unequivocally in the *Tafsīr* in his exegesis of the eighty-fifth verse of Sūrat al-Isrāʾ ("And they ask you about the soul. Say, 'The spirit is of the affairs of My Lord. You have not been given of knowledge save a little.'").[10] Rather than discussing the spirit in the Galenic tradition of pneuma, Rāzī shifts to discussion the nature of the human soul. There, Rāzī gives little attention to other views of the nature of the soul save to dismiss them, and spends much of the section presenting arguments in favor of the non-corporeal nature of the human soul, which he views as the sole representative of the essence of the person. It is this abstracted, non-corporeal, non-space-occupying substance, entirely different from bodies and accidents, that survives the death of the body, whereas the body proves useful merely as a tool for acquiring knowledge through the senses while at the same time being a dangerous enticement towards corporeal pleasure.

In the *Tafsīr*, the list of those who subscribe to the non-corporeality of the soul is even more pronounced, including "most of the metaphysicians (*al-ilāhiyīn*) of the Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) who maintained the survival (*baqāʾ*) of the soul, who established for it a spiritual afterlife (*maʿād*^{an} *rūḥānī*^{yan}), reward and punishment, and a spiritual reckoning (*ḥisāb*^{an}

[8] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 38.
[9] Ibid.
[10] See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 36-53.

rūḥānīyan)" as well as "a great group of the Muslim scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*)" including al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (said by al-Suyūṭī to have died in the early 5th/11th century[11]) and al-Ghazālī, as well as Muʿtazila predecessors (including Muʿammar bin ʿIbād al-Salamī, d. ca. 835[12]) and members of the Shiʿī (such as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, d. 413/1032), and even a group of the Karāmiyya.[13] Rāzī's reference to intellectual predecessors is eclectic and illustrates not only the widespread support for his position but also his openness to well-founded opinions regardless of their source.

As in Rāzī, the division between the celestial and the physical realms is found in al-Ghazālī's later works including the *Iḥyāʾ,* and it is likely (as Rāzī maintains) that al-Ghazālī too subscribed to the existence of the immortal and immaterial soul that experiences a spiritual afterlife.[14] Treiger argues that "the heart" (*al-qalb*) in al-Ghazālī's works is the locus of cognition which is both immaterial and immortal as it is released from the confines of the body upon death. As such, al-Ghazālī's views of the soul align with the philosophers', and his shift in terminology is merely an attempt to make their philosophy "more palatable to the broader circles of religious scholars (*'ulamā'*), while leaving its content essentially the same."[15] Al-Ghazālī further includes a robust understanding of the development of human nature in a number of works, particularly as it is perfected by knowledge.[16] As we find in Rāzī, knowledge and practice train and refine this immaterial aspect of the human being and prepare it for the afterlife.

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[11] *EI2*, s.v. "al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī," by E. K. Rowson.
[12] Muʿammar was a materialist who nonetheless held the soul to be an immaterial atom. Marmura, "Soul: Islamic Concepts."
[13] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 45.
[14] Richard M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 52.
[15] Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 17-18.
[16] On the approach to understanding al-Ghazālī's view of the soul through its development, see Taneli Kukkonen, "Receptive to Reality: Al-Ghazālī on the Structure of the Soul," *Muslim World* 102, no. 3–4 (2012): 541–561.

It is worth noting, however, that not all of al-Ghazālī's texts are clear on his acceptance of an immaterial soul. In his earlier works, al-Ghazālī's affirmation of the immaterial soul is either absent or stated with ambiguity. In the *Iqtiṣād*, for instance, al-Ghazālī clarifies that he adopted the view of the immaterial, immortal soul and its resurrection in any kind of body merely for the sake of argument in the *Tahāfut*, whereas his own position—in this text at least—is one of strict materialism, limiting the human person to a particular makeup of the physical atoms and accidents the restoration of which occurs in full and exactly as in life at the point of resurrection.[17] Alternatively, scholars have argued that his twentieth discussion of the *Tahāfut* seeks to show the indemonstrability of the philosophers' views on the afterlife despite his own concurrence with many of their positions.[18] Indeed, at the end of the twentieth discussion, al-Ghazālī concedes that most of the philosophers' views on the afterlife do not conflict with religion (*al-shar'*), while still maintaining that to reject a bodily resurrection altogether constitutes unbelief.

Yet Rāzī's statement is unequivocal. As we have seen, he states in both the *Maṭālib* and the *Tafsīr* that al-Ghazālī was convinced of the immateriality of the immortal soul, and we find the statement repeated in the *Muḥaṣṣal,* where he lists al-Ghazālī as among those who adhered to

[17] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī l-i'tiqād*, ed. Ḥusayn Atay (Ankara: Nur Matbaası, 1962), 215. See also Marmura, "Al-Ghazali on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the Tahāfut and Iqtiṣād," 283–84; Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, 63–64.

[18] Gianotti argues for the possibility that al-Ghazālī accepts the philosophers' position on the soul to be true, but does not believe that it can be proved demonstrably. Thus, the *Tahāfut* proves the indemonstrability of these positions on the soul without in fact rejecting their conclusions. See Timothy J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Iḥyā'* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 88–116. Treiger argues that the *Tahāfut* must be viewed in this light, given al-Ghazālī's overall adoption of Avicennian noetics elsewhere in his corpus. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 81–92.

the position that "[the soul] is not a body."[19] Given the ambiguity in many of al-Ghazālī's texts, and his evident reticence to present this view with the same openness that Rāzī embraces, one may posit that Rāzī anchors his understanding of al-Ghazālī's view on the soul in *al-Risāla al-laduniyya*, which Rāzī cites in his *Tafsīr*.[20] As we discussed in the third chapter, this text may have influenced Rāzī in the development of his own theory of the Universal Soul, and given its resonance with Rāzī's view of the soul and the nobility of knowledge, it was likely a text to which he gave no small degree of attention.

In *al-Risāla al-laduniyya*, al-Ghazālī states, in no uncertain terms, that the human being is composed of a lowly body that is subject to degeneration, and a soul (*nafs*), which comprises "a singular, luminous essence (*jawhar*) that grasps, acts, moves, and wields the instruments and bodies."[21] Incorporating a tripartite vision into his description, he writes that this soul is distinct from those faculties that seek nourishment or that exercise passion and desire (a division of the soul espoused by Ibn Sīnā that Rāzī will later reject, but which nonetheless reflects al-Ghazālī's incorporation of the philosophical tradition into his philosophical theology). It is what the sages (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) have termed "the rational soul," and what the Qur'an terms "the peaceful soul" (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*) and the "commanding spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-ʾamrī*), and what the Sufis call "the heart" (*al-qalb*). While his terminology varies throughout his corpus, al-Ghazālī here notes that when he has said "the absolute spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-muṭlaq*) or "the heart" (*al-qalb*), he has signified this essence.[22]

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[19] al-Rāzī, *Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, 224.
[20] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 149.
[21] al-Ghazālī, *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 241.
[22] Ibid., 241.

Likely inspiring Rāzī's later assertion that he subscribed to the immateriality of the soul, al-Ghazālī states in *al-Risāla al-laduniyya* that "the wise sciences, certain proofs, and clear evidence" have shown that the soul is neither a body nor an accident. Rather, it is "an enduring, immortal essence that does not decay" that is akin to the higher beings that are abstracted from matter and exercise God's command.[23] At death it separates from the body and awaits a return to God on the day of resurrection. In life, the body serves as merely a tool (*ʾāla*) of the soul; it does not reside in the body, for it resides in no place.[24] Whereas the other aspects of the tripartite soul desire such things as nourishment and pleasure, the rational soul, the immortal aspect of the person, desires only knowledge (*al-ʿilm*).[25]

Returning to the *Maṭālib*, we find that the overall structure of the subsequent sections of the second part of the seventh volume, which span over one hundred pages in the printed edition, reflects Rāzī's scholastic method and indicates that Rāzī believes the soul to be non-corporeal. The first sub-section introduces the various views on the matter (broadly divided along the soul being corporeal or non-corporeal), while subsequent sections detail the arguments for each position and raise possible objections. After considering each side thoroughly, Rāzī aligns his own point of view with that of the Philosophers' in the final two sub-sections of the second part. These two concluding sections contain a plethora of arguments for the non-corporeality of the soul that not only support the view that the soul is a non-space-occupying substance that represents the essence of the human person, but also offer additional clarification on the nature of the soul as Rāzī understands it. While Rāzī offers ten proofs in the section "The strong proofs

[23] Ibid., 242.
[24] Ibid., 243.
[25] Ibid., 244.

considered regarding the affirmation of the soul" that broadly speaking align with the philosophical tradition, I will focus only on a portion of them in order to draw out not only his understanding of the non-corporeality of the soul, but also other key notions on what the soul is and how it relates to the body.[26] The section is translated in full in Appendix VI.

As we have explored in the second chapter of this dissertation, it is characteristic of Rāzī's methodology that his proofs rest on what he describes as axiomatic or necessary knowledge (a method that is, as we discussed, heavily influenced by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī). In the very first argument on the non-corporeality of the soul, Rāzī appeals to what is immediately self-evident by pointing out that despite the many changes that occur in the body, that which is signified by the person's saying "I" does not change. Thus, the body is not the same as that which the person considers to be their essential self. Rāzī describes this knowledge that the person is the same being that exists from the beginning to the end of life as known "necessarily"(*bi-l-ḍarūra*) and adds, "We explained in the beginning of the book that the most evident of known things for the person is his knowledge of the existence of himself; and just as I know that I exist now, so too do I know that I am that which was existent twenty years ago."[27] Further, this essential nature of the person must also be continuous from the beginning to the end of life in order to allow for the accumulation of acquired knowledge. Given that the body is not the same throughout one's life but rather undergoes a multiplicity of shifts and changes, Rāzī writes that it is "of the axiomatic truths" (*min al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*) that that which remains is

[26] Many of these arguments are presented in much the same manner in Rāzī's *Tafsīr*. See al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 36-53.
[27] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 102.

not the same as that which does not remain; thus, the person is something other than this body and the sensible organs that compose it.[28]

The first fundamental characterization of the soul has thus been posited. Namely, for Rāzī (and in agreement with a range of predecessors from the philosophers to individual thinkers of the Muʿtazilites, Ashʿarites, and Shiʿīs while significantly diverging from traditional Ashʿarite theology), the soul is a non-corporeal substance that represents the true essence of the person. The subsequent arguments of this section allow us to further explore the nature of the soul in Rāzī's philosophical system.

1.2 The Soul is Singular and Unified

While Rāzī views the body as a composite of atoms and accidents as per the traditional Ashʿarite view, his understanding of not only the existence and function of the soul but also its being an entirely singular unity is radically different from traditional Ashʿarite anthropology and theologically significant. Prior Ashʿarites, including al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī, Ibn Fūrak, al-Fazārī, and al-Anṣārī, insisted on the composite nature of created beings because it is only God that is fully and entirely singular.[29] Even in Rāzī's own early Ashʿarite treatise, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, he writes that the human being can only be characterized as "one" figuratively, for "each atom of man in which life resides is living; man is indeed many living beings."[30] In later insisting on the absolute singularity of the soul, Rāzī is at variance not only with Ibn Sīnā but also (and utterly so) with traditional Ashʿarite theology.

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[28] Ibid., vol. 7, 103.
[29] Shihadeh, "Classical Ashʿarī Anthropology: Body, Life and Spirit," 458–65.
[30] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, MS Beirut, American University of Beirut Library, 297:R27kA, f. 43a as quoted and cited in Shihadeh, 460.

In the sixth argument of "The strong proofs considered regarding the affirmation of the soul," Rāzī seeks to prove the non-corporeality of the human soul by recourse to its nature as an entirely singular entity. The soul, he maintains, is not only the locus of all experience, but also the source of all action. First, he reasons that there must be a singular thing that performs all cognitive functions, namely: it judges both particulars and universals; it accesses that which is grasped by the senses; it combines these perceptions through the imagination; it assesses them through the estimative faculty; and it synthesizes them through the cogitative faculty. Rāzī is here employing Ibn Sīnā's taxonomy of the functions of the soul as adopted from Aristotle, some of which Ibn Sīnā locates in the body (i.e., in certain parts of the brain), with the highest functioning being non-corporeal.

However, while Rāzī refers to these functions of the soul, he does not consider them to be located in any way in the body and rejects Ibn Sīnā's division of the functions of the soul as partly corporeal and partly non-corporeal.[31] This singular thing which directs all mental function must also be the source of all actions. One is motivated in one's movements either by desire for that which one considers to be beneficial, or aversion to that which is perceived to be harmful. That which acts through its own desire and that which grasps the result of this same action must be the same; i.e., that essential nature of the person that senses, processes information, and experiences desire or aversion is also that which acts upon those motivations. Rāzī here expresses his own bewilderment at Galen's assertion that it is the heart that produces anger, happiness, and sadness, whereas it is the brain that grasps information. He dismisses this notion of split-functioning as utterly nonsensical; for how can it be that that which would find

[31] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 114-15.

something distasteful is in one part of the body, and that which would then be angered by it (the result of such conviction) be in another part? "What we have said is thus established with utmost clarity and strength, [namely] that that which grasps all kinds of graspings, and that which desires and hates, and that which acts and that which desists, must be a singular thing."[32] Rāzī therefore locates not only all experience and knowledge, but also the source of all action, in a singular essence.

What remains for Rāzī, in this particular argument, is to prove that that singular aspect of the human being entails that it must in fact be non-corporeal. Rāzī maintains that this essential aspect that not only experiences but also directs all processes and actions can in no way be corporeal—it cannot be the sum of the body, nor a body within it, nor one of its organs, nor a body outside of it. We know "necessarily," he writes, that the internal psychological processes as well as the senses do not occur, for instance, in the hands or the feet. Thus, the whole body may not be described as seeing, thinking, imagining, hearing, etc. Further, if there *were* a bodily part that could be described as encompassing all of these characteristics, we would certainly be aware of it; instead, we know "necessarily" that no such locality in our body exists. This, Rāzī insists, is a valid point because of the manifest nature of the knowledge of the self, which he describes as "necessary, and prior to all [other] knowledges."[33] Were all that the self encompasses located in a specific part of the body, Rāzī maintains, then the person would certainly be aware necessarily of this being so.

A key point highlighted in this argument is Rāzī's conviction that the soul is entirely unitary. While he aligns his own view of the soul as non-corporeal with the philosophical

[32] Ibid., vol. 7, 116.
[33] Ibid., vol. 7, 117.

tradition broadly speaking, his understanding of the nature of that non-corporeal substance is not without variation and critique. While the soul employs the bodily senses as it manages the body during life, the power to perceive both particulars and universals as well as its ability to imagine, estimate, and cogitate are all aspects that are part of the singular non-corporeal substance of the soul. This offers us one insight into why Rāzī elsewhere rejects certain arguments that Ibn Sīnā presents for the non-corporeality of the soul (such as his argument based on the abstraction of essences). Rāzī writes (correctly) that Ibn Sīnā holds the estimative and cogitative faculty to be corporeal faculties.[34] Rāzī's own arguments for the non-corporeality of the soul do not reference the abstraction of essences—a process he explicitly rejects, as we saw in the second chapter of this dissertation—and it holds, in contradistinction with Ibn Sīnā, that all of these qualities of the soul (including perception as well as cogitation, memory, and intellection[35]) are not divided into various physical locations in the body but are rather part of its singular and unified substance. As we will see in Rāzī's discussions of the life of the soul after death, his expanded conception of the disembodied soul, in sharp contrast with that of Ibn Sīnā, allows for the soul's continued perception and intellectual engagement with both particulars and universals (albeit without the aid of the senses).

We find this view of the singular nature of the human soul explored as well in subsequent sections of the seventh volume. In a later section that discusses "whether or not the souls are unified in reality and essence," Rāzī aligns himself with those who consider the human soul to be a genus under which there are various species that are a result of a specific spirit of the planets.[36]

[34] Ibid., vol. 7, 65.
[35] Ibid., vol. 7, 117.
[36] Ibid., vol. 7, 142. See also Ibid., vol. 7, 149, 266.

In subscribing to this view, he follows Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, who ascribed a single celestial soul as cause of each distinct class of human beings, with the variations between human beings stemming from different celestial causes.[37] While the souls in each species are the same, the human souls belonging to the genus as a whole differ in essence, accounting for variations in both personality and capacity.[38] Rāzī dismisses Ibn Sīnā's attribution of these differences between people to variations in the mixture of the bodily humors and insists on these variations being essential to the (non-corporeal) human person.[39] While Rāzī is arguing that the human souls as a group are not unified in essence, his view of a singular human soul is one of simplicity and unification in a non-corporeal essence. The essence of a person is not the composite of various bodily and non-bodily factors, but is rather singular, whole, and entirely non-corporeal.

Rāzī rejects the tripartite soul, which he attributes to Galen, in favor of a singular soul that performs various functions. In a section entitled "On demonstrating that the soul is singular," he writes that it is held by Aristotle and his followers that "the soul is singular, and different faculties proceed from it according to different actions; and this is the truth about which there is no doubt."[40] He proceeds to lobby six arguments against Galen's tripartite theory of the soul and the association of the rational soul (*al-nafs al-naṭiqiyya*) with the brain, the irascible soul (*al-nafs al-ghaḍabiyya*) with the heart, and the appetitive soul (*al-nafs al-shahwāniyya*) with the liver.

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[37] Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 156-57; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī l-ḥikma*, vol. 2, 388-91.
[38] Ibid., vol. 7, 142.
This view is repeated in the eighth volume of the *Maṭālib*, and is discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation as it relates to the celestial spiritual beings. See Chapter III, section 4.5 ("Human Perfection and the Celestial World"), pages 186-87.
[39] Rāzī raises a number of objections against this theory, including that shifts between various temperatures and degrees of humidity do not result in a change in a person's moral or intellectual character. For these arguments, see Ibid., vol. 7, 145-47.
[40] Ibid., vol. 7, 159.

These arguments parallel that by which he argues for the non-corporeal nature of the soul based on its singularity. He begins with an appeal to axiomatic knowledge, saying that we know "necessarily" (*bi-l-ḍarūra*) that that which is signified when one says "I" is a singular thing. Further, he reasons that the very act of seeking or avoiding certain things is predicated on feeling anger against, or desire for, the object of action. Thus, that which intends either to gain something or to avoid it must be the same thing that feels such aversion or attraction, and the same as that which ultimately achieves its end. Grasping (*idrāk*), desire (*shahwa*), and anger (*ghaḍab*), Rāzī argues, are all attributes of a single entity (*dhāt wāḥida*), not three distinct attributes of three different entities.

In a subsequent argument in the same chapter, Rāzī elaborates further on the nature of the soul as he understands it in contradistinction with the tripartite soul as posited by Galen. He writes:

> The reality of the person is that [the person] is a body that has a soul that perceives (*ḥassās*) and moves by will (*mutaḥarrik bi-l-irāda*). It is thus a condition of the soul that it be perceiving, and that it move by will; so that which possesses sensation is exactly the same as that which possesses that will. If the will were one of attraction, it constitutes desire (*shahwa*); if it were one of aversion, then it is anger (*ghaḍab*). This indicates that grasping, desire, and anger are three attributes of a single entity (*li-dhāt^{in} wāḥida^{tin}*).[41]

The soul is not divided into three souls or three divided functions located in different aspects of the body. Rather, the soul is an entirely singular essence that expresses desire and anger, that moves in accordance with its will, and that perceives and grasps the objects of said will.

Rāzī's critique of Galen's understanding of the tripartite soul is implicitly a further rejection of Ibn Sīnā's division of psychological faculties as adopted from Aristotle. Instead of

[41] Ibid., vol. 7, 161.

viewing the soul as divided in its faculties (and in its corporeal locations) per Ibn Sīnā's psychology between that which is: the vegetative or natural soul (the *ṭabīʿiya,* serving nourishment, growth, and production); animal or vital (the *ḥayawāniyya,* perceiving and performing motive functions, including the appetitive, *shahwa*, and irascible, *ghaḍab*); and the non-corporeal rational or mental (the *nafsāniyya,* including the theoretical and practical intellect), Rāzī posits a singular non-corporeal essence that performs both the animal and rational functions.[42] When Rāzī refers to the "rational soul" (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) within his own system, it is always to this expanded vision of a singular, unified, non-corporeal essence that perceives, experiences aversion and desire, produces movement in the body, and grasps and analyzes concepts.[43]

Rāzī views the essential nature of the human being as fully inscribed in the non-corporeal soul that survives the death of the body. The soul is entirely singular; though it employs physical senses as instruments while embodied, it is a unified essence that perceives as well as experiences desire and aversion and subsequently produces action. Thus, Rāzī implicitly rejects the notion of the true essence of the human being as composite, locating it in the singular, non-corporeal soul in a view that is at utter variance with traditional Ashʿarite theology. Yet he also dismisses the Galenic and later Avicennian tripartite division of the soul, and further rejects the Avicennian notion that certain aspects of the soul are corporeal while others are not.

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[42] Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 120. As Shihadeh notes, these points are also emphasized in the *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ* and the *Mabāḥith*. See al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, vol. 2, 245. On the faculties of the soul in Ibn Sīnā, see Hall, "Intellect, Soul and Body in Ibn Sīnā."

[43] Indeed, in *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, Rāzī notes that "we have affirmed in all of our books that all of these perceptions belong to the substance (*jawhar*) of the soul, and all of the actions belong to the substance of the soul, and each of the organs of the body is an instrument of the soul in accordance with any one of its particular actions." al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, 78.

1.3 The Soul Perceives Universals and Particulars

In addition to his characterization of the soul as non-corporeal and entirely unified, he also argues, against Ibn Sīnā, for the rational soul's ability to perceive particulars in addition to universals. We see these extended arguments primarily in the thirteenth and fourteenth sections of the third part of the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib.* Ibn Sīnā, notes Rāzī, locates multiple functions of the person in the body rather than in the incorporeal rational soul. These corporeal faculties include that of external perception, as well as the imagination, the estimation, and the motive faculties.[44]

While Ibn Sīnā went further than al-Fārābī in positing that each individual possesses an immaterial, eternal rational soul, he synthesizes aspects of the fully materialist anthropology of the Galenic tradition with the Aristotelian and theorizes that this incorporeal intellect is aided by internal senses that receive and process particular perceptions and which are housed in the brain. These include: the common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), which receives perceptions from the senses, and the image-bearing faculty (*al-khayāl, al-muṣawwira*), which stores these perceptions, which are housed in the front ventricle of the brain; the imagining and cogitative faculty (*al-mutakhayyila, al-mufakkira*), which combines and separates both sensory and (in the case of the human being) conceptual images, and estimation (*wahm*), which judges connotations of objects, which are seated in the middle ventricle; and memory (*al-ḥāfiẓa* or *al-dhikr*), which stores these connotative concepts (*maʾānin*) and is seated in the rear ventricle.[45] These senses are physical,

[44] For the arguments attributed to Ibn Sīnā on the locus of the perception of particulars being corporeal, see Ibid., vol. 7, 247-250.
[45] See Robert E. Hall, "Intellect, Soul and Body in Ibn Sīnā: Systematic Synthesis and Development of the Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Galenic Theories," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam. Proceedings of the Second Conference of the*

and exist within human beings and animals alike.[46] With the death of the body, these functions that are aspects of the animal soul cease to exist.

Rāzī posits that the implication of locating such functions by which the rational soul accesses particulars in the body—functions that are shared with other animals such as the imagination and estimation as well as the common sense and memory—is that the disembodied soul may only access universals. Ibn Sīnā ultimately differentiates intuition (*ḥāds*) from thinking (*fikr*); intuition alights upon the middle term of a syllogism immediately and without the aid of faculties other than the intellect and continues after the death of the body, whereas thinking reaches the middle term through contact with the Active Intellect as the result of a search that involves a temporal sequence and occurs only in life.[47] This faculty, aided by conjunction with the Active Intellect, forms syllogisms. It is also physical, and located in the brain, thus suffering annihilation upon death.[48] While Rāzī too will ascribe temporal thought only to the embodied soul, he rejects the notion that the soul relies upon the body as the sole means to access particulars. Yet in Ibn Sīnā's system, there is no way in which the person acquires knowledge of particulars save through the body; the only activity possible for the disembodied being is the contemplation of the universal intelligibles through contact with the Active Intellect, the storehouse of all intelligibles (a skill honed in life through sequential thought).[49] Rāzī finds this

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Avicenna Study Group (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 71–80 and Dimitri Gutas, "Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology," *Princeton Papers* 9 (2001): 8–9.

[46] Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 89.

[47] Gutas, "Intuition and Thinking," 25; Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 100-102

[48] Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 98.

[49] In the *Metaphysics* of the Shifāʾ, the *Najāt*, and the *Ishārā,* Ibn Sīnā does allow that the disembodied souls may attach themselves to a celestial sphere and employ it as a surrogate brain in order to allow for the pleasure or suffering of individual souls in the manner imagined through popular religion. Davidson argues that this concession does not fit into Ibn Sīnā's philosophical

version of an afterlife insufficient—not in the least because he rejects the existence and function of the Active Intellect altogether. If the afterlife is to be truly spiritual, as Rāzī posits in his later works, then surely the person must be fully represented in that non-corporeal essence.

Rāzī raises a total of ten arguments against the view that the human soul is partially corporeal. He firstly retorts that it is not in fact self-evident that it is the eye that sees or the ear that hears. Rather, it is axiomatic "that the eye is a consideration in the occurrence of vision," but it is not clear whether it actually sees or whether it is merely an instrument for sight.[50] It becomes clear from Rāzī's subsequent arguments that he views the sense organs as merely tools rather than as the loci of perception.[51] Further, Rāzī remarks that it is not impossible that while human souls are non-corporeal, the faculties of other animals are corporeal—eliminating the need to explain an overlap in faculties through the division of some as corporeal and others as abstracted from matter. Additionally, while Ibn Sīnā raises the objection that a non-corporeal soul cannot obtain forms, Rāzī notes that he has rejected this abstraction of forms and their obtainment in the soul altogether, making this a moot point. His arguments critique the view of various functions of the soul being corporeal; he posits instead a single, unified, non-corporeal entity that governs the body. "For there is no meaning to the management and governance of the body save moving it according to goals and benefits. If this soul is not capable of moving this body, then our

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system given his rejection of transmigration of souls (*tanāsukh*) and that "Avicenna may have recorded the rationalization of promised physical pleasures in the hereafter to protect himself against any charge that he was wholly rejecting Islamic accounts of the life to come." Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 113-15.

[50] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, 7, 251.

[51] Rāzī also emphasizes the body merely as a tool for the soul's perception of the physical realm in the *Tafsīr*. The soul's relationship to the body is purely one of "managing and modes of comportment" (*al-tadbīr wa-l-taṣarruf*), the same language that he has used to describe the relationship of the heavenly intellects and souls to the celestial bodies. al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 49.

assertion that the soul is the manager of the body and its governor is nothing but a futile expression."[52] Rāzī rejects altogether the assertion that it is not possible for an abstracted soul to govern a corporeal body, and posits instead an entirely singular, non-corporeal soul that perceives both particulars and universals and that dictates bodily function.

In the following section, entitled "Bringing forth powerful proofs that it is the soul that is characterized by all classes of graspings, and which directs all movements and commands of this body," Rāzī outlines his own viewpoints and arguments regarding the unity of the soul. He restates that it is the soul which perceives and judges all that is sensed and imagined. It is a singular soul that combines various forms and meanings, and which is a unified entity that perceives both the particular and a universal (for comprehending both the particular nature of an object and its belonging to a general category, Rāzī later notes, is necessary for the formation of syllogisms and for the soul's knowledge of its particular self[53]). It is also this singular soul that inclines towards certain actions after judging them to be beneficial, and which is then capable of acting upon that desire.[54] This very inclination toward a particular action or object, Rāzī later argues, requires that the soul know that particular, otherwise it would be unable to specify a particular towards which it would act.

In the course of these arguments, Rāzī appeals once again to immediate and axiomatic truth; necessary knowledge, he notes, must be recognized, otherwise infinite regress and circularity result necessarily, and these are impossible. He writes that "everyone knows necessarily (*bi-l-ḍarūra*) that it is *he* that sees the objects of vision, *he* that hears sounds, *he* that

[52] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 253-54.
[53] Ibid., vol. 7, 258-59.
[54] Ibid., vol. 7, 255-56.

tastes and touches and smells, imagines, remembers and forgets, moves *his* hand to take and leg to walk."[55] This is the most evident of knowledge possessed by the human being. "Manifest *fiṭra* bears witness to the fact that it is the human being that is described by these attributes, and it is he who is the enactor of these actions."[56] Rāzī makes clear that by "the human being" (*al-insān*), he means the soul of the person which represents the true essence. "If the human being is an expression of the soul, then the soul must be that which is described by these attributes and the achiever of these acts."[57] Thus, not only does Rāzī consider the non-corporeal soul to be the comprehensive essence of the person, and the director of all actions, but he further believes this knowledge to be the most evident of all axiomatic knowledge.[58]

Rāzī's understanding of the soul as the locus of perception of both universals and particulars has key implications for the afterlife of the person. In this section, Rāzī warns that it is not his goal to prove that the soul knows particulars *solely* through the aid of bodily instruments; he is not here discussing *how* knowledge of particulars occurs, but rather that it is the soul that obtains this knowledge.[59] The relationship between the soul's knowledge of particulars and its bodily implements is the subject of the following section in which he maintains that the soul remains knowing of particulars after it separates from the body and that its knowledge of particulars is not in fact dependent on the bodily instruments. This being the case, the soul, after it separates from the body, "is capable of grasping particulars and specific

[55] Ibid., vol. 7, 257. Emphasis added.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., vol. 7, 258.
[59] Ibid., vol. 7, 256-57.

actions"[60] This theory of the soul's robust access to both particular and universal knowledge allows Rāzī to posit a rich existence for the disembodied soul after the death of the body.

Rāzī begins by stating that the view that "particular graspings that are obtained in the soul are dependent upon bodily instruments" is "absolutely false" (*bāṭil*^{an} *qaṭ*$^{\varsigma an}$). He then presents a short proof that argues that if the soul were only to perceive universals when not employing the tools of the body, then its relationship to this body would be no different than its relationship to all other bodies. For if it were unable to perceive particulars, how would it specify this body over any other? Naturally, it could not do so by appealing to the tools of the body, for this would lead to circularity. Thus, before it employs the instruments of the body, the soul must be able to grasp particulars in addition to universals. Its ability to do so is therefore not dependent upon the body.

The import of this conclusion does not escape Rāzī. He declares that this proof affirms what he has previously stated, namely that the soul is cognizant of particulars even without employing the instruments of the body. "It must be said with certainty that the soul," Rāzī writes, "after separating from the body, remains grasping of particulars. And this is a noble principle that is advantageous in the knowledge of the afterlife (*al-ma*$^{\varsigma}$*ād*)."[61] After citing a hadith in support of this conclusion,[62] he ends this exceedingly short section by acknowledging both its

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[60] Ibid., vol. 7, 261. The manuscript that I have referenced (MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503) is significantly more coherent in this section, though all references to the soul (*al-nafs*) are in the masculine (a common rendering in this manuscript). I have corrected several typos in the printed edition in my translations by referencing this manuscript, including replacing the meaningless "*tataqawwā* $^{\varsigma}$*alā*" of the printed edition with "*yaqwā* $^{\varsigma}$*alā*" (to be capable of) as written in the manuscript, and correcting a missing verb in the second paragraph (the printed edition renders the sentence "if it were universal, then its specification with this specific body…*would not be* more likely than its specification with the rest of the bodies" in the nonsensical affirmative). For this section in the manuscript, see MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503 fols. 327r—327v.

[61] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-*$^{\varsigma}$*āliya*, vol. 7, 262.

[62] The hadith that he cites here states, "Even if the dead is carried to his bier, his spirit flutters above the bier, and says, 'O my people, O my son. May this world (*al-dunyā*) not toy with you as

significance and its brevity, noting that the section is "small in size but great in benefit (*nafʿ*)."[63] As we will see, the ability of the soul to grasp particulars will allow it, in Rāzī's account, to form relationships with still embodied souls and to increase its own knowledge in the afterlife.

1.4 The Soul is Immortal

Keeping in mind that Rāzī has posited that the soul still perceives particulars and universals after the death of the body, let us turn our attention to Rāzī's discussion of the survival of the soul in the afterlife. Following Ibn Sīnā, Rāzī posits that all human souls achieve a spiritual afterlife the nature of which is determined by their attainment of knowledge and works in life. Rāzī discusses the non-corporeal afterlife of the person in the final two arguments of ten in the section in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* that has been our focus, entitled "The strong proofs considered regarding the affirmation of the soul." In the ninth argument, Rāzī emphasizes once again that the soul is not the body, nor is it a body within the body or a corporeal aspect entangled with the body.[64] Rather, the soul is "a single thing to which all knowledge, all graspings, and all faculties are attributed, and which is itself the enactor of all actions."[65] His emphasis, once again, is on the non-corporeal nature of the human soul, which, he has argued, represents the essential nature of the person in all of her proclivities and perceptions.

Following this re-assertion that the soul is in no way corporeal, Rāzī contends in the tenth and final argument that the non-corporeal nature of the soul is, in fact, fundamental for the

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it did with me. I collected money from those with and those without. I am despicable to others, and it is my own fault. Take heed of what befell me!'"

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., vol. 7, 121-23.

[65] Ibid., vol. 7, 122.

guarantee of both resurrection and just reward. He states that if the soul were in fact one of the organs of the body, this "would make resurrection (*al-ḥashr wa-l-nashr*), reward (*al-thawāb*), and punishment (*al-ʿiqāb*) impossible, and the human being the vilest of animals."[66] Rāzī reasons that we witness that this body is composed of many parts "that break apart and become disparate, and become altogether destroyed."[67] He believes that, judging by the light of reason (*fī badīhat al-ʿaql*), it is impossible for something to perish and disappear and then be reconstituted exactly as it was. He further rejects entirely the possibility that the human being somehow survives in these disparate parts. Given that the restitution of the human person after the body has perished and vanished exactly as he was before death is impossible, Rāzī maintains that it is necessary that the soul be other than the body in order to ensure the possibility of resurrection.[68] In this case, resurrection can only be taken to be spiritual, as Rāzī has maintained that it is impossible not only that the essence of the person exist in the body, but also that this body be reconstituted after death exactly as it was in life. The only possibility for the survival of the human being is through a spiritual afterlife.

For Rāzī, rather, the body is not necessary for the human being to live on in fullness; in fact, those who become enlightened in life live with an even greater degree of fulfillment after death because they are no longer impeded by the body. This view is apparent as well in Rāzī's *Tafsīr*, in which he aligns himself with those "metaphysicians of the Philosophers" who believe in a "spiritual afterlife (*maʿādᵃⁿ rūḥānīʸᵃⁿ*)"[69] as well as "the majority of the knowers privy to unveilings (*al-ʿārifīn al-mukāshifīn*) of the companions of [spiritual] exercises and the lords of

[66] Ibid., vol. 7, 123.
[67] Ibid., vol. 7, 123-24.
[68] Ibid., vol. 7, 124.
[69] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 45.

unveilings and witnessings" who insist that the spirit is a holy, abstracted substance.[70] He further interprets verses pertaining to a return to God as referring purely to the soul at the exclusion of the then-dead body. Regarding, for instance, the objection that God created humankind from sperm (with reference to Q 80:17-22), and that "this is a declaration that the human being is a thing created from sperm, and that he dies, enters the grave, and then God Exalted brings him out from the grave," Rāzī responds that the human being is only referred to as his body (*juththa*) as a kind of convention (*ʿurf*) that refers to his external form. The implication is carried out fully in Rāzī's following point, in which he notes that it is the spirit, not the body "deteriorating under the earth," that "seeks refuge in the lights hung under the throne (*al-ʿarsh*)."[71]

The second premise in this tenth and final argument is of utmost importance for understanding Rāzī's view of the soul's afterlife. Rāzī builds an argument on the nobility of the human being occurring through the intellect, which must be perfected after the death of the body and which takes no pleasure in bodily comforts. Given the significance of this section, I translate it here in full. Rāzī states:

> Regarding the demonstration of the second premise, which is our saying that if the doctrines of resurrection (*baʿth*) and the survival of the soul after the death of the body are false, then the human being must be the vilest of all animals, the evidence of this is that the human being is distinguished from the rest of the animals by the faculty of the intellect. The intellect entails suffering (*shaqāʾ*) in [the human being's experience of] the bodily pleasures, and felicity (*saʿāda*) in the intellectual perfections (*al-kamālāt al-ʿaqliyya*) from which it benefits after death. And the proof of this is that the intellect prompts the rational person (*al-ʿāqil*) to contemplate the past, the present, and the future.
> As for the contemplation of the past, if the person remembers all that came to pass of reviled matters, then intense sorrow settles in his heart because of its past occurrence. And if the person remembers all that occurred of pleasant states, then intense sorrow settles in his heart due to their passing and disappearance.

[70] Ibid., vol. 21, 52.
[71] Ibid., vol. 21, 52-53.

As for the contemplation of present states, these are either of good or bad [states]. For if it were [contemplation of] good [states], then the mind entails distress for a number of reasons.

The first is that it fears their disappearance, and the pain of anxiety immediately arises.

The second is that there is no comfort that cannot be exceeded by another, higher level [of enjoyment]. If the intellect recognizes this, it longs for the superior degree [of comfort], and disdains the measure [of pleasure] that has been obtained; thus, distress and pain occur.

Thirdly, the pleasure [one takes] in all that occurs is transitory, and its having been obtained strengthens the desire and the seeking for more, for much effort is a cause for the obtainment of stable faculties. As for the contemplation of future states, this too necessitates intense anxiety and complete panic, for one knows that they may occur in accordance with, or contrary to, one's desire.[72]

What we have said is thus affirmed, namely that the intellect necessitates that the obtainment of these bodily comforts be spoiled and linked with anxiety, discomfort, and emotional pain (*ʿalam al-qalb*). Yet the rest of the animals are devoid of intellects, and their benefit from the corporeal pleasures is free of the disturbance that occurs because of the intellect. It must be then that their benefit from these corporeal pleasures is more perfect than that benefit which occurs for the human being from them.

If this is affirmed, then we say that the intellect's being that which necessitates perfection and happiness must mean that this [fulfillment and joy] occurs after death. If the aim here is that the soul does not survive at all after the death of the body, then there would be no benefit that would occur for the intellect after the death. We have shown that [the intellect] is one of the strongest necessitating causes entailing the spoiling and disturbance of these corporeal pleasures and the invalidation of their benefits. At this point it becomes clear that if the soul were not to survive the death of the body, then the human being would be the vilest and most contemptible of animals, and the weakest and most worthless of them. For its distinction from the rest of [the animals] is by nothing other than the intellect, from which there is no benefit save in the diminution of goods and the spoiling of pleasures and comforts. And when the light of reason (*badīhat al-ʿaql*) attests that this resulting conclusion must surely be false, and that the human being is the noblest of animals and the highest of them in power and worth due in fact to the occurrence of the intellect in him, then it is evident that the perfection, majesty, and loftiness of the intellect (which is the cause of the devaluing of the temporal corporeal goods) must absolutely be in its obtaining the perfections which occur

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[72] Parts of these sentences are missing from the printed edition. The manuscript states:
إنما كلما حصل فإنّه يزول الالتذاذ به و حصوله يقوي الرغبة في طلب الزيادة لأنّ كثرة الفعل سبب لحصول الملكات الراسخة و امّا التفكر في الأحوال المستقبلة فهو يوجب الخوف الشديد و الفزع التام لأنه لا يعرف أنّه يحصل على وفق المراد أو على خلاف المراد.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 306v.

> after the death of the body. And this indicates that the soul is not the body, and that it survives after the death of the body.[73]

Rāzī appeals to the nature of the human being as torn between the physical and the intellectual, the corporeal and the non-corporeal, in this proof of the survival of the soul after death and its non-corporeal nature. His argument also tells us a great deal about the function and role of the intellect, which Rāzī views as the source of the human being's nobility, power, and worth. The intellect spoils bodily pleasure, and yet it is the foundation of the human being's perfection and felicity. Its function must therefore be one of preparing the soul for the non-bodily afterlife; one experiences intellectual pleasure in this life which comes to full fruition through perfection of the intellect and subsequent eternal felicity after the death of the body.

A foundational belief in teleology and the goodness of creation undergirds Rāzī's argument; God cannot have created the human being without purpose and without some promise of just reward—a sentiment at odds with traditional Ashʿarite thought, which asserts that anything that God does is in fact good. Yet Rāzī notes that if the intellect were to spoil corporeal pleasures in this life for no reason, then the human being was created purely for torment. This, however, is not in the nature of a good Creator. Rāzī writes that what is at stake here is the very goodness of God's creation. If one accepts that good must be dominant over evil, there must be some purpose to the existence of the human being. This life is rife with suffering—if there is no afterlife, then the human being was created purely for torment. If there is to be any triumph, felicity, and goodness for the human being, it must be attained in the hereafter. And this, Rāzī notes, "indicates that the soul is not the body, nor a sum of its parts, and further that the soul survives after the death of the body, either in [a state of] felicity and well-being, or in [a state of]

[73] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 124-25.

misery."[74] Thus, the singular and unified soul, which survives as a non-corporeal essence that perceives both particulars and universals after the death of the body, experiences its just recompense in the afterlife—a state that Rāzī implies is the direct result of the development and function of the intellect during life.

2. Opposing Forces: The Body and the Intellect, the Lowly and the Lofty

This opposition between the soul and the body and their respective pleasures is apparent throughout Rāzī's later corpus, and is intrinsically related to the perfection of the soul and its eternal felicity. Rāzī emphasizes the superior nature of intellectual and spiritual pleasure, and its diametric opposition to bodily pleasure, in such works as the *Maṭālib*, *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, and *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*. As we will say in later sections, Rāzī also incorporates the performance of good works into the process of perfecting the soul, though it is the theoretical that is always loftier, and knowledge that is always privileged over works. In this, Rāzī's theory of knowledge and perfection falls squarely within the philosophical tradition. Ibn Sīnā's argument for the immateriality of the soul and a spiritual afterlife by appealing to the superiority of intellectual pleasure over the bodily is critiqued by al-Ghazālī in the twentieth discussion of his *Tahāfut*.[75] The proof is essentially Avicennian; rooted in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1072b15-20 and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174b20-35, Ibn Sīnā writes in the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifāʾ* of pure intellectual pleasure, of far greater perfection that that achieved by the senses, that the soul attains when it apprehends and becomes one with the intelligibles, thus "becoming an intellectual

[74] Ibid., vol. 7, 127.
[75] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifah: a parallel English-Arabic text* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 212–17.

world in actuality."[76] After death, Ibn Sīnā notes, the soul sheds the impediment of the body and may, potentially, enjoy infinite pleasure. Rāzī was likely influenced by Ibn Sīnā's assertion of the superiority of spiritual pleasures and descriptions of the spiritual afterlife in the eighth class of the *Ishārāt*.[77] He may also have considered Ibn Sīnā to be much in line with the views of Aristotle, given the contemporary understanding of Aristotle's positions on the soul and the various pseudo-Aristotelian texts attributed to the Stagirite. Al-Shahrastānī, for instance, writes that Aristotle posited that the souls that are perfected and thus resemble the divine survive the death of the body to join the angels. These experience perfect pleasure that is intellectual, while those that have not been perfected in life experience spiritual pains. Aristotle affirmed the afterlife (*al-maʿād*) for souls, writes al-Shahrastānī, but denied a physical resurrection.[78]

Al-Ghazālī, too, echoed the importance of knowledge for the perfection of the soul (despite his critique of this as proof of a purely spiritual afterlife in the *Tahāfut*). He writes in the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* that knowledge (*ʿilm*) represents "a pleasure in itself which is sought for itself, a means to the afterlife and its felicity, and a measure of closeness to God Exalted who cannot be

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[76] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 298.
On Ibn Sīnā's views on the perfection of the soul in the afterlife, see also Gutas, "Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Rational Soul" and Shams Constantine Inati, "The Relevance of Happiness to Eternal Existence: Some Reflections on Ibn Sina's View," *Domes: Digest of Middle East Studies; Milwaukee, WI* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 12.

[77] While it is difficult (and perhaps impossible) to ascertain Rāzī's own positions in his commentary works, the very existence of Rāzī's extended commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārat wa-l-tanbīhāt* allows us to assert the significance of the *Ishārāt* for his own intellectual development and, naturally, his awareness of Ibn Sīnā's positions as expressed in this text. The importance of the text for Rāzī is further affirmed by his own introduction, in which he praises the *Ishārat* as containing (despite its brevity) much knowledge and wonder. Having already spent a good portion of his life in the attempt to understand the text, Rāzī writes that he then "desired to assert those benefits in guiding students in this great pursuit"—namely, through the intricacies of the *Ishārāt*. al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 1, 2-3. For his commentary on the eighth class of the *Ishārāt*, see Ibid., vol. 2, 562-588.

[78] al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, vol. 2, 193-94.

approached save by it…the root of felicity in this life and the next."[79] Rāzī, undoubtedly influenced both by al-Ghazālī's sentiments and by Ibn Sīnā's systematic association of intellectual contemplation with eternal felicity, produces his own proofs of the superiority of the intellectual over the bodily and the ultimate force of this diametric opposition in determining the nature of a person's afterlife.

Rāzī is explicit about the relationship between knowledge and the felicity of the soul in the eighth argument of ten in the section that has been our focus in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* ("The strong proofs considered regarding the affirmation of the soul"). The section seeks to prove once again that the soul is not the body, but it does so by elucidating the way in which intellectual and spiritual occupation perfects the soul at the expense of the body. The details provide us the link between knowledge and the soul, as well as an illustration of the way in which both paths (the intellectual and the mystical) are employed for the perfection of the soul.

Once again, because of the import of this section, I will translate it here in full. Rāzī writes:

> The light of reason (*badīhat al-ʿaql*) stipulates that a single thing, in relation to [another] single thing, cannot be simultaneously the cause of its perfection and its deficiency. If this is established, then we say that we know necessarily (*bi-l-ḍarūra*) that perseverance in much contemplation (*afkār*) of the subtle sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-daqīqiyya*) necessitates perfection of the state of the soul. For the soul, due to these contemplations, moves from potentiality to actuality in the intellectual perfections, and becomes luminous, radiant, shining, and delighted. And perseverance in much contemplation, as mentioned, necessitates deficiency in the state of the body, and its destruction; for when occupation with those thoughts and drowning in them occurs, dryness overwhelms the brain, the state of digestion is weakened, and the state of the body worsens. So it is established that perseverance in the aforementioned contemplations necessitates both the perfection of the state of the soul and the deficiency of the state of the body. If the soul were exactly that body, or a part of its parts, then the single thing, in relation to a single thing, would simultaneously be the cause of perfection and deficiency.

[79] al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, vol. 1, 12.

> And that is impossible. It must then be said with certainty that the soul is something other than this body, and other than every one of its parts—and that is the desired conclusion.
> And know that the aforementioned consideration is specific to the theoretical faculty (*al-quwwa al-naẓariyya*); but this is also evident in the [spiritual] exercise of the soul (*riyāḍat al-nafs*) through fasting and detaching [oneself] from the world of bodies. Experience indicates that if the person were to persevere in eating, drinking, and taking delight in bodily things, his intellectual faculty becomes deficient and is corrupted, and nothing of it remains with him to which he can turn or from which he can take heed.[80] This is well known through a saying which goes, "bellies destroy intelligence (*al-baṭna tadhhab al-fiṭna*)." But if the human being exerts himself (*rāḍa nafsihi*) in resisting foods, and abstaining from the bodily pleasures, and sits in a dark room in which he sees nothing and hears nothing, and attempts to eliminate sensible forms and bodily inclination[81] from thought and imagination, and perseveres in this state for an extended period of time – then his soul comes to be at the extreme of perfection, and his body at the extreme of weakness and emaciation. And this consideration indicates that all that is a cause of the felicity of the soul is exactly that which becomes a cause for the distress of the body. And all that is a cause of the distress of the soul, is exactly that which causes felicity of the body. And that indicates that the soul is something other than the body and is not a part of this body or its organs.[82]

This short passage offers us Rāzī's characterization of the relationship between the soul and the body as well as the intellectual and spiritual capacities of the soul. In a parallel to the two paths to knowledge, Rāzī writes that it is thinking on the "subtle sciences" (*al-ʿulūm al-daqīqiyya*) that perfects the intellectual faculty and thus the soul while at the same time weakening the body. The person may also devote themselves to spiritual exercises which also lead to both spiritual perfection and bodily emaciation. In either case, the soul strengthens at the expense of the body,

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[80] The printed edition omits a key section of the text which can be found in the manuscript. The manuscript states:

اعلم أن الاعتبار المذكور مختص بالقوة النظريّة و هو أيضا قائم في رياضة النفس بواسطة التجويع و الانقطاع عن عالم الاجسام فإن التجربة دلت على أن الإنسان إذا كان مواظبا على الأكل و الشرب و التفرج و التنزه بالجسمانيات فإنه يختل قوته العقلية و تفسد و لا تبقى معه فيها شيء يلتفت إليه و يعتبر به.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 303v.

[81] I follow the manuscript here in translating *mīl* rather than *mathal*. See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 303v.

[82] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 119-120

or vice versa; while the soul is embodied, the two are diametrically opposed. Rāzī further notes that the body's sleep, akin to death, allows the soul to awaken to the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) and receive what he calls "trustworthy dreams" (*al-manāmāt al-ṣādiqa*) after comprehending some of the states of that world. The body and the soul are entirely at odds; "the life of the soul, its felicity, and its awakening, require the death of the body, its suffering, and its passing away."[83] One cannot dominate without the other suffering, and of the two, it is only the soul's perfection that will allow for eternal felicity.

The assertion of the superiority of the non-corporeal over the corporeal is oft-repeated throughout the *Maṭālib*. Already in the first pages of the first introductory section to the work, Rāzī gestures at the superiority of spiritual pleasures as indicative that these inquiries into God represent the most noble of all sciences.[84] He posits that "diving into the tumult of those pleasures entices the soul from the highest climes of the world of holy spirits to the lowest depths of the world of brute animals."[85] While the bodily pleasures represent the gravest of dangers for the human soul, "the spiritual felicities, however, are eternal, everlasting, elevated, and noble, drawing the soul from the depths of brutishness to the pinnacle of angelic being (*malakīya*), and from the shadows of the world of bodies to the heights of the worlds of pure holy entities."[86] Given the spiritual import of refraining from an excess of bodily pleasure, Rāzī emphasizes this point again and again throughout his corpus.

Rāzī seeks to prove that bodily pleasures are in fact inferior in a section of the seventh volume entitled "On clarification that the intellectual pleasures are more noble and more perfect

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[83] Ibid., vol. 7, 120-21.
[84] This section is translated in Appendix I.
[85] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 39.
[86] Ibid.

than the bodily pleasures." He offers ten arguments against the view that the most intense pleasures and the most perfect felicities are to be found in eating and in sex, a view which he ascribes to the masses.

These pleasures, he argues, are experienced by animals as well – and yet the human being is superior to the rest of the animals. While both animals and humans share in these corporeal pleasures, the human being seeks these pleasures less than animals because he possesses an intellect which, Rāzī writes, "is called *ʿaql* because it is used to hobble (*ʿaqāl*^{an}) [the person], and bars him from most of that for which he craves and that to which his nature inclines."[87] Animals access these pleasures more completely, due to their lack of intellect, than human beings; thus, it is known axiomatically (*bi-l-badīha*) that these sensual pleasures must not be that which brings about joy and felicity for human beings.

Further, Rāzī argues that these bodily pleasures are not true pleasures but rather represent the staving off of pain. Eating, for instance, is merely the prevention of hunger, as evidenced by the increased enjoyment one takes in eating while hungry. Any pleasure taken from clothing is merely due to the protection it provides from the pains of heat and cold. There is, Rāzī writes, no felicity (*saʿāda*) in these pleasures—they are merely the prevention of displeasure rather than being themselves true pleasures. Additionally, Rāzī writes that one knows through necessary knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī*) that the felicity and joy of the angels is more perfect than that experienced, for instance, by a donkey. And yet angels do not experience the pleasure of eating, drinking, or sex. If human beings are to approach the divine, it must be in ways other than these

[87] Ibid., vol. 7, 298.

pleasures.[88] Ultimately, Rāzī concludes that it is known through human experience and through axiomatic truths that these bodily pleasures are far inferior to that which is experienced intellectually. "The virtue of the human being, and his perfection, is only manifested through the true sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ḥaqīqiyya*) and virtuous morals (*al-akhlāq al-fāḍila*)."[89] It is thus the soul, and not the body, that allows for human perfection through knowledge and good works.

The human soul while embodied exists at the crossroads between these two influences. If it focuses on those pleasures which are this-worldly, it is dirtied by these influences and condemned in the afterlife. Yet if it involves itself with that which is non-corporeal, including the pursuit of what Rāzī terms "intellectual pleasure" (*al-ladhdha al-ʿaqliyya*), it is drawn to the loftier influences. The first benefit of prayer, in fact, is a positioning of the soul away from that which is bodily and towards the divine. Through prayer, one's soul confirms the perfection of God and His power in the upper and lower worlds, "and in this way this felicity occurs for the soul; and the greater the perseverance in this path, the greater is the detachment from the lower world, and the more complete and more perfect is the pull towards the loftier world."[90] Rāzī implies that the first and foremost effect of prayer is in rectifying that to which the soul has become accustomed in this lowly existence by repositioning it away from the corporeal and towards the spiritual delights.

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[88] This argument is relayed in the twentieth discussion of the *Tahāfut* as one of the proofs for the superiority of spiritual pleasure over the bodily as made by the philosophers as evidence for a spiritual resurrection. al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifah*, 214. It is also to be found in the second section of the eighth class of Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*. For Rāzī's commentary on this section of the *Ishārāt*, see al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 566.

[89] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 302.

[90] Ibid., vol. 7, 271-72.

These sentiments are repeated in the *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ* (alternatively entitled *Kitāb fī ʿilm al-akhlāq*) which is devoted to various topics in the science of character and practical ethics.[91] The basis for Rāzī's understanding of moral development is his utter rejection of sensual pleasure as being diametrically opposed to spiritual and intellectual progress. Here, Rāzī offers an extended form of the argument that all bodily pleasures are simply the repulsion of pain rather than being, themselves, true forms of felicity.[92] He also devotes pages to the discussion of the person's experience of distress in the past, present, and future due to an absence of, or a fear of losing, these pleasures.[93] Amongst his arguments is the statement that these pleasures negate the meaning of humanity, "for the human being is human due to the obtainment of the light of the intellect and its insight into the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) and the divine lights (*al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*)."[94] Embroilment with these pleasures muddies the intellect and allows one's bestial nature to overwhelm that which makes the person truly human. Furthermore, full occupation with these corporeal pleasures disallows the person from worshipping and remembering God; "since those are the most noble cognitions of the levels of creatures, and these sensual pleasures are a barrier from them, then [these sensual pleasures] are the basest of all things."[95] Finally, the danger of these bodily pleasures is most acute for the afterlife, for one who is most wedded to them experiences the greatest degree of pain upon separating from the body at death.[96] Rāzī thus warns that she who is so absorbed in the experience of bodily pleasure

[91] Altaş's study concludes that the text is among Rāzī's later works, written in 605-606/1209. Altaş, "Fahreddin er-Razi Eserlerinin Kronolojisi," 153.
[92] al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Nafs wa-l-rūḥ*, 96-98.
[93] Ibid., 100-107.
[94] Ibid., 99.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 99-100.

will not devote herself to the attainment of knowledge or to the development of her intellect. The person's attachment to his body in life will lead to inconsolable misery upon his soul's separation from it at the point of death.

Rāzī also emphasizes the importance of theoretical speculation for the perfection of the soul in the *Tafsīr*. "Persevering in exact thoughts (*al-afkār al-daqīqa*) has an effect on the soul and on the body," he writes.[97] As for the soul, it is the exercise of the mind in this way that moves the soul from potentiality (*al-quwwa*) to actuality (*al-fʿil*) in its thoughts and graspings; "and the more there are these thoughts, the more perfect are the states obtained—and that is the purpose of its perfection and the end of its nobility and majesty."[98] The perfection of the body is achieved in its very decay, as it wilts away with the increased attention given to thought at its expense.

This fundamental push and pull between the lofty and lowly pleasures is explored fully in Rāzī's *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā,* which, he notes, he wrote in 604/1208 (two years before his death, after composing the first part of the *Maṭālib*). Rāzī's taxonomy of pleasure includes three divisions, namely, bodily, imaginal, and intellectual (a classification that reflects his characterization of Ibn Sīnā's hierarchy of pleasures in the eighth class of the *Ishārāt*).[99] His arguments on the lowliness of bodily pleasure are much along the same lines of those we have

[97] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 50.
[98] Ibid., vol. 21, 50.
[99] Regarding the eighth class of the *Ishārāt*, Rāzī writes, "Know that it appears that the Shaykh called for the necessity of proving the existence of a pleasure that is beyond the external sensible pleasures. Then, in the first part of this class, he showed that the imaginal and estimative pleasures are stronger than the external sensible [pleasures]. And in the second part, he showed that intellectual pleasure is stronger than the external, sensible pleasures." al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 563.

seen in the other works; he writes that these pleasures are in fact merely the repulsion of pain,[100] and seeks to illustrate the impurity and baseness of such bodily pleasures as taste and sex,[101] as well as the weak and fleeting nature of those pleasures.[102] He characterizes the general experience of trying to obtain such earthly enjoyment as exhausting for the seeker, and life in this earthly realm as one of pain and distress, with pleasure and goodness being scarce.[103]

Rāzī describes the second category of pleasure as "imaginal" (*khayāliyya*), and defines it as that pleasure which comes from leadership and fame. Yet he dismisses this drive as not only exhausting for the seeker with ever-more ambitious desires that are always left unfulfilled, but also as, in itself, ignoble and base. He seeks to show that any outcome of the attempt to acquire power leaves the seeker dissatisfied; if one is unsuccessful, one's suffering increases, while if one does succeed, then one desires even more power.[104] Further, the very nature of such domination over others is vile, and even the obtainment of leadership does not allow one to escape from the utter dissatisfaction that characterizes life in this world.[105]

Rāzī ultimately dismisses any sciences that only provide this-worldly benefit given "that we have proven the vileness of corporeal life."[106] As for "the intellectual sciences," Rāzī writes that they can be divided into those desired for their own sake, or for the sake of something else. Logic is that which serves other inquiries, and its nobility is in accordance with the nature of that which it assists. As for those intellectual sciences that are desired for their own sake, these are

[100] al-Rāzī, "Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā," 217–19.
[101] Ibid., 220–24.
[102] Ibid., 224–27.
[103] Ibid., 227–29.
[104] Ibid., 232–33.
[105] Ibid., 233–51.
[106] Ibid., 251.

divided into four categories: knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God (the most noble of all intellectual pursuits); knowledge of the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*); knowledge of the upper world; and knowledge of the lower world. The subsequent passages illustrate these inquiries, including discussions of syllogistic reasoning and axiomatic truths, of the nature of spatial extension and time, of the nature of God as that which influences the existence of all else, the problem of good and evil, and modalities. One may indeed note that it is to these four categories of inquiry into metaphysics that Rāzī devotes discussion in his *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya,* a work contemporaneous with *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*.[107]

The opposition between the body and the mind and their requisite pleasures is representative of the fundamental distinction between the non-corporeal realm of the angels and the corporeal sublunar realm. One short passage in the *Maṭālib* emphasizes this key division; at the end of a section that treats inspiration (*ilhām*) and temptation (*waswasa*), Rāzī writes:

> The masters of revealings (*aṣḥāb al-mukāshafāt*) were confused on the account of the exact difference between the satanic thoughts (*al-khawāṭir al-shayṭāniyya*) and the merciful thoughts (*al-khawāṭir al-raḥmāniyya*), and their discussion of it was lengthy. We say that we have shown that intellectual felicities (*al-saʿādāt al-ʿaqliyya*) that are connected to the world of the separates (*ʿālam al-mufāriqāt*) are more perfect and superior to the felicities linked to the world of corporealities (*ʿālam al-jismāniyyāt*). All that beckons you to something of the spirituals (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*) represents the merciful summoning, and all that beckons you to something of the pleasures of this world and its goods represents the satanic summoning.[108]

Ultimately, then, the division between the intellectual and the bodily is a division between that which connects to the world of the eternal spiritual beings—i.e., the celestial intellects and souls,

[107] Rāzī also refers his reader to the *Maṭālib* in his discussions of causation in *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dūnyā*. See Ibid., 260–61.
[108] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 331.

as discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation—and the sublunar world of generation and decay that will largely become inaccessible to the soul when the body dies.

While other animals partake in neither the intellect's powers, nor its temporal anxieties, these intellectual and spiritual perfections achievable by humankind are shared with the angels. In a section that recounts various opinions on the causes of the movements of the heaven, Rāzī appears to align himself with the view that their movements are caused not by a desire for physical perfection (as, he writes, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā maintain) but rather in order to achieve spiritual perfection. He considers three possible kinds of spiritual perfection, all of which are centered upon knowledge. The first perfection that may be achieved is that of life, which Rāzī still associates with the attainment of knowledge—for ignorance is connected to both stillness and death, and life is associated with movement and the intellect.[109] The second possible goal of the movement of the spheres is the "acquirement of knowledges and cognitions (*al-ʿulūm wa-l-maʿārif*) and the intensification of the perfection of [these knowledges and cognitions]."[110] Rāzī emphasizes not only the highest degree of perfection allowed by the achievement of such knowledge, but also the height of pleasure and felicity experienced in its achievement. These spheres are "drowning in the obtainment of this kind of felicity," which they achieve through this movement and the subsequent attainment of knowledges and cognitions. Finally, the third possible goal of the movements of the spheres is to seek the perfection of the intellectual faculty, which Rāzī writes is supported by the differences between planets as asserted by astrologers, their primary goal being an imitation of the divine, and their physical movements being akin to

[109] Ibid., vol. 7, 361.
[110] Ibid., vol. 7, 362.

the prostrations of worship. We may note that at the center of each of these three kinds of spiritual perfection recounted is knowledge and the intellect.

We see, particularly in Rāzī's later works, an emphasis on this division between the corporeal and non-corporeal, the bodily and the spiritual. The intellect may be perfected through theoretical inquiry and spiritual exercises, ensuring both the everlasting felicity of the soul and the weakness of the body during this life. Conversely, the more the body experiences pleasure, the greater is one's attachment this world, the poorer is one prepared for the afterlife, and the more intense is one's pain upon separating from the sublunar realm at the death of the body. These oppositional bodily and spiritual delights are associated with various levels of the cosmos. Human beings share the experience of bodily pleasure with the other animals of the sublunar realm, while intellectual perfection and the subsequent spiritual felicity is also experienced by the angels in the celestial realm. To partake in bodily delights drags the soul to the level of beasts; yet to perfect one's intellect through metaphysical inquiry and/or spiritual exercises and physical regimentation is to elevate one's soul within this cosmological hierarchy to the realm of the celestial angels.

3. Knowledge and the Afterlife

As we have discussed, Rāzī views the soul as perceiving particulars and universals in this life and the next, and as surviving the death of the body as the true essence of the human being. The body is not an essential aspect the human person; rather, it is an instrument for the soul to acquire certain kinds of particulars in this life. Various passages in the *Maṭālib* allow us not only to assert that Rāzī understands the soul to survive the death of the body as the full essence of the

person, but also that this disembodied soul experiences a verification of knowledge acquired in life and a continued relationship with embodied souls.

While embroilment in bodily pleasures is harmful for the human soul, the body nonetheless aids the embodied soul in its acquirement of new knowledge. The relationship between the body and soul is described through a variety of metaphors in a section entitled "On the relationship between the organs and faculties to the substance (*jawhar*) of the soul." These are attributed to "the sages" (*al-ḥukamāʾ*); given Rāzī's repeated description of the sages as achieving the same degree of perfection as that attributed to the prophets, this section may be taken to largely represent Rāzī's own understanding of the relationship between soul and body. Further, Rāzī integrates concepts that he has asserted elsewhere, including the division between axiomatic (*badīhī*) and acquired knowledge and the role of the senses in acquiring knowledge.[111]

Rāzī states that the sages hold that the soul, when in the bodily world, employs the body as an instrument (*ʾāla*) "to acquire beneficial knowledge and good work."[112] He relates various similes that illustrate the relation between the soul and the rest of the faculties. The body and its parts he likens to the various actors in a city, with the rational soul being its ruler. Alternatively, the rational soul is like a knight mounted for the hunt, with its desire (*shahwa*) as its horse and its passion (*ghaḍab*) as its dog. Or, the body is like a well-constructed house, with the soul being the owner of the home. Ultimately, "what is intended from all these instruments is that they acquire the embellishment of knowledge, and this soul becomes imprinted with (*munaqasha bi*) the

[111] Ibid., vol. 7, 285-86.
[112] Ibid., vol. 7, 286.
We have seen Rāzī elsewhere denounce that the soul *requires* the body in order to perceive particulars; this statement should be taken to mean that the body allows the soul to access certain kinds of particulars, but that the soul may grasp particulars whether it is embodied or not.

engraving (*naqsh*) of the world of the *malakūt*, adorned with the adornment of the divine, the Living that does not die."[113] The body, employed in the best manner, is utilized to acquire knowledge and to perform good acts in order to perfect the soul. Both Rāzī's language and sentiment here echo Ibn Sīnā's description of the perfection of the rational soul in the *Shifāʾ*. Having apprehended the form of the entire intelligible world, the rational soul, according to Ibn Sīnā, "thus becomes transformed into an intelligible world that parallels the existing world in its entirety… imprinted with (*munaqasha bi*) its example and form, affiliated with it, and becoming of its substance."[114] Employing al-Ghazālī's theologized term for the philosophical concept of the intelligible world, Rāzī nonetheless echoes the conviction that perfection represents the embellishment of the self that results from the imprinting of knowledge of the non-corporeal realm upon the soul.

A section in the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* addressing the visiting of burial sites elucidates the nature of the existence of the disembodied soul after death and allows us to posit the importance of both correct spiritual orientation and the accruement of knowledge during the life of the person. This section, Rāzī notes, is a summary of a letter responding to the questions of the king [Ghiyāth al-Dīn] Muhammad bin Sām bin al-Ḥusayn al-Ghūri.[115] Having proven, he

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[113] Ibid., vol. 7, 288.
[114] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 350.
[115] Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 599/1203) was one of the more powerful rulers of the Ghurid family who resided primarily in Fīrūzkūh. Rāzī was initially under the patronage of Ghiyāth al-Dīn while living in Herat, until ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad of the Khwarazmshahs conquered the city in the summer of 605/1208 (five years after Ghiyāth al-Dīn's death). At that point, Rāzī came under the patronage of the Khwarazmshahs. Rāzī likely wrote the seventh volume of the *Maṭālib* during this volatile period in Herat, finishing the volume in the fall and winter of 605/1208-1209. Despite his remark that this sub-section is excerpted from a letter to the Ghurid king, the volume as a whole was likely completed under new patronage. Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 326–30.

writes, that the souls of human beings survive after separating from the body, he approaches the question of visiting the tombs of the dead by discussing the difference between the souls that are embodied and those that are disembodied after the death of the body. In some ways, he notes, the souls that are disembodied are stronger; "having separated from their bodies, the cover disappears, and the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) and the secrets of the stations of the hereafter are revealed to them."[116] While the language here is theological, the sentiment reflects that which is expressed by Ibn Sīnā in *On the Rational Soul*. Ibn Sīnā writes that, upon the death of the body, the soul no longer experiences the obstacle of its relation to the body and it is able to receive the divine effluence (*al-fayḍ al-ʾilāhī*) in its totality. While Ibn Sinā views the Active Intellect as the primary medium of this emanation, Rāzī—as we have previously noted—rejects the Active Intellect and views all of the celestial intellects and souls (the angels) as mediators between the human and the divine.[117] Further—and of great interest for our discussion here – Rāzī writes that that which was known demonstratively (*burhāniyya*) before death becomes necessary (*ḍarūriyya*) after separating from the body. Whereas souls while embodied exist in what Rāzī describes as a state of "dust and smoke," upon the body's demise, "those souls shine, become clear, and radiate, and, in this way, a kind of perfection occurs for the souls separated from bodies."[118] Thus, whatever apodictic conclusions the soul reached through theoretical reasoning in life become absolutely certain in the afterlife, and the soul exists in a state of radiance unmarred by the body's functions.

[116] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 275.
[117] See Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 73–74; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 197–98.
[118] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 276.

However, those souls that are still embodied are superior in one way, Rāzī notes. For they still have, through the body, access to "the instruments of acquiring and seeking [knowledge]…and these souls, by mediation of successive thoughts and consecutive examinations, benefit every day from new knowledge and additional investigation."[119] The human soul, while embodied, experiences the world temporally and through bodily perception. As such, it is able to learn in a way that is not possible for the soul after the death of the body. This potential for new knowledge is unique to the embodied soul; while the disembodied soul can still grasp particulars (and retains the knowledge achieved in life, the continued grasping of which is not dependent on the body[120]), it evidently does not experience successive, temporal thought, nor does it have access to the instruments of perception that it wields while managing the body.

Rāzī here describes a view of the afterlife that is conditioned by the soul's relationship to the body during life. He writes:

> If the relationship of the souls to their bodies is one that resembles intense passion and complete love, then for this reason everything that it seeks to obtain in this world it does so in order to connect the good and comfort with this body. If this is affirmed, then when the human being dies and the soul leaves this body, that inclination remains, and that passion does not disappear except for after some time. And that soul remains greatly inclined to that body, pulled immensely to it. This is even more so the case for the school of thought that we have championed, namely that the rational souls grasp particulars, and that they remain characterized by these graspings after the death of the body.[121]

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Rāzī notes in the *Tafsīr* that the soul does not require the tools of the body for knowledges and cognitions. Assumedly, upon obtaining demonstrative conclusions, that knowledge remains with the soul after death. al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 21, 50.

[121] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 276.

Rāzī thus notes that if the soul does not disengage from bodily passions in life, it will long for them in its death—a pain that will be all the more acute because, Rāzī maintains, it still senses particulars after the death of the body.

While Rāzī contends that the rational soul grasps particulars even after the death of the body, his view of the afterlife is fundamentally influenced by the philosophical tradition. The sentiments resonate, for instance, with the seventh chapter of book nine of the metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā's *Shifā'*, in which he discusses a taxonomy of pain and pleasure in the afterlife. Ibn Sīnā writes that the enlightened soul, upon separating from the body, is aware of the excellence that it has attained and is able to sense in fullness the pleasure of such perfection (without the impediment of the body). The partially enlightened, having acquired the desire to perfect the intellect, but failing to accomplish this task in life, recognizes its own deficiency, resulting in commensurate torment.[122] For, Ibn Sīnā writes, "the primary [elements] of the positive disposition of knowledge are acquired only by means of the body, [and] nothing else—and the body is no more."[123] Those souls who were engrossed by the body—the sole distraction from the soul's insights in this life—will experience confusion and torment in the afterlife due to their ill-preparedness and the lack of that which had been their focus while embodied (an "accidental alien thing"), a distress that will nonetheless lessen as the soul is purified in the afterlife. He allows that those who have acquired some desire for perfection –without acquiring bad dispositions—may find comfort in God's mercy, but those who have acquired bad dispositions will experience commensurate suffering as the focus of their desire (the body) is lost.[124] While

[122] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 352.
[123] Ibid., 353.
[124] Ibid., 355.

such a taxonomy is more elaborate than what Rāzī posits, the thrust of the system is the same. The experience of pleasure or pain in the afterlife is directly correlated for Ibn Sīnā, as for Rāzī, with the soul's disposition towards the body in this life. For those who have detached from the corporeal in this life and focused on the development of the intellect, the afterlife promises eternal felicity.[125]

Returning to Rāzī's letter as summarized in the *Maṭālib,* Rāzī then asserts that the benefit of visiting the tombs of powerful souls is that the soul of the visitor may in some way access the knowledge achieved by that disembodied soul, which Rāzī describes as "light." The letter is relatively short, and while it enumerates the benefits experienced by both the visitor and the visited, it provides scant detail on the mechanism by which this occurs. Rāzī writes that if a person is on the same level (*rutba*) as the powerful, perfect, and influential spirit visited, then she encounters that spirit and is affected by it. Of this encounter, Rāzī writes:

> And those two souls become like two polished mirrors (*marāʾayn ṣaqīlatayn*) placed in such a way that the rays of each are reflected in the other.[126] And all that occurs within the soul of this live visitor of demonstrative truths (*al-maʿārif al-burhāniyya*), acquired knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-kasbiyya*), and virtuous morals of the submission to God Exalted and the contentment with the decree of God Exalted, is reflected from him as light (*nūr*) to the spirit of the dead. And a light is reflected from all that occurs of brilliant knowledges and powerful, perfect effects in the soul of that [dead] person to the spirit of that live visitor. It is in this way that visiting (*al-ziyāra*) becomes a reason for the obtainment of great benefit and immense joy in the spirit of the visitor as well as the spirit of the visited.[127]

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[125] Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, 109-113.
[126] The image of the soul becoming like a polished mirror echoes the same phrase found in Ibn Sīnā's *On the Rational Soul*, in which he writes that the soul becomes like a polished mirror (*mirʾā ṣaqīla*) as the result of its purification through knowledge and works. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 71; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 196.
[127] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 276-77.

The relationship between the embodied and disembodied souls is one of mutual exchange of comprehension and morality. The soul of the dead benefits from both the knowledge and ethics achieved by the live visitor, and that visitor receives "brilliant knowledges" from that powerful, no longer embodied spirit. The passages also confirm the importance of acquiring knowledge while embodied, for that which was understood demonstratively in life becomes necessary for the soul in its death. The brilliant existence of the soul is fundamentally tied to its state of knowing, which, even for the disembodied soul, is ever-expanding.

Rāzī's letter in many respects parallels a response attributed to Ibn Sīnā on visiting graves. Ibn Sīnā writes that if a soul reaches a certain degree of perfection in life, it joins the supernal intellects and souls in eternal felicity, influencing the sublunar realm just as the chain of celestial causes, terminating in the Active Intellect, influences this world. When a prayer is offered, or a burial site visited, an influence occurs from these perfected souls that effects the person who visits both physically and spiritually.[128] Given Rāzī's characterization of the soul as joining its celestial kin upon death, the mechanism of influence must surely be the same; just as the celestial souls and intellects influence events in the sublunar realm, so too can the powerful souls who have disengaged from their bodies after death produce effects upon this world.

This benefit of visiting the dead is affirmed in another section in which Rāzī appeals to revelation for proof of the soul being other than the body. As one of his proofs, he offers the evidence that it is customary for those possessing reason to visit sacred shrines, to pray, fast, and appeal to God, and to ultimately experience an evident beneficial effect from their visits. Remarkably, given that this section appeals to the Qur'ān and the Sunna, Rāzī adds that "it is

[128] Ibn Sīnā, *Traités mystiques d'Abou Alî al-Hosain b. Abdallah b. Sênâ ou d'Avicenne* (Brill, 1889), 46–48.

said that the companions of Aristotle, whenever a question was difficult for them, would go to his tomb and discuss it, and that question would reveal itself to them."[129] It appears that Rāzī understands these disembodied souls to be guides of sorts for the embodied souls living in the sublunar realm. The description of the souls of the disembodied seeking to perfect those still-embodied souls may well be rooted in the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, who write that "when the complete and perfect souls depart from their bodies, they become taken up with helping the deficient [still] incarnate souls, so as to make some of them complete, and others perfect."[130]

The importance of both spiritual orientation and intellectual contemplation in life becomes apparent in these sections. For Rāzī, correct spiritual orientation towards the non-corporeal allows one to disengage from bodily pseudo-pleasures in life and to position oneself towards that which transcends the material realm, thus preparing one's soul for a non-corporeal afterlife. The nature of the afterlife is determined by one's preparation in life, by one's relation to the corporeal, and by the knowledge obtained while still accessing the tools of bodily perception. While one has access to the instruments of the body in life and can thus gain certain kinds of new knowledge through perception and temporal thought, with death, all the impediments of the body fall away and the properly prepared soul is able to fully achieve perfection and absolute spiritual felicity. Even in death, this disembodied soul may connect with still embodied souls and share in the perfection of knowledge and ethics, reflecting the brilliance achieved in each through a profound bond.

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[129] Ibid., vol. 7, 131.
[130] Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: Sciences of the Soul and Intellect. Part III, An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 39-41* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 221.

4. Revelation and Knowledge

4.1 Revelation in Rāzī's Methodology

Thus far, we have employed the section of the seventh volume entitled "The strong proofs considered regarding the affirmation of the soul" as our guide in drawing out how Rāzī conceives of the human soul, the body, and the afterlife. The following section supports these views through an appeal to revelation and is entitled "Traditional proofs on the soul not being the body." We will use this section to introduce our discussion of the meaning, purpose, and utility of revelation for Rāzī.

Rāzī begins by noting that "a group of those said to trade in the true sciences" has denounced this assertion of the soul being non-corporeal as being contrary to the Qur'an and the Sunna.[131] This, Rāzī states, is absolutely false; rather, the Holy Book and the Sunna are filled with proofs indicating that the soul is not, in fact, the body. The section appeals not only to Qur'anic verses but also to axiomatic truths, which, as we discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, Rāzī also considers to be God-granted. Rāzī argues that the Qur'an and Sunna support the proposition that the soul alone survives the death of the body, and that the soul experiences either felicity or misery in the afterlife.

While Rāzī offers extended examples illustrating that the soul is non-corporeal, one example in particular allows us to highlight the nature of knowledge for the soul. Rāzī writes that certain verses of the Qur'an indicate that the human being returns to God after death in happiness and blessedness. Rāzī here focuses on the final verses of Sūrat al-Fajr, which read, "O reassured self (*nafs*), return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing; enter among My servants, and

[131] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 129.

enter My paradise" (Q 89:27-30). He writes that that which is intended by "the reassured self" "is that obligation, by which reassurance is achieved, that it is necessary to shun the corporealities and devote oneself to the world of the separates (*al-mufāriqāt*) and the spirituals (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*)."[132] As we have noted in the third chapter of the dissertation, what Rāzī likely means by the separates and spirituals are the celestial spirits and intellects associated with the physical heavens. Rāzī interprets the remaining verses to describe the state of the soul in its return to God. First and foremost, Rāzī highlights the soul's knowledge; the soul will be "reassured in the true sciences and the virtuous morals that do not dissipate because of the vanishing of the body."[133] Secondly, the soul will be pleased with its Creator in all things, and thirdly, it will be pleasing to God in all of its convictions and morals. The thrust of the soul's purpose in this life is twofold: firstly, the soul must acquire knowledge that it will retain after the death of the body; and secondly, guided by this knowledge, the person must cultivate good morals from which they benefit in both this life and the next.

As exemplified in this passage, Rāzī primarily references the Qur'ān in the *Maṭālib* to confirm a conclusion he has reached through theoretical reasoning. The two reinforce the same argument and illustrate as well the cohesion of theoretical reasoning based on God-granted axiomatic truths, and knowledge bestowed through divine revelation. Yet this is not the only role played by revelation for Rāzī, for he views it as a medium offered between human beings and the divine that allows for a kind of perfection not otherwise achievable. The full import of revelation for Rāzī is illustrated in his discussions of prophecy and in his own self-disclosures as he approaches his own death and anticipated afterlife.

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[132] Ibid., vol. 7, 132.
[133] Ibid.

4.2 Prophecy and the Imamate: Perfect and Perfecting

The passage above also illustrates what Rāzī sees to be the purpose of religion; while he views Islam as the superior way, every true religion exhorts its followers to shun what is this-worldly in favor of the non-corporeal and the spiritual and works to instantiate virtuous ethics in its community. The prophet mediates between the earthly and celestial realms and works to perfect his followers' theoretical and practical faculties, i.e., their knowledge and their actions. He is characterized by intellectual and spiritual excellence, and is both perfected by his relation with the celestial realm and perfecting of those human beings who are beneath him on the cosmic ontological hierarchy through his conveyance of received revelation. Revelation, therefore, is formed in such a way as to perfect the masses who, by nature, are of various spiritual and intellectual capacities.

While traditional Ashʿarite thinkers of the 10th and 11th centuries, including al-Ashʿarī himself as well as al-Juwaynī, believed that a prophet could only be recognized by the miracles he performs, a shift to the judgment of the prophet by his message and moral character occurs with al-Ghazālī and continues through al-Rāzī's works.[134] While Rāzī does not refer to Ibn Sīnā's argument that states that divine providence must provide a legislator to order human association,[135] his arguments for the proof of prophecy by his message is likely inspired by Ibn

[134] Frank Griffel, "Al-Ġazālī's Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into Aš'arite Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy: A Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 101–4.
[135] See Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 364–66 and Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt fī l-ḥikma al-manṭiqiyya wa-l-ṭabiʿiyya wa-l-ilāhiyya*, 338–40.

Sīnā's view of the prophet as both psychologically perfect and sociologically perfecting of his followers.[136]

Rāzī maintains that while the performance of miracles generally indicates some kind of divine favor, the manner of that favor is unclear.[137] While Rāzī's views on the recognition of prophecy shifted throughout his career, in this section of the *Maṭālib* he writes that affirmation of the prophet by his message is, on the other hand, demonstrably certain. Rāzī additionally argues that the Qur'an in fact indicates that this is the true way of confirming prophecy with verses that gesture at the perfection of the prophet's theoretical and practical faculties and his ability to

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[136] Ayman Shihadeh, "Aspects of the Reception of Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in Islamic Theology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (July 1, 2012): 27.
Griffel asserts the possibility that Rāzī was aware of the treatise *Fī ithbāt al-nubuwwa*, ascribed to Ibn Sīnā but of doubtful authenticity, and was influenced by it in developing his theory of a continuum of human capacity, at one end being the human beings of perfect theoretical and practical faculties. The treatise seeks to prove the existence of the prophet by arguing that accessing intelligibles solely through intuition (*ḥads*) must be an essential attribute of some human beings (namely the prophets). However, as Griffel also notes, the notion of a continuum of capacity terminating in one of perfect ability is evident in other works of Ibn Sīnā, including the *Kitāb al-Nafs* of the *Shifāʾ,* in which he states that it is possible, given the deficiency of some, that there exist one of naturally perfect intuition and syllogistic reasoning even without being taught. The continuum of human capacities contains the extremes of, on the one hand, one who possesses no intuition, and on the other, one who operates with intuition in all or most inquiries. This loose proof of the existence of prophets as human beings of perfect capacity is far closer to Rāzī's arguments than those presented in *Fī ithbāt al-nubuwwa.* For discussion of this continuum, see Ibn Sīnā, *Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text)*, 249. For analysis of *Fī ithbāt al-nubuwwa*, see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 1 (1963): 49–56. On its possible connection to Rāzī's proofs and to al-Ghazālī's views on prophecy, see Griffel, "Al-Ghazali's Concept of Prophecy." For an (albeit flawed) Arabic printing of the text, see Ibn Sīnā, *Tisʿ rasāʾil fī l-ḥikmah wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt* (Cairo: Dār al-ʿArab lil-Bustānī, 1989), and for an English translation, see Ralph Lerner, *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 112–21.
[137] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 123.
For a detailed analysis of Rāzī's views on the confirmation of prophecy throughout his lifetime, see Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī,* 129-154.

perfect these faculties in others.[138] The Qur'an also contains verses that indicate that "love of this world overpowers souls and spirits; when the body dies, the soul remains in [a state of] loss and deprivation."[139] Yet this state of distress may be avoided through the perfection of the theoretical and practical faculties in the self and in others. Most human beings' souls are sick, inclining away from God and towards the material realm; the prophet is he who is able to treat this spiritual illness.[140]

In a section entitled "On distinguishing this way from the previous way"[141] which compares the two methods of recognizing a prophet, Rāzī writes that the human being is perfected by "knowing truth for its own sake" and by performing works guided by that knowledge.[142] This view of the prophet as inherently perfect and therefore capable of perfecting others is a shift from the understanding of prophets as ordinary human beings graced with God's revelation that was prevalent in 11th century theological schools. It is rooted in Ibn Sīnā's explanation of prophecy through appeal to psychological abilities rather than miracles. However, the Active Intellect—so prevalent in Ibn Sīnā's explanation of prophecy –is entirely absent from Rāzī's theory.[143] The dichotomy between the theoretical and the practical reflects the development of these two modes of knowledge in the Arabic tradition as rooted in Aristotle's

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[138] Ibid., vol. 8, 109-114.
[139] Ibid., vol. 8, 113.
[140] Ibid., vol. 8, 123.
This echoes as well al-Ghazālī's sentiment in *al-Risāla al-laduniyya* in which he describes the prophets as "doctors of souls" (*aṭibbāʾ al-nufūs*). See al-Ghazālī, *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 251.
[141] See Appendix VIII for a translation of this section.
[142] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 104-5.
[143] See Shihadeh, "Aspects of the Reception of Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in Islamic Theology."

concept of theoretical and practical wisdom.[144] Rāzī incorporates the dual function of reason as both theoretical and practical robustly into his understanding of human flourishing; the prophet, as one perfect in these faculties, must perfect these faculties in his followers by influencing not only their knowledge but also their acts as guided by that knowledge.[145]

This dual focus on knowledge and morality is to be found as well in Ibn Sīnā, who writes in the metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ* that, in addition to knowledge of the intelligible realm, "true happiness is not fully achieved except by rectifying the practical part of the soul"—in his case, though proper ordering of the faculties (while Rāzī's notion rather involves a proper orientation of the whole person towards the divine realm and away from the corporeal).[146] In *On the Rational Soul,* Ibn Sīnā states that the soul may only be rendered perfect through both knowledge and good works. Purification through works includes both its purgation of vile qualities, attributes, and habits, and its adornment with that which is good and praiseworthy by following in each case both reason and law (*ʿaql*^{an} *wa sharʿ*^{an}).[147] Purification through knowledge involves moving towards a state of actuality in which the intelligibles are fully present in the soul—a state that we have seen reflected in Rāzī's accounts of human development. Purification through works includes "perseverance in religious duties, both legal (*al-sharʿiyya*) and traditional (*al-sunan al-milliyya*)."[148] Thus, the wedding of knowledge with good works as they perfect the

[144] On Aristotle's account of practical wisdom, see *De Anima* III 9-11, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, and *Metaphysics* 993b20. Ibn Sīnā's accounts of the division between theoretical and practical faculties, rooted in Aristotle, are likely the basis for Rāzī's own theory. See, for instance, the division of the sciences into theoretical and practical and their roles in perfecting the faculties of the soul through knowledge and action in Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 2.
[145] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 107.
[146] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 354.
[147] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 71; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 196.
[148] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 71; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, 197. Translation own.

soul, while it certainly finds resonance in the theological traditions, is still much in keeping with Ibn Sīnā's developed philosophy.

For Rāzī, both the theoretical and practical faculties (which, we may posit, parallel the two paths of theoretical reasoning and spiritual striving) position the human being towards the non-corporeal realm with the ultimate purpose of perfecting the human soul by knowledge of God and ethical action.[149] The theoretical faculty, which Rāzī later states is the superior of the two,[150] must be perfected such that "the forms of things, and their realities, are revealed in it in a way that is both complete and perfect, and free of defect and error."[151] The practical faculty, while employed during the soul's embodiment in this world, directs the human person towards the non-corporeal. Perfection in this faculty allows for a disposition by which one performs good works. What is meant by good works, writes Rāzī, is states of being "that necessitate aversion to bodily felicities, and desire for the world of the hereafter (*ʿālam al-ākhira*) and for the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*)"—a conviction that Rāzī attributes both to the prophets and the sages of metaphysics.[152] Rāzī also describes the modes and purposes of each faculty in his *Tafsīr*. He writes:

> The soul has two faculties. The first is its preparation to receive the forms of existents from the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*), and this is the faculty which is called the theoretical faculty. And the felicity of this faculty is in obtaining knowledges (*maʿarif*); and the noblest of knowledges and the most sublime is the knowledge is that there is no god save Him, which is indicated by His saying, "Warn that there is no god save Me" (Q 16:2). And the second faculty

[149] Despite their absence from the text, Rāzī interprets sections both on the failings and triumphs of the human soul as outlined in the eighth class of Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt* through this dichotomy, namely, through possible deficiencies and perfections of the theoretical and practical faculties. See Rāzī's commentary on the eleventh through fourteenth sections of the eighth class of the *Ishārāt*, al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, 579-582.
[150] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 111.
[151] Ibid., vol. 8, 104.
[152] Ibid.

> of the soul is its preparation for administering over the bodies of this world; and this faculty is that which is called the practical faculty. And the felicity of this faculty is in performing good works, the noblest of which is the worship of God exalted, as indicated by His saying, "so fear Me" (Q 16:2). Since the theoretical faculty is nobler than the practical faculty, there is no doubt that God made the words of the theoretical faculty (these being His saying "there is no god save Me") precede the words of the practical faculty ("so fear Me").[153]

Thus, Rāzī follows Ibn Sīnā's dichotomy of the theoretical and the practical, demanding that the soul both achieve knowledge of the intelligible realm and practice "good works." Both knowledge and ethics are employed to perfect the human person, and while they retain their emphasis on knowledge, God is the focal point of each and their perfection is accomplished through divine revelation. For Rāzī (as for Ibn Sīnā), while both prophets and saints have perfected these faculties, it is the prophets alone who are able to treat those who are deficient in these faculties, bringing them "from the depths of deficiency to the pinnacle of perfection."[154] The prophet is effectively a healer of spiritual maladies, treating the essential failing of the rational soul that consists in turning away from God and towards God's creation.[155]

Rāzī's argument for the very existence of the prophet as the pinnacle of human existence exhibits a remarkable openness to, and integration of, Shiʿī and philosophical beliefs. Human beings, Rāzī writes, are of various levels of perfection depending, firstly, on the place in which they live, with the most advanced human beings living in Persia (Irānshahr).[156] In every age, there is one who is the most perfect individual. The Sufis, Rāzī notes, have named this person

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[153] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 19, 221.
[154] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 104.
[155] Ibid., vol. 8, 108.
[156] Characterizing peoples through geographical determinism participates in a tradition that, for the Islamic world, stems from Aristotle (see the *Politics* 1327b). The assertion that the most perfect place is Persia, while in keeping with Rāzī's own origins, can only strike one as odd given that the birthplace of Islam is in Arab lands.

"the Pole of the World" (*quṭb al-ʿālam*), while "the community of the Shiʿīs and the Imāmīs[157] call him 'the Infallible Imam' (*al-imām al-maʿṣūm*) and 'the Lord of the Age' (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*), and they say that he is in occultation (*ghāʾib*)."[158] The human being is the focal point of the creation of the non-corporeal world, and the noblest aspect of this existence. He possesses a "theoretical faculty by which he acquires the holy lights from the world of the angels, and the practical faculty by which he is able to manage this corporeal world in the best manner and most perfect way."[159] As the pinnacle of human existence, the single, most perfect person in each age (*dawr*) represents "the fundamental aim (*al-maqṣūd al-ʾaṣlī*) of this material world" with all else being subordinate to him.[160] His very existence is the essential aim of creation, while those human beings who are deficient are merely accidental.

Rāzī incorporates Shiʿī concepts of the imamate based on a theory of the continuum of human deficiency and perfection fully into his understanding of human excellence. In each age, just as there exist those who approach the level of beasts in their extreme degree of imperfection, there also must be one who is *most* perfect and free of such defects. It is in this sense, Rāzī writes, that this person is called "the Infallible Imam" (*al-imām al-maʿṣūm*) by the Shiʿīs and Imāmīs. He is also called "the Lord of the Age" (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*), "for as we have shown, that person is the essential aim in that time and all else is his followers."[161] Further, Rāzī notes that he

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[157] I follow the manuscript here in separating these groups with a *waw*. See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 370v.
[158] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 106.
[159] Ibid., vol. 8, 105.
[160] Ibid., vol. 8, 106.
[161] Ibid.
The manuscript includes an additional sentence here which makes the paragraph more cohesive. It reads:
و هو ايضان صاحب الزمان لأنا بينا أن ذلك الشخص هو المقصود بالذات في ذلك الزمان و ما سواه فالكل اتباعه ...
See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 370v.

is said to be in occultation (*ghāʾib*) because he is not recognized by the people of his age. Rāzī adds his own interpretation of his lack of recognition, stating:

> And I say that perhaps they do not recognize that person as the best of the people of the age because he, himself, knows the state of himself but cannot know the state of others, and that that person is not recognized by others and also does not recognize himself. This is as it was related in the divine narrations, that God Exalted said, "My saints are under my shrines, not recognized other than by me."[162]

Rāzī's understanding of human perfection and the imamate is not based on hereditary lines, but rather upon a natural continuum of human excellence. Further, if these perfect human beings of all ages are considered together, then surely one will stand out as the most remarkable, occurring perhaps once in a thousand years or so. "That person," Rāzī states, "is the greatest messenger, the noble prophet, the originator of Laws, guide to the truths; and his relation to the rest of the Lords of the Ages is like the relation of the sun to the rest of the planets."[163] One who is closest to this pinnacle of perfection exists as the moon in relation to the sun, "and he is the Imam Arising (*al-imām al-qāʾim*), his position being the establisher of his Law (*muqarrir sharīʿatihi*)."[164] The relation of the rest of humanity to these perfect human beings are as the events of the sublunar realm to the planets; they are affected by these perfect beings, "perfected by the lights of the intellects of the Lords of the Ages, and are strengthened by their power."[165] This argument, notes Rāzī, "is rational and derived through this induction that aids sureness and certainty."[166]

Rāzī further describes the prophet by his relation to the celestial realm. Human beings are beneath the angels in rank, and yet the pinnacle of human existence would connect to the lowest

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[162] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 106.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid., vol. 8, 107.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.

ranks of those spiritual beings. Being close to the celestial realm, he would also embody certain attributes characteristic of that plane. Rāzī writes:

> Since we have demonstrated that that person who exists at the highest point of the stages of humanity must be connected to the world of the angels and mixed with them, and since freedom from bodily attachments, power over the world of bodies, and having no need in their actions of the corporeal instruments are among the traits of the world of the angels, then that person who is characterized by what is appropriate of these attributes has little regard for corporeal things, is powerful in his comportment in them, and is intensely pulled towards the world of the spirituals (*ʿālam al-rūḥāniyyāt*). His theoretical faculty is thus perfected by the varieties of manifest holy truths (*al-jalāyā al-rūhānīya*) and divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ilāhiyya*), and his practical faculty effects bodies of this world through various modes of comportment (that is what is intended by the miracles). Then, after the completion of these two stations, his spiritual faculty is effective in perfecting the deficient spirits in their theoretical and practical faculties.[167]

Like the angels (or, as we have discussed in the third chapter, the celestial intellects and souls), the prophet is perfected by divine knowledge and effects the world of bodies by the strength of his soul. Finally, he is further able to perfect that which is beneath him, playing his own role in the cosmic hierarchy. With perfect theoretical and practical faculties, he is able to improve those deficient in one or both capacities.

Rāzī's characterization of religion as suitable for the masses in its generalities and noble lies falls much in line with Ibn Sīnā's sentiments in the metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ* and in the *Najāt,* in which he states, regarding prophecy, that the prophet must not involve the masses with anything beyond his statement that God "is One, the Truth, and has nothing similar to Him."[168] In granting more intricate details of God's relationship to the classes of existents, for instance, the prophet will simply confuse his followers, as "it is only the very few among them that can

[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 365; Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt fī l-ḥikma al-manṭiqiyya wa-l-ṭabiʿiyya wa-l-ilāhiyya*, 339.

understand the truth of divine 'unity' and divine 'transcendence.'"[169] This may well lead the others into dissensions that are at cross-purposes with the well-being of the city. As Rāzī later echoes, for the vast majority of people, God's majesty may only be known through symbols, similitudes, and parables. Convictions in such matters as resurrection, which can be understood by the masses, should be taught by the prophet, while the true nature of the afterlife should only be taught through generalities.[170]

Echoing Ibn Sīnā's sentiments, Rāzī writes that in order to be effective in perfecting the greatest percentage of people, the prophet's message should not be conveyed in the form of argumentation (*jadal*) or reasoning (*istidlāl*), for this would elicit counterarguments and further questions from his audience. Instead, the prophet must:

> present demonstrative proofs (*al-bayānāt al-burhāniyya*) blended, through the method of rhetoric (*bi-ṭarīqat al-khiṭāba*), with enticement and intimidation (*targhīb wa l-tarhīb*). For due to what is present of the power of demonstrative premises, it will remain significant in the intellects; and because of what is present in it by the way of rhetoric, its effect on the hearts will be more perfect and it will further distance its audience from poor morals, which are the result of discord.[171]

Thus, it is the prophet's imperative not to present his revelation through purely rationalist means, but rather to appeal to all members of society in a persuasive manner that nonetheless conveys demonstrative truths. Further, the need to appeal to the majority of human beings precludes his incorporation of pure deanthropomorphism (*tanzīh*) into the religion, though a balance must be struck by which God is shown to be above all resemblance to created beings.[172] All save the intellectual elite should be barred from investigating the intricate details of the religion, and

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[169] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 366; Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt fī l-ḥikma al-manṭiqiyya wa-l-ṭabiʿiyya wa-l-ilāhiyya*, 340.
[170] Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 366;
[171] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 116.
[172] Ibid., vol. 8, 116, 124-25.

certain views of utility should be advanced among the masses –such as the human being's existence as a free actor, though all is by the will of God.[173] While all revelation acts to improve the theoretical and practical faculties of its followers, the Qur'an, Rāzī notes, is particularly effective in this goal. For Muhammad went to great lengths to praise various aspects of the divine in a general way, while "forbidding them from entering into the details (*al-tafṣīl*)"[174] Thus, true religion, and at its best, Islam, is a means of perfecting those who may not have the capacity to achieve knowledge and correct spiritual orientation without its aid.

Rāzī echoes this characterization of the purpose and function of revelation in his *Tafsīr*. In his exegesis of the fifty-ninth verse of Sūrat al-Anʿām, which states, "With Him are the keys of the unknown; none knows them save He. He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf falls that He does not know, nor a grain in the earth's shadows. No fresh nor withered thing is not written in a clear record" (Q 6:59). The verse exemplifies the way in which Rāzī understands the Qur'an to make itself accessible to the masses. While the first phrase of the verse ("With Him are the keys of the unknown (*al-ghayb*)") is esoteric, "a purely intellectual premise that is difficult to understand in a complete and perfect manner save by those in possession of perfect intellects," the following phrases of the verse illustrate the meaning through concrete examples such as the land and the sea.[175] These connections to the sensible realm flow naturally from the esoteric aspect of the verse, and they aid each reader, regardless of intellectual capacity, to comprehend its meaning.

[173] Ibid., vol. 8, 117.
[174] Ibid.
[175] al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 13, 9.

Rāzī thus integrates philosophical, Shiʿī, and Sufi concepts of human perfection into his theory of prophecy. The prophet is of utmost excellence in both the theoretical and practical faculties who is also able to perfect these faculties in others. Thus, Rāzī in the *Maṭālib* writes that prophets should be confirmed not by their performance of miracles but rather by their message. They exist as links between the human and angelic realms and aid their followers in positioning themselves towards the non-corporeal and perfecting their souls through knowledge of God and ethical actions. Prophets are healers of spiritual maladies who must address the masses of humanity; thus, revelation must speak in generalities and forbid those who are incapable of doing so from delving into the subtle details of religion.

It is the recognition of this last point that was, it seems, a great source of existential anxiety for Rāzī as he approached his own death. What are the limits of the intellect vis-à-vis revelation and metaphysical truth? Had he done these questions justice in his own life, and had his inquiries enriched that which was already granted through revelation?

4.3 Reason and Revelation

As we have discussed particularly in the second chapter of this dissertation, reason within Rāzī's system is undeniably limited. While his methodology is highly rationalist in its seemingly endless analysis of various viewpoints for logical deficiencies, syllogistic reasoning itself is founded upon axiomatic truths that are, by nature, confined to that which may be accessed through the senses. While reason may approach the divine, there are boundaries beyond which it cannot cross. The intellect reaches upwards through its employment of theoretical reasoning, and revelation meets it at its limits. Inspiration is received through the angelic realm, representing a flow of knowledge from the divine to the human mind that allows one to know truths that exist

beyond the limits of intellect. Revelation as conveyed by the prophets is accessible to the intellectual and the non-intellectual alike, but its approachability makes its truths no less profound.

As we have noted in past discussions, Rāzī incorporates a robust understanding of divine revelation and inspiration whereby it is not only the prophets but also the saints and the sages who access divine knowledge by mediation of the angelic realm. As such, notions of the perfecting nature of revelation can be taken to refer not only to the Qur'an and, to a lesser extent, the other holy books, but also personal inspiration experienced by the spiritual elite. Nonetheless, it is this divine unveiling, and not advanced syllogistic reasoning, that Rāzī emphasizes as most essential for the perfection of the intellect and the attainment of eternal felicity. In his exegesis of the second verse of Sūrat al-Naḥl, which begins, "He sends down the angels with the spirit (*rūḥ*) of His command," Rāzī grants a metaphorical reading of spirit (*rūḥ*) as representing the Qur'an and revelation. He writes:

> The Qur'an and revelation (*waḥy*) are that by which the divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ilāhiyya*) are perfected. The lordly unveilings and these cognitions are that by which the intellect is enlightened, is purified, and perfected; the substance (*jawhar*) of the spirit (*rūḥ*) is perfected by the intellect, and the state of the body is perfected by the spirit. Thus, it is evident that the true original spirit is the revelation and the Qur'an, for it is by this that deliverance from the slumber of ignorance and the sleep of heedlessness is accomplished, and it is by this that the movement from the depths of bestiality to the heights of angelic being (*malakiyya*) occurs.[176]

Revelation, thus, is the starting point of a movement towards intellectual and spiritual perfection. Not uncharacteristically, therefore, human excellence begins and ends in divine grace. It is through the reception of knowledge from the divine realm that the human being awakens from a

[176] Ibid., vol. 19, 219-20.

"slumber of ignorance," and it is by these "holy cognitions" that the intellect, and subsequently the spirit and the body, are refined.

A similar sentiment is expressed in Rāzī's exegesis of the eighty-fifth verse of Sūrat al-Isrāʾ, which begins, "And they ask you about the spirit (*al-rūḥ*)." Rāzī asserts that this spirit is the Qur'an, as supported by its being called "spirit" in other key verses (such as "We have revealed to you a spirit (*rūḥ*^{an}) from our command" in Q 45:52 and "He sends down the angels with the spirit (*bi-l-rūḥ*) of his command" in Q 16:2). Further, Rāzī asserts that "the Qur'an causes the life of spirits and intellects for it is that by which knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God exalted and His angels, books, and prophets is obtained. Spirits (*arwāḥ*) are enlivened by these cognitions (*maʿārif*)."[177] These particular cognitions are indeed beyond the bounds of theoretical reasoning to immediately ascertain. They are beyond the physical and beyond the rational, representing a kind of knowledge that may only be received from on high.

In light of what we have understood of Rāzī's epistemology and the roles of intellectual reasoning and spiritual perfection for the attainment of knowledge, we may approach passages that exhibit profound doubt about the efficacy of reason with a fresh perspective. Rāzī indeed praises revelation as far superior to intellectual reasoning, particularly in his final will and testament (his *waṣiyya*) and at key points in his late works. What emerges is the confluence of two key aspects of Rāzī as a thinker and as a person, namely: the existential anxiety of a man of both extraordinary rationalism and intense piety approaching his own death, and anxiety which appears to ebb and flow in his later works; and a wedding of this recognition of human limitation with his own mature theories of epistemology. Rāzī's entire later project is one of testing and

[177] Ibid., vol. 21, 38.

recognizing the limits of human rationality while incorporating revelation to reach metaphysical truths that exist beyond the power of the intellect. The intellect, he acknowledges throughout his corpus, is powerful but not infinitely so. Revelation—including not only the Qur'an but also the Torah and the Bible—allows human beings to access key truths that would otherwise be beyond them. With increasing recognition of the difficulties of achieving certainty on metaphysical topics, Rāzī returns more and more often to the glorification of the divine found in the Qur'an.

At the conclusion of *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, which largely praises intellectual pleasure over the imaginal and the sensible, Rāzī expresses his recognition of the limits of rationality in both prose and verse. He writes:

> Yet the intellectual pleasures cannot be reached nor approached nor connected to! It is for these reasons that we say: O, had we only remained in initial nonexistence, and not witnessed this world! If only the soul had not joined with this body! In this sense, we say:
> The end of reason's progress (*ʿuqūl*) is hobbling (*ʿiqāl*) / And most effort in the universe is in vain (*ḍalāl*)
> Our spirits dwell in the alienation of our bodies / And the result of our worldly existence is misery and pain
> We do not derive any benefit from our lifelong investigations / save to compile "It is said, and they said"
> And how much have we seen of men and nations / thus perished altogether, hastened and vanished
> And how many mountains were surmounted / By men who perished, while mountains remained[178]

In many ways, these lines read as anguish at the limitations of the intellect and the impossible existence of the human being as transitory and caged in a useless body and yet gifted with an inadequate mind. The tone is much in line with the rest of the text, which is devoted to

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[178] al-Rāzī, "Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā," 262.
The poem is an excellent example of *zuhdiyya* poetry, which highlights the human person's helplessness and the forces of destiny, the treachery of the world, and mortality, as well as the value of asceticism. On the *zuhdiyya* genre, see Andras Hamori, "Ascetic Poetry (zuhdiyyāt)," in *Abbasid Belles Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 265–74.

explicating the transience and dissatisfactions of this worldly existence. His distress is palpable; he has spent his entire life pursuing what he has termed "the lofty pursuits" (*al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya*) and ultimately has come to recognize the utter imperfection of the human intellect. He continues:

> Know that after delving into these straits and immersing myself in investigating the secrets of these truths, I saw that the most correct and the most proper in this topic is the way of the great and noble Qur'an, and that is abandoning [both] deep penetration and the inference of the existence of the Lord of the Two Worlds by the classes of the bodies of the heavens and the earth, and exceeding in glorifying without plunging into details...it is established that my intellect and my understanding are too deficient to arrive at the essence of the truth of an atom of the atoms of Your creations.[179]

While the general sentiment of frustration is not uncharacteristic of Rāzī and appears at various points throughout his later corpus, the shift within a single treatise is striking. Only the last and prior section of this text praised the lofty pursuits of intellectual inquiry as the only means towards true pleasure, with a discussion of the very proof that he has dismissed in the conclusion.[180] Yet the final words shrug off the thrust of the body of the text and the efficacy of that which he has praised as granting meaning to this very worldly life—namely, the pursuit of metaphysical truth through the exercise of the intellect resulting in "intellectual pleasure."

After admitting that ultimately he found the generalist way of the Qur'an to be most appropriate for the human being when it comes to praising God, Rāzī proceeds to critique any way in which God may be praised as entirely inadequate. The passage is ultimately one of submission; Rāzī recognizes God as absolutely beyond the limits of human rationality and language, and appeals to simple obedience to the divine through the general praise established in

[179] Ibid., 263.
[180] Namely, this being the proof of God's existence through the existence of all else as contingent. See Ibid., 260–62.

revelation. The intellect, he asserts, can approach no closer to the divine than through revelatory verses.

Thus, within a single text, Rāzī has praised the employment of the intellect and the pleasure derived from its usage in the exploration of metaphysical matters, and bemoaned its utter limitations. Ultimately, he ends the treatise with a plea for God's forgiveness for any of his errors, and that all that he has accomplished by God's grace be accepted from him. The lasting impression of these final lines is Rāzī's conviction that all that he has written, taught, and preached in his life has been executed with piety and good intention, and that God alone may judge his successes and his errors. Yet one cannot but be struck by the pessimism of the treatise as a whole, which appears to leave nothing redeeming for the human being's existence save knowledge of God through revelation. It seems, however, that this lapse into despair was temporary, for Rāzī went on to complete the majority of the *Maṭālib* after *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā.*[181]

A similar sentiment, though less pessimistic, is echoed only two years later in Rāzī's final will and testament. He begins a statement on his own life by saying, "Know that I was a man who was a lover of knowledge (*ʿilm*), and I would write something about anything, regardless of quality or quantity, whether it was true or false, meager or meaty."[182] Rāzī was indeed a prolific writer who wrote thousands of pages in dozens of books and treatises in a single lifetime, and he

[181] *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā* was completed in 604/1208. Rāzī completed parts two to seven of the *Maṭālib* in the fall and winter of 605/1208-1209. Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," 326. However, *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā* refers to the third and fourth books of the *Maṭālib*, suggesting that the books may have been written earlier but revised after writing *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā.* Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 10–11.

[182] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 27. The *waṣiyya* is quoted in full by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa.

here acknowledges his own tendency to write at length about topics about which he had achieved varying degrees of certitude. He notes that he devoted his works to an exploration of God as that which manages the sensible world, a God that is characterized by power, knowledge, and mercy, and is beyond all comparison. As in the conclusion if *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, Rāzī returns ultimately to the efficacy of the Qur'an over theoretical reasoning in producing knowledge of the divine. "I tried the paths of theology and the ways of philosophy, and I saw no benefit in them that equals that that I found in the great Qur'an," for once again it is the Qur'an that praises God in general terms, but prevents one from delving (*al-taʿammuq*) into contradictions and discrepancies—"and what is that save the knowledge that human minds are destroyed and vanish in those deep straits and hidden ways!"[183] It is, in fact, this delving (*al-taʿammuq*) into contradictions and discrepancies that Rāzī employs to describe his own methodology in earlier texts.[184] This sentiment, similar to that expressed in the conclusion of *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, seems to poke fun at the arrogance of his younger self, and acknowledges the absolute limitations of his own mind and method as he approaches death.

Rāzī offers a taxonomy of conclusions that harkens back to his general methodology of appealing to that which is self-evident. Rāzī writes that he upholds all that was established in "evident proofs" (*al-dalāʾil al-ẓāhira*) regarding God, and that he "meets God through them."[185] That which ends in subtlety he compares with views that are accepted as in accordance with revelation. Yet he does not state here that he regrets exploring these intricacies, but rather

[183] Ibid.
[184] See, for instance, Rāzī's introduction to the *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, in which he describes his method of one of "thoroughly investigating (*istiqṣāʾ*) the questions and responses and delving (*al-taʿammuq*) into the sea of difficulties." Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Fūda (Beirut: Dar al-Dhakhāʾir, 2015), 99.
[185] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 27.

maintains his own pious intent in their pursuit.[186] As for these subtle points that fail to resonate immediately with the agreed upon meaning of revelation, Rāzī appeals to God's mercy as he approaches death. He writes:

> I say, O God of the two worlds, indeed I see that people agree that you are the most generous of the generous, the most merciful of the merciful; unto You is what my pen wrote and what my mind thought. I bear witness to Your knowledge, and say: If you knew of me that I wished to verify the false or falsify the true, then do with me as befits such action. Yet if you knew of me that I attempted only to establish what I believed was the truth, and imagined was right, let Your mercy be with my intention and not with my result.[187]

Rāzī seeks God's forgiveness for his errors while maintaining that God is too merciful to punish one whose faults stemmed from slips in judgment that were due not to ill intent but rather to human weakness. For neither the "gnosis of the knowers (*ʿirfān al-ʿārifīn*) nor the errors of evil-doers" add to, or detract from, the power of the divine.[188]

Rāzī continues to praise the greatness of God, and to pray for mercy for any of his own human failings in life while maintaining his own good intent despite any errors in judgment into which he may have fallen. He finally appeals to those who follow him and requests that they remember him positively in their prayers. Once again, the impression is not one of repentance for what he has accomplished in his life, but rather of a simple plea for understanding after his death. He ends this section of his *waṣiyya* by stating:

> As for the scientific books that I authored (or, those in which I exceeded in conveying the inquiries of my predecessors), whoever examines something of them and finds those inquiries pleasing, let him mention me kindly and graciously in the piety of his prayers. Otherwise, let him omit the unkind word, for I desired

[186] Street argues that the treatment of Rāzī's *waṣiyya* as a kind of repentance was largely perpetrated by Ibn Taymiyya and subsequent authors who mischaracterized Rāzī's words. See Street, "Concerning the Life and Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."
[187] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *Kitāb ʿuyūn al-ānbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, vol. 2, 27.
[188] Ibid., vol. 2, 27.

> nothing save the increase of investigation and the honing of thought, and my reliance in it is upon God Exalted.[189]

It is evident that Rāzī recognizes that there are some who will simply not understand the thrust of his life's work, and will censure him even in their prayers for his intricate and seemingly endless consideration of possible arguments. His hope is perhaps not unlike that held by most prolific yet long-winded academics, namely, that those with an appreciation for the project remember him well, and those for whom it produces frustration omit any ill-wishes from their prayers (or book reviews!). Rāzī's assertion of the possible connection between the still embodied soul and that which is disembodied after death, particularly of his description of the followers of Aristotle and their aid in solving problems from the deceased, make the request even more profound. Perhaps it is Rāzī's hope that his life's work will not only benefit souls in this life, but will further establish between their souls and his a connection in the afterlife.

Conclusion

In his later works, Rāzī comes to accept the philosophically aligned understanding of the soul as the non-corporeal and immortal essence of the human being. Yet in contradistinction with Ibn Sīnā, Rāzī posits that the soul is absolutely unified, with this singular non-corporeal essence being not only that which thinks but also that which perceives, desires or dislikes, and produces movement in the body. Further, while Ibn Sīnā maintains that those faculties which perceive and respond to particulars are corporeal, Rāzī allows for the possibility that the disembodied soul still accesses particulars even without the aid of the body as its instrument. It is perhaps this capacity

[189] Ibid., vol. 2, 28.

to perceive particulars that allows the intellectually and spiritually perfected souls to guide those that are still embodied even after they themselves have separated from their bodies in death.

For Rāzī as for Ibn Sīnā, knowledge and works in life dictate the nature of the soul's afterlife. While still embodied, the soul's perfection, both intellectual and spiritual, occurs at the expense of the body. Yet focus on the non-corporeal allows the soul to rise to the ranks of the angels and to ultimately join these celestial kin after the death of the body. Further, revelation plays a crucial role for Rāzī in granting a path to correct spiritual orientation for those who are otherwise incapable of finding the way without guidance. The prophet is one who has not only perfected his own theoretical and practical faculties, but is also able to perfect these faculties in his followers through a message that is formed in such a way as to properly guide the greatest number of people of a range of intellectual and spiritual capacities.

It is perhaps this particular role of revelation, as well as Rāzī's conviction of the supreme efficacy of the Qur'an as a guide to correct belief and action, that produced significant tension between his intellectual and pietistic inclinations in his later years. Yet Rāzī's overall project is one that both acknowledges and tests the limits of intellectual inquiry, and even the anxieties evident in *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā* and his final will and testament (*waṣiyya*) are not out of character with the thrust of his later works.

As we have explored throughout the dissertation, Rāzī's later texts speak of two ways to knowledge of God, namely the intellectual and the spiritual. Yet it is the combination of the two, embodied in Rāzī's own life and works, that is the ideal path. While the intellectual way of knowing is limited by that which may be accessed through the senses to form axioms and, subsequently, syllogisims, the spiritual way relies upon the intellectual to recognize its own triumphs and shortcomings. The path of spiritual exercises and striving is intimately connected to

that which mediates between the human and the divine, namely, the spiritual realm. Revelation is conveyed through the angels, which Rāzī associates with the celestial souls and intellects of the philosophical tradition. It is the effect of these supernal beings that allows for extraordinary action, born out in both magic and miracles, as well as divine knowledge conveyed through revelation and inspiration.

The importance of knowledge for the soul is born out not only in Rāzī's views on its teleological role in perfecting the soul for its spiritual afterlife, but also in his own intellectual orientations and innovations. Particularly in forming his later views, Rāzī was not limited by creed or doctrine. While the importance of Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī for Rāzī is most pronounced, his sources included groups and thinkers unrestricted by time period, religion, culture, or native tongue, and included not only intellectuals of the Ashʿarite, Muʿtazilite, and *falsafa* traditions but also the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, the Hermetic corpus, the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān, and Greek and Hellenic philosophy (both pseudo and authentic).

Ultimately, Rāzī recognizes the limits of reason while still emphasizing its utter importance. Even in his final words, the importance of knowledge for Rāzī resounds. He has devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge and truth, and ultimately recognizes the efficacy of the kind of knowing revealed in the Qur'an over that which he has been able to achieve by reason alone. The *waṣiyya* closes Rāzī's life project with a tone of piety that is in keeping with his later works, and reinforces the notion that it is the way of inquiry and not necessarily the conclusions reached that are most important for Rāzī. To have lived a life pursuing the intellectual and spiritual, to deny corporeal pleasures in pursuit of truth and ethical action, is the best life that a human being can live in preparation for her soul's spiritual existence after it separates from this material body. While demonstrable conclusions are desirable, the very acts of

careful thinking and contemplative devotion to the spiritual over the material during life have a lasting effect on the immortal soul. In this sense, Rāzī's *waṣiyya* may be seen as closure of a significant but relatively brief opening stage, and as welcoming the next. We may posit that it is Rāzī's hope, read between the lines of the *waṣiyya* and interpreted through a careful reading of his later works, that his soul will survive the death of this alien, corporeal mass, and will, with God's mercy and grace, have been adequately prepared to join the celestial ranks in the spiritual afterlife.

Appendices

A note on translation:

I have chosen the passages from *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* to which I most refer in this dissertation for translation in these appendices. The translation is primarily based on the printed edition of the *Maṭālib* (edited by Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Aḥmad Saqqā and printed by Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī in Beirut in 1987). The printed edition, however, contains a fair number of errors, and so I have cross-referenced it with a manuscript that is clearly scribed and comprehensive (MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503). I have noted the points at which my translation follows the manuscript rather than the printed edition in footnotes. I have only deviated from the printed edition when it is at odds with the manuscript in such a way as to affect the intelligibility of the text (in which cases, it is consistently evident that the manuscript is superior to the printed edition).

Appendix I: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, introductory section 1[1]

[37] The First Section: On the demonstration that this science (*ʿilm*) is absolutely the noblest of sciences

Know that the nobility of the science (*ʿilm*) is evident in a number of aspects (*wujūh*):

The first of those aspects that entail nobility is the nobility of a given science's subject of study. In this science, [the subject] is the being (*dhāt*) of God Exalted and His attributes; and He is absolutely the most noble of existences. This is indicated by a number of reasons:

The first is that He requires neither acting, nor receiving [action], whereas all else is in need of Him.

The second is that He is absolutely singular and does not require the constitutive part (*al-juzʾ al-muqawwim*).[2]

The third is that the Necessary by virtue of Itself is no other than Him while all else is merely contingent by virtue of itself, and is in need of something that influences (*muʾaththir*) [its existence]. Thus, everything other than God is in need of Him, yet He requires nothing that is other than Himself. He must therefore be the most noble of all existents.[3]

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[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 37-40.

[2] The constitutive part (*al-juzʾ al-muqawwim*), also refered to as "the part that does not further subdivide" (*al-juzʾ alladhī lā yatajazzaʾ*) or "the indivisible part," is the most basic building block of matter as theorized by the *mutakallimūn* beginning in the 2nd/8th century. It is, however, the accidents associated with atoms that form the physical properties of reality. Without accidents, the atom has no actuality. God, being radically singular and utterly beyond the corporeal world, does not consist of atoms. It is worth noting, however, that Rāzī also considers the human soul and the celestial intellects and souls to be non-spatial substances that are not therefore atomistic in structure.

[3] Here, Rāzī refers to Ibn Sīnā's proof of God's existence as the Necessarily Existent by inference from the rest of creation as contingently existent. All that exists is either necessarily existent, or contingently existent. If it is necessarily existent, that is that which is being sought in the proof (God). If contingently existent, then the existent requires that which is necessarily existent in order to exist. Thus, there must exist an existent that is necessary in itself, i.e., God.

The fourth is that it is established that something contingent is in need of something that effects [it] (*muʾaththir*) during its creation, and hence is also in need of it in its perdurance. All that is other than Him is in need of Him at all times, [38] whether it be in the moment of creation or in its perdurance. And just as it is reliant on Him with regard to existence, so too is this the case with regard to nonexistence, since it is established that something contingent is not nonexistent by virtue of itself—rather, the cause of nonexistence is the nonexistence of the cause. This affirms what we said, that the Truth, Praise Be and Exalted, is more noble than all else, given these considerations.

The fifth is that existence is nobler than nonexistence, and the Necessary by virtue of Itself is utterly unreceptive to nonexistence; for He is the Existent by virtue Itself, and with His existence, existence occurs for every existent. Indeed, His existence is incompatible with nonexistence, whereas all that is other than Him is contingent by virtue of itself. When the contingent is considered in and of itself, it is without existence. And all that is other than Him, if considered in and of itself, is not existent. If He is considered in and of Himself, however, He is existent.

It is for this reason that we say that God is the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*)[4], and all else is false. Rather, the truth is that only He is worthy of being called "true," and the sole conviction that is appropriately described as "true" is the belief in His existence. All that is other than God is pure annihilation and pure loss, just as is stated in the Holy Book: "All things perish, save His Face"

For a discussion of this proof, see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Proof from Contingency for God's Existence in the Metaphysics of the Shifāʾ," *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1980): 337–352.

[4] This is a play on homonyms. God is *al-ḥaqq* (one of the ninety-nine names for God in the Islamic tradition), which can either be translated as "the Real" or "the True." God is the only "real" existent in the sense previously described, and Rāzī also plays on the homonym to draw out the dichotomy that all else is false as God is the only "True."

(Q 28:88). It is affirmed, by these considerations, that God Exalted is the most noble of all that exists, and the most perfect. Indeed, He is too noble and too perfect to even be compared with what is other than Himself. And the nobler is the thing that is known, the nobler is the knowledge of that thing – and so much more so for the noblest of known things.

The second way of elucidating the nobility of this science, the intensity of the need for Him, and the perfection of the benefit achieved from Him is that the most noble of sciences, from this point of view, is theology (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*). That is because the intended result is none other than attaining felicity and release from misery. And felicities are either bodily or spiritual, and philosophical proofs and true signs have indicated that [39] bodily felicities are base.[5] The least of these [proofs] is that both the base animals and human beings experience the same pleasures. Further, induction (*istiqrāʾ*) indicates that those base animals are stronger and more perfect when it comes to those pleasures than the human being. Also, intuition (*ḥads*) and induction (*istiqrāʾ*) both indicate that diving into the tumult of those pleasures entices the soul from the highest climes of the world of holy spirits to the lowest depths of the world of brute animals. Further, these pleasures are quick to conclude and vanish, whereas spiritual pleasures are safe from such extinction and preserved from annihilation. Additionally, everyone agrees that excessiveness in bodily pleasures is base. For everyone judges the human being who spends all his time eating and copulating to be a pure brute, based on the baseness of the pleasures and the ignobility of the endeavor. But as for the human being of whom it is thought that he limits such states, everyone naturally praises him, and recognizes his high class and perfect character. Thus, the masses are convinced that a person who has little desire for food, drink, and sex deserves

[5] Rāzī's late treatise, *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, evaluates a taxonomy of pleasure and dismisses corporeal pleasures as entirely base in favor of "intellectual pleasure" (*al-ladhdha al-ʿaqliyya*). This treatise is discussed at length in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

praise and attendance, reckoning themselves in comparison to such a one as slaves to lords. All of this indicates that these bodily felicities are base occurrences. The spiritual felicities, however, are eternal, everlasting, elevated, and noble, drawing the soul from the depths of brutishness to the pinnacle of angelic being (*malakiyya*), and from the shadows of the world of bodies to the heights of the worlds of pure holy entities. It is for these overpowering demonstrations that He said in the Holy Book: "And the enduring things, the good deeds, are better for your Lord as a reward" (Q 18:46/Q 19:76). And the master of revelation and Law related, regarding the Lord of Might Exalted, "I am a table companion of one who remembers Me." What we have said is thus evident—that is, the spiritual pleasures are more virtuous than the physical pleasures. There is no doubt that the chief of the spiritual pleasures, and their quintessence, is the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the First Principle and of the attributes of His glory and the characteristics of His perfection and greatness. Further, prophetic testimonies and wise signs (*al-maʿālim al-ḥakīmiyya*) have indicated that ignorance of this matter entails continuous torment and absolute loss, and that the attainment of this cognition entails [40] everlasting felicity and eternal dominion. So it must be that this science is the chief of all sciences, the noblest of their divisions, and the most sublime.

The third way of demonstrating the nobility of this science is that the perfect human being finds for himself that the more his spirit is immersed in these perfect cognitions, the greater his absorption in them, the fuller his attraction to them, and the more complete his removal from all else, then the better is his delight with himself, the more perfect is the power of his spirit, and the fuller is his joy in himself. And as much as this is the opposite, then so much so are the spiritual states and the psychological effects the opposite of what we have described. All this indicates that all felicities are tied to this cause and all perfections and blessings arising from this horizon. As He said in the Holy Book: "Truly, in the remembrance of God, their hearts are

calmed" (Q 13:28).

And the fourth way [in this demonstration] is that the considered benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) are either of this life or of the afterlife. As for the benefits of this life, they can only be carried out with the knowledge of the Origin and the Return. For if the true laws were not determined, order would perish, benefits would be in disorder, and turmoil would arise, and no one would safeguard himself or his loved ones. But as for the matters of the afterlife, not one of them can be fulfilled without knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God Exalted and of His angels, scriptures, and prophets, and the Day [of Judgment] and the hereafter; and that [knowledge] cannot be achieved except by this science.

It is thus clear from these investigations that we have undertaken that the principle of blessings, the source of felicities, and the spring of miracles is this science. And whoever thoroughly comprehends it, to the degree necessary, is at the last rank of humanity and the first of the angelic ranks.

Appendix II: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, introductory section 2[1]

[41] The Second Part: On whether human understanding has a path to achieving decisive judgment and certainty in this science, or whether it is sufficient in some of its investigations and inquiries to accept that which is more suitable and appropriate

I saw in some books that it was quoted from the great [sages] of wisdom (*ʿuẓamāʾ al-ḥikma*) and the masters of philosophy (*asāṭīn al-falsafa*) that they said that the utmost goal in this matter is accepting the more suitable and appropriate, and holding fast to the better and more perfect side, and that judgment that precludes opposition cannot be achieved in some investigations.

Those who hold to this statement advance their argument in several ways:

The first argument is that the most evident of things known, for all sensible people, is the person's knowledge of their own, specific self. Though it is the most evident of knowledges and the most obvious of cognitions, this knowledge reaches such a degree of difficulty and obscurity that intellects are incapable of attaining it. If this is the case for the most evident of things known, then how shall it be for that which is furthest from association with matters made known to people? This argument is complete with the establishment of [the following] premises:

The first premise is that the most evident of things known to every person is his specific self. This being so is indicated by the fact that everyone who knows something must therefore know his existence as a knower of [42] that thing—for he says, "I grasped this thing and knew it." Nonetheless, his knowledge of himself as knowing that thing is preceded by his knowledge of his particular self. For if one does not know his self, how can he judge himself to be knowing of that object of knowledge? They therefore said that every assent (*taṣdīq*) is preceded by

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 41-52.

conceptualization (*taṣawwur*).[2] It is obvious that the condition is antecedent in rank to the conditioned. This indicates that every person's knowledge of any known thing is conditioned upon his knowledge of his specific self, and preceded by his knowledge of his specific self. So it is affirmed that every person's knowledge of themselves is prior to their knowledge of all that is other than themselves, whether that knowledge be of obvious axiomatic truths (*al-badīhiyyāt al-jaliyyāt*), or of acquired knowledges (*al-kasbiyyāt*). That which is prior to all obvious truths takes precedence in its being obvious and axiomatic (*badīhīyan*). This demonstration affirms that the knowledge of every person of his specific self is the most obvious, evident, and powerful of things known.

The second premise in establishing that each person's knowledge of their own specific self is extremely difficult and obscure is indicated by the fact that the signified of every person's saying "I" is either: this visible shape; one of the existent bodies inside this shape; one of the attributes of this shape; or an essence abstracted from this body and its relations. The minds of intellectuals were bewildered (*ḥārat*) by these four divisions, and their heads spun in specifying them. From contemplating the investigations of discussions of the soul, one knows that this question has reached the utmost degree of difficulty. So it is affirmed that this knowledge (*ʿilm*) is obscure and difficult.

The third premise is that we have shown that the most manifest of known things is each person's knowledge of their specific, particular self. We have also shown that although it is the most manifest of known things, knowledge of [the self] reaches an extraordinary degree of difficulty, hiddenness, and obscurity. If this is established, then [43] we say that the Self of the Truth, Exalted and Praise Be, is different in essence and reality from all classes of contingent and

[2] See Chapter II, "*3.2 Meno's Paradox:* Taṣawwur *and* Taṣdīq" for a discussion of these terms.

created things.

So if the knowledge of the most manifest of known things reaches the degree of hiddenness and obscurity that we have described, then the knowledge that is of the attributes of the Existent that is no way similar to anything of the contingent things, is not analogous to anything (to be sure, It is furthest from comparison to the intelligibles and similarity to that which is reached by thought, remembrance, estimation, and imagination) – if [this knowledge] is extremely difficult, then [it should be considered as being of the kind that] is more appropriate (*awlā*) [rather than certain]. So it is affirmed that this noble knowledge is too lofty and majestic to be fully understood by the intellect; there is no possibility for human intellects except to accept that which is more appropriate, more perfect, and better.

Know that there is another explanation for the establishment of this proof, which is that induction indicates that the most manifest of known things for people are things that are limited, like the knowledge of every person of themselves, and like their knowledge of their time, place, and corporeality. Yet the intellect that dives into cognition of the soul and body, and of place and time, becomes bewildered (*tuḥayar*) and is incapable of deliverance (*khalāṣ*). If its state in knowing the most manifest of things is such as this, how would its state be in the cognition of the most hidden of things? In order to demonstrate the truth of what we have mentioned, we say:

The first [knowledge of apparent things] is one's specific self, and we have examined the truth of the case in it.

The second of them is one's knowledge of place and time. Everyone judges, by the light of reason (*bi-badīhat ʿaqlihi*), that he was in that place and moved from it to another place, or stayed in that first place. Knowledge of place is part of that knowledge. Also, every person judges by the light of reason (*bi-badīhat ʿaqlihi*) that this particular time is such and such a time,

and afterward says, "That time passed, and another time has come." Knowledge of the reality of time and duration is part of the knowledge that the first time passed, and a second time came. As for the intellectuals, their heads spun and their intellects were bewildered (*ḥārat*) in the cognition of the reality of place and time. As for place, the companions of Plato and all of the sages who came before him expressed agreement that [place] is an expression of extended dimension (*al-buʿd al-mumtadd*). But the companions of Aristotle agreed that it is an expression of an encompassing surface (*al-saṭḥ al-muḥīṭ*), and that the position [44] of dimension is invalid. The difficulty of this question is evident in the investigation of the question of place.[3] As for time, intellects were bewildered and heads spun in its cognition. If you reflect upon the question of time, and your intellect fully understands all the profound details and exact discussions in this question, you would know that this question has reached the utmost degree in difficulty and obscurity.

The third [knowledge of apparent things] is knowledge of the reality of the body. Minds were bewildered too on whether it is composed of indivisible parts, or whether the issue is not like this, and [that which is corporeal] is instead infinitely divisible.[4] Whoever delves into this question and knows the strength of the proofs of both sides knows that nothing can occur for the mind save bewilderment and wonderment, and the acceptance of what is more appropriate and more suitable. It is affirmed, through this induction, that the intellect's result when it comes to cognition of the most manifest of known things is solely absolute bewilderment and

[3] The fifth volume of Rāzī's *Maṭālib* includes extensive discussions of time and place. For an in-depth study of Rāzī's responses to the definitions of place presented by Plato, Aristotle, and Ibn Sīnā, and his argument for a definition of place as a self-subisting extension, see Peter Adamson, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Place," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (September 2017): 205–36.

[4] Questions on the nature of matter (*al-hayūlā*) are considered at length in the sixth volume of Rāzī's *Maṭālib.*

wonderment, and accepting the position that is more appropriate and suitable. So what is your opinion of the intellect when it encounters the glory of God Exalted and when it attempts to delve into inquiry on the true nature of His greatness and lordliness, the attributes of His majesty, and His honor in His knowledge, capability, and wisdom? This, then, is what is to be said upon this topic.

Something that adds a dimension to this discussion is the fact that geometry (*al-handasa*) is the most rigorous intellectual fields of study as agreed upon by the majority of intellectuals. For example, one may consider the book of Euclid in which he says that the classes of polygons commence with the triangle and continue indefinitely. Euclid then focused on the proof that establishes the triangle and the quadrilateral in the first chapter, and when he needed to prove the pentagon, he needed to present a premise for it. To do so, he produced a triangle that had two base angles [45] attached to the upper angle, then he divided each one of the two base angles into two; in this way he was able to make the pentagon. When he had undertaken the proof that the radius of every circle is the hypotenuse of a hexagon, there was no doubt that he could use this method to produce a hexagon. He then jumped from that to a polygon that has fifteen sides (the reason for this leap being that in order for him to produce the heptagon, he needed to present a triangle in which each of the base angles is three times the upper angle).

The executions of the book of Euclid did not supply the proof for this desired end [i.e., the heptagon]. Rather, it could only be established by dividing cones. He was surely unable to do this, and thus abandoned it. Further, the formation of the nonagon can only be proven in two ways. The first is that one produces a triangle of equal sides, then divides each one of the three angles into three equal parts. And we've shown that this too can only be executed through the division of cones. The second way is that one produces a triangle in which the two base angles

are each four times the upper angle—and he was unable to do it. As for the polygon that comprises eleven sides [i..e, the hendecagon], it can only be executed by producing a triangle for which the two base angles are five times the upper angle—which he was unable to do. And the same was true for the polygon that comprises thirteen sides [i.e., the triskaidecagon]. It is completed by the formation of a triangle for which the two angles above the base are each six times the upper angle; and he was unable to do it. But as for the polygon that encloses fifteen sides, he could form it by the premises that he established in his book—namely, he drew a triangle of equal sides inside of a circle, thus dividing the circle into three equal parts. Then he drew [46] the radius of the circle (that being the hypotenuse of a hexagon) in one part, then divided what remained into two. In this way, he divided every arc[5] into five equal parts and was thus able to produce a polygon that encloses fifteen sides. At this point, he stopped his work, and could do no more.

In sum, Euclid was able to produce proof the existence of five kinds of polygons: the triangle, the quadrilateral, the pentagon, the hexagon, and the pentadecagon. But as for the rest of the classes, which are infinite, his rules fell short, and his premises were inadequate to prove their existence.

As for those who mastered the geometry of cones, one school devoted themselves to establishing the heptagon and the nonagon, but the rest remained at the point of incapacity and insufficiency. What we have stated is thus evident: human intellects fall short, and human understandings are not sufficient to grasp the truth of things except for a very small portion of a wealth of what can be known of these sensibles (*al-maḥsūsāt*). So what, then, is your view of the

[5] The printed edition evidently contains a typo here. The manuscript scribes "*qaus*" (arc) rather than contextually nonsensical "*quwwatayn*".
See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 3r.

intellect when encountering the arising of the light of the divine, and the manifestation of the eternal beams (*aḍwāʾ*)?

The second proof in this matter is that the faculty of [external] vision and the faculty of internal sight (*baṣīra*) are alike. One may consider that the state of the faculty of vision, along with what is seen, occurs in three states:

The first state occurs with small (*ḥaqīra*) and weak objects of sight such as atoms and particles (*al-habāʾāt*). It is well known that the faculty of vision is not capable of grasping the likes of these objects of sight, is unfamiliar with them, and is not capable of apprehending those levels.

The second state comprises the objects of sight that are intense, overpowering, and lofty such as the disk of the sun when it is at [47] its zenith (*ʿand ghāyat lamaʿānihi wa ishrāqihi*). For the faculty of sight is [at that point] incapable of completely and perfectly grasping it. Do you not see that when sight views the disk of the sun at its zenith, it imagines a shadow and blackness in the middle of the disk of the sun? It is as if it imagines that the lights, when emanating from the sides of the disk of the sun, are emanating from the sides of a basin. As for the disk itself, which is like the basin, the person sees it as a black shadow. It is only that the sound mind judges that that shadow is not in fact occurring in the center of the sun—for it is the source of the lights, and the reason for their appearance! But the human being's faculty of vision is then overpowered by the perfection of those lights, and is unable to grasp [the full sight of the sun]. When it was incapable of grasping it, either it imagined shadow and blackness in it, or it perceived the light as if it were received at the edges of the disk and its sides.

The third state [of vision] represents the objects of sight that are balanced in strength and weakness, perfection and deficiency. These are, for instance, the qualities subsisting in the

bodies of this world. If the faculty of vision can investigate them, thoroughly comprehend them, and completely grasp them, then this demonstration that we have presented becomes evident: namely, the faculty of vision is deficient in grasping objects that are overpowering, and also deficient in grasping those objects that are weak, but it is capable of grasping the objects of vision that are balanced in strength and weakness, perfection and deficiency. And if you knew these three levels in the faculty of vision, then know their parallels in the levels of the faculty of mental perception and the intellect. For things which are known are of three classes:

The first [of the classes of known things] consists of the objects of knowledge that are weak and lowly (*ḥaqīra*), such as the levels of mixtures, changes, and differences that arise in the degrees of gaps (*istimālāt*) occurring in the existent, decaying bodies. Human intellects are not capable of grasping those levels and apprehending those degrees, because they are weak states that quickly dissipate and are on the edge of perishing and ceasing. Due to their weakness and lowness, human intellects are not able to grasp them in a complete and perfect way.

[48] The second [of the classes of known things] represents those objects of knowledge that are overpowering, lofty, and holy. These are the holy substances and the essences abstracted from bodies' relations. And the most noble and the loftiest of these is the Self of God Exalted and the attributes of His majesty and the characteristics of His greatness.

Intellects are incapable of grasping God Exalted due to the brilliance of His majesty, and imaginations and understandings are too weak to reach the arenas of the brilliance of His greatness. This is indicated by the Master of Law's statement that, "God has seventy veils of light, and if they were removed, the glories of His face would burn all that is in the heavens and the earth." And some of the believers would say, "Glory be to He who is veiled from intellects by the intensity of His appearance, and is hidden from them by the perfection of His light." And

if you knew this, then [it becomes apparent that] the intellect is incapable of grasping Him and cognizing Him because of the extraordinary degree of His power, perfection, and loftiness.

And just as sight is incapable of grasping the disk of the sun due to the perfection of its light—just as sight can only imagine of the sun blackness and shadow, and does not imagine emanation of light except on the edges of the disk of the sun—so too is it the case for the intellect. If it attempts to regard (*naẓar ilā*) the essence (*kunh*) of His greatness, a state of consternation and bewilderment (*ḥayra*) overwhelms it, and it does not see anything at all. Rather, it can see the light of His generosity, and the emanation of His goodness and mercy—and essentially, [it can look] to His creation—like we see the light of the disk of the sun emanating from its edges and sides.[6]

The third [of the classes of known things] consists of the objects of knowledge that are balanced. These are not at the extreme of power and sublimity, nor are they at the extreme of weakness and lowness, like these objects of knowledge that the intellectual faculty cannot grasp and comprehend thoroughly.

What we have established thus becomes evident by this consideration; that is, intellects are repelled, [49] thoughts overpowered, and minds are driven back. The reality of the truth cannot be comprehended by intellects' ideas and thoughts, and the greatness of the divine cannot

[6] The metaphor of God being like the sun, and thus ill-perceived if beheld directly, may be drawn from Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān.* In the last pages, Ḥayy describes the King, whose presence is the goal of the journey and who stands as a metaphor for the divine. "When one of those who surround His immensity undertakes to meditate on Him, his eye blinks with stupor and he comes away dazzled. Indeed, his eyes are most ravished by him, even before he has turned them upon Him. It would seem that his beauty is the veil of His beauty, that His Manifestation is the cause of His Occultation, that His Epiphany is the cause of His Hiddennness. Even so, it is by veiling itself a little that the sun can be better contemplated; when, on the contrary, the heliphany sheds all the violence of its brightness, the sun is denited to the eyes, and that is why its light is the veil of its light." Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, Bollingen Series 66 (New York Pantheon Books, 1960), 150.

be pursued by the wings of analogies and theories. It is apparent that there is no result for the intellect save the confirmation of the affirmation, in general terms (*ʿalā sabīl al-ijmāl*), of His absolute perfection, and His being beyond all internal contradiction. But as for the way of particularization (*ʿalā sabīl al-tafṣīl*) [in this matter], that is not in the nature of the human intellectual faculty.

The third argument on this topic is that knowledges are either conceptual (*taṣawwuriyya*) or consisting of assent (*taṣdīqiyya*). With regards to that which is conceptual, we find, after a full inquiry and a perfect induction, that we have a self-evident feeling (*wajdān*^{an} *badīhī*^{yan}) that our intellects, estimations, and imaginations can only point out four kinds of conceptual knowledges (*taṣawwurāt*).

The first of these comprises essences (*māhiyyāt*) that we grasp with one of the five senses, these being things seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched.

The second of these is essences (*māhiyyāt*) that we grasp by ourselves in a necessary manner (*idrāk*^{an} *ḍarūrī*^{yan}) such as pain, pleasure, hunger, satiety, happiness, anger, and the likes of these.

The third of [kind of conceptual knowledge] is essences (*māhiyyāt*) that we grasp by the judgment of the innate nature (*fiṭra*) of our intellects, like our conceptualization of the meaning of existence and nonexistence, singularity and multiplicity, and necessity, possibility, and impossibility.

The fourth kind represents essences (*māhiyyāt*) that the intellect and imagination synthesize from these simple entities. As for the imagination's synthesis, this is, for example, our conceptualizing a sea made of mercury, or a person with a thousand heads. For by the sense of sight, we grasped both the sea, and mercury, and the imagination then synthesizes the form of the

sea with the form of mercury. The same goes for other examples. As for the intellect's synthesis, it is like if I said "the partner of God is impossible of existence." So long as the intellect cannot conceptualize the meaning of the partner of God, then it is prevented from judging it as impossible. On the contrary, the intellect can conceptualize the meaning of "partner of God," for it conceptualizes the meaning of "partner" in some instances, and conceptualizes also the meaning of "god" in a [50] general sense. When it obtains the conceptualization of these two significations, then certainly it can synthesize them together, and it then obtains the conceptualization of "the partner of God." There is no doubt that it is capable of judging it as impossible. So we say, when we cognize "the partner" with respect to one of us, and we attach this meaning that we grasp with respect to us to God Exalted, then we say: affirming something of God Exalted, the relation of which to Him is like the relation of our partner to us, is impossible of existence.

This clarification is thus established, that human intellects' conceptualizations cannot go beyond these four classes. If the conceptualizations that are obtained for us are limited to these classes, then so too are the assents limited to them. When it is established that assents are conditioned by conceptualizations, then it is affirmed that peoples' conceptualizations and their assents are limited to these four classes.

If this premise is apparent, then the demonstration is established that the Reality of the Truth, Praise Be and Exalted, is entirely contrary to these essences that are sensible (*maḥsūsa*) for us, and which are present in our intellects in a particular manner. Nothing of them is appropriate for God Exalted, and He is, in every way, contrary to all of them. If He were to take part in them in some ways but be contrary to them in others, then that of which he takes part, and that of which he does not, would be mixed in Him. His reality would thus be composite, and that

is impossible. And if this is the case, then it must be that His reality[7] is not conceptualized by people in any way whatsoever. If His reality is not conceptualized by people, then the judgment of it by negation and affirmation, either of simples or composites, is impossible –for assent is predicated upon conceptualization.

So intellects fall short of cognizing Him, and those things that are grasped (*al-idrākāt*) do not reach Him. The utmost limit [we can reach in cognizing God] is if we were to conceptualize the meaning of perfection and deficiency with respect to ourselves, according to what befits us, and in a measure that is appropriate for us. We must then understand the meaning of perfection and deficiency, for the absolute is a part of the essence of the restricted. And in this way (*ṭarīq*), one conceptualizes the meaning of perfection and deficiency. If we conceptualize this meaning, we recognize the affirmation of designating "perfection" for Him on the condition that that appellation is beyond [51] that which is attached to it because of its occurring in us. For all people, there are no cognitions of His majesty save in this capacity. What we have clarified thus is apparent: that people's intellects cannot obtain cognitions of the divine save in general things, which are indicated through the way of [accepting] that which is more appropriate and more suitable. [Cognitions of the divine], however, cannot be achieved by the way of particularization (*ʿalā sabīl al-tafṣīl*).

The fourth argument of theirs in this matter is that moving from comprehending what is known to that of which one is ignorant cannot be performed except in one of three ways: 1) induction from the cause about that which is caused; 2) induction from one thing to its equivalent; or induction from that which is caused about the cause.

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[7] I have translated "his reality" (*ḥaqīqatuhu*), as per the manuscript, rather than "a reality" (*ḥaqīqa*) as per the printed edition.
See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 4r.

And the two first ways, with regards to the Truth, are nonexistent—so only the third way (*ṭarīq*) remains. Namely, one ascends from the effect to that which affects, moving from the created to the Creator. If you knew this, then we say that the rational human soul is positioned at the last rank of abstracted holy existents, and you will know the truth of this premise (*muqaddima*) when you comprehend the knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the degrees of angels and their ranks. If this is so, then this human soul advances from its knowledge of itself to its knowledge of its cause, and from its knowledge of its cause to its knowledge of the cause of its cause, and thus it advances rank by rank until it reaches, at last, the presence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence. As He said in the Holy Book, "To your Lord is the highest degree" (Q 53:42), "Only to God do all things lead" (Q 42:53), and "He is the First, and the Last" (Q 57:3). And the Truth is "The First" point in the descent from the Truth to creation (*min al-ḥaqq ilā al-khalq*), and "The Last" point in the ascent (*al-ṣuʿūd*) from creation to the Truth. And whereas the degrees of intermediaries [52] are many, and their ranks concealed from human intellects, and the states of those intermediaries, and the ranks of their lights, force, and power are various, so too is the power of the human rational soul weak when it comes to advancing in these stages. Certainly, most people remained in the depths of the realms of the sensibles (*ʿawālim al-maḥsūsāt*), and only a rare few rid themselves of the world of sensation (*ʿālam al-ḥiss*), rising from the world of the sensibles (*ʿālam al-maḥsūsāt*) to the world of the phantasms (*ʿālam al-khayālāt*). Few of the companions of phantasms moved to the world of the intelligibles (*ʿālam al-maʿqūlāt*). Then, in the world of intelligibles, there are many ranks of holy spirits. Certainly most of the remaining intellects, upon arriving at the realms of the lights of the intelligibles, waned and were destroyed in the light of those holy spirits, except for those who were aided by a vanquishing power and a divine soul. These rise from the ginger of Mars to the cool water

(*salsabīl*) of Jupiter, and from it to the camphor of Saturn. Surpassing all and rising above all, from the concomitants of the realm of potentiality (*lawāḥiq ʿālam al-imkān*) and the change of origination (*ghiyār al-ḥudūth*), they arrive at the Holy Presence [of God] (*al-ḥaḍra al-muqaddasa*). They take joy in His saying "Their Lord supplied them a pure drink" (Q 76:21). And that pure drink purifies [the seeker] of relations of potentiality and temporal creation (*ʿalāʾiq al-imkān wa-l-ḥudūth*), and makes manifest to him the threshold of the Necessity by its Essence (*al-wujūd bi-l-dhāt*). If you knew that, then it has become apparent that only a select few human spirits enjoy the reception of an atom of the atoms of the lights of the realm of magnificence. And we relayed these signs and admonitions in the introduction to this science to instruct the person that a small amount of investigations into these noble signs (*maʿālim*) is so much for the [human] spirits. And thus He said in the Holy Book, speaking of the Truth Exalted, "And few of My servants are grateful" (Q 34:13). And regarding Iblīs, "You do not find most of them grateful" (Q 7:17).

Let us be content with this degree of clarification about this topic (*maqām*), for it is a sea with no shore.

Appendix III: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, introductory section 3[1]

[53] The Third Section: Regarding obtaining these holy cognitions, is there one way (*ṭarīqa*) to them, or more than one?

Know that it was revealed to the lords of sight (*arbāb al-baṣāʾir*) that the path (*ṭarīq*) to [holy cognition] has two routes. The first is the path of the companions of theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning (*al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*), and the second is the path of the companions of [spiritual] exercise and striving (*al-riyāḍa wa-l-mujāhada*).

As for the first path, it is the path of the sages of metaphysics (*al-ḥukamāʾ al-ilāhiyīn*), for it is the inference (*al-istidlāl*) from the states of the contingent beings (*al-mumkināt*) to prove the existence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li- dhātihi*). For when it is established that: 1) these sensible existents are contingent and created; 2) the contingent is in need of a preponderator [for its existence]; 3) that which is created (*muḥdath*) is in need of a creator (*muḥdith*); and 4) that infinite regress and circularity are impossible, then at that point these existents must ultimately arrive at the eternal existence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li- dhātihi*). And know that the "Chief Shaykh," Ibn Sīnā, mentioned in the book *al-Irshādāt* that this is a path that proves the existence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence (*wājib al-wujūd li- dhātihi*) through the consideration of the state of being insofar as it is being [i.e., through metaphysics]. And he said, "There is no need in it to consider the state of the existence of anything else, for we say that there is no doubt that there is, in existence, an existent. And we say that that existent is either necessary [54] of itself (which is the aim), or it is contingent by virtue of itself, in which case it is in need of the Necessary by virtue of Itself. So it is established that considering the existent

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, 53-59.

insofar as it is existent confirms the existence of an existent that is Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence." This is what he said, and he preferred this way over that which draws conclusions about Him from the contingency (*imkān*) of what is other than Him with regard to His existence.

Know that thorough investigation indicates that this argument is not strong (*qawīy*). We rather say that that which exists is either necessary by virtue of itself, or contingent by virtue of itself. If it is contingent by virtue of itself, then it is impossible that the preponderance of its existence over its nonexistence occur without a preponderator. This deduces the Necessary of Existence from the existence of the contingent. It is thus established that there is no way to proving the Necessary of Existence except by this premise. Further, suppose that the way that he mentioned proves the existence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence. There still remains the doubt as to whether that existent which is Necessary of Its Essence is these bodies, or something other than them. For that [argument] which fails to demonstrate that these bodies are contingent of themselves cannot provide the judgment that they require an influencer and preponderator for their existence.

What we have stated is thus affirmed, namely, that the cognition of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence does not occur except if we consider the states of the existence of these sensible things (*al-maḥsūsāt*). If we show that: 1) [sensible things] are contingent in themselves; 2) that the contingent by virtue of itself is in need of a preponderator; and 3) that infinite regress and circularity are false, then at that point we can, with certainty, prove the existence of the Necessary of Existence by virtue of its Essence. This is the sum total of the speech regarding the inference of the existence of God Exalted from the existence of what is

other than God.[2]

As for the second way (*ṭarīq*) [to holy cognition], it is the way of the companions of [spiritual] exercise. It is the verified, conquering, wondrous path, for if the human being labors in purifying (*bi-taṣfīya*) his heart of the remembrance (*dhikr*) of not-God (*dhikr ghayr illāhi*), and persists with the tongue of both his body and his spirit in the remembrance (*dhikr*) [of God], light, illumination, an overpowering state, and a lofty power occur in his heart, and lofty lights and divine secrets are revealed to the substance (*jawhar*) of the soul. These are stations that cannot be comprehended in a particular manner (*ʿalā sabīl al-tafṣīl*) by one who has not reached them. [55] I point out the stations (*maqāmāt*) that one must comprehend in order for that pointer (*tanbīh*) to be a cause for caution regarding the blunders that occur in [the stations].

Regarding the first of the stations considered in this topic: it is established for us that human rational souls vary in essence and substance. Some of them are brilliant, divine, and lofty, and some of them are dark, muddy, and lowly. We have exerted ourselves in establishing these ideas in the book on the soul (*Kitāb al-Nafs*).

If this is established, then we say that among the souls there is one that, in the nature of substance and essence, is a divine soul that is receptive to the presence of the divine, with mighty love for [that presence], which is absorbed in the degrees of their cognitions. And of them, there is also one in which occurs for it something of these states, except that it is weak. There are also souls among them that are muddy, dark, and empty of these divine attractions and spiritual inclinations, which are drowning in the sea of passion (*hawa*) and the shadows of the world of sensation and imagination. To make my meaning absolutely clear, I will explain by an analogy,

[2] Rāzī seeks to prove these premises, and to support the proof of the existence of the Necessarily of Existence by contingency, in the first volume of the *Maṭālib*.

and say: The mountains of the world and its elevations are of two kinds. There are those that contain mineral resources, and those that do not. Induction indicates that the mountains empty of minerals are far more common than the mountains in which are formed mineral resources. Then we say, of the mountain in which mineral resources are formed, that there are some in which are formed base materials like those of oil, sulfur, lime, and salt. And then there are those in which form noble materials, such as gold, silver, precious stones, garnet, and so forth. Then induction indicates that the mountains in which these noble, precious minerals occur are far rarer than the mountains in which these base materials occur. We thus say that these mountains in which arise these noble minerals are the seven essential bodies.[3] And we perceive that the baser the materials, the more common they are, and the nobler are their materials, the [56] rarer. For induction attests to the fact that the materials of iron, copper, and lead[4] are far more common than the mineral resources of gold and silver. Then we say that the mineral resources of gold and silver also vary; of the mountains, there are some that require a great deal of tiresome work for a small amount of gold to be obtained from them. And there are some that are not like that; rather, a small amount of easy work leads to obtaining riches. Between these two extremes, there are medians that are of varying degrees in paucity and abundance, as well as a point beyond which further goodness and perfection are not possible, perhaps ending at a mountain in which the human being finds a cave filled with gold and silver. And if you knew these levels, then it is clear for you that such a mountain containing such a cave [of extreme richness] is exceedingly rare, and that reaching it, and obtaining it[s riches], does not occur save once in a long while. If

[3] This line likely references the seven metals of Jābi, namely, gold, silver, lead, tin, iron, copper, and *khar sini*.
[4] The printed edition contains a typo here. The manuscript scribes "*al-usrub*" (lead) rather than the nonsensical "*abūt*."
See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 5v.

you knew this, then we say that truly the human spirits are along the lines of the mountains and elevations, and the lights of the cognition of God and His love are along the lines of the pure unadulterated gold. Just as most of the mountains of this world, and their elevations, are empty of material resources, just so are the spirits of most people empty of the inclination towards the world of the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*). And if this class [of people] exerts itself in bodily exercise, its benefit from it is less; just so is it the case that the human being may tire himself in mining a mountain that is empty of mineral resources, and ultimately find nothing [of worth] in it at all.

As for the second class, it consists of the spirits in which occur these cognitions.[5] Just as the mountains that contain the mineral resources of gold and silver are different, some requiring a great deal of work for the attainment of a small benefit, just so is that the case for this class of [human] spirits. Of them, there are some that require much intense exercise (*al-riyāḍa*) to attain a small measure of these unveilings; and yet there are others for whom a small amount of practice (*al-ʿamal*) allows them to achieve sublime blessings.

[57] And just as the levels of the mountains that contain mineral sources vary in their paucity or abundance in ways that cannot be defined precisely, just so are the levels of the degrees of spirits different in strength and weakness, paucity and abundance, in ways that cannot be defined precisely. Just as it is not unlikely that one finds, in rare instances, a mountain containing a cave filled with gold, just so is it not impossible that one finds, in infrequent ages, a person for whom the cave of his soul is filled with the lights of the greatness of God.

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[5] The printed edition and manuscript are at odds here. The manuscript states here "cognitions" (*maʿārif*) (which I have followed in my translation), whereas the printed edition states "resources" (*maʿādin*).
See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 5v.

If you have understood this analogy, then you know that not everyone who dives into [spiritual] exercise, in the most difficult of cases, will necessarily attain any result. Further, not everyone who attains a result reaches the utmost [possible] degree [of attainment]. Indeed, the utmost degree in the path is inaccessible; just as there is no end to the glory of God and the heights of His greatness, just so is there no end to the levels of felicities [achieved] in this pursuit (*fī hadhā al-bāb*).

To make sure that you bear this analogy in mind so that you are not deceived into thinking that every person who walks [the path] reaches [the destination], and each who seeks finds, we say that we do not deny that those [spiritual] exercises have an effect in some respects, and that one who perseveres in the practice attains some effect in some ways. It is, however, evident that "treating the eyes with kohl (*al-takaḥḥal*) is not the same as [natural] dark coloring [of the eyes] (*ka-l-kaḥali*)."[6]

Further, it is true what the sage of poetry [al-Mutanabbī] said, namely, "It desired from the heart to forget you, but the bearer's [i.e., the heart's] nature forbids it." Aristotle said that whoever wishes to begin seeking these divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ilāhīya*) must invent another innate disposition (*fiṭra*) for himself. His intending meaning is that the person exerts himself in abstracting his intellect from the connections of sensation, estimation, and imagination. And this is what is [to be said about] this station.

[58] As for the second station, it is the one in which the outcome of this path is the emptying of the heart of the remembrance of not-God (*dhikr ghayr illāhi*). For it is as if the

[6] This is a line from al-Mutannabī's poem *Ajāba dam ʿī wa mā al-dā ʿī siwa ṭalali.* The line indicates that one's attempt to change one's nature, or to embellish oneself, is not the same as that which is innate or natural; the eyes that are treated with kohl to look dark are not the same as those that are naturally dark.

substance of the soul (*jawhar al-nafs*) longs for the Presence of the Majesty of God by primal attraction and innate impulse. Except that when [the soul] was connected to this body, and was occupied with these bodily pleasures and base goods, its immersion in this side became a hindrance to its attraction to the original homeland (*al-waṭan al-aṣlī*) and the essential starting point (*al-markaz al-dhātī*). If the person exerts himself in striving to remove these [bodily] accidents and is left with the gem of the soul (*jawharat al-nafs*) and its original attributes (*lawāzimihā al-aṣlīya*), after the concealing dust and the hindering cover have lifted, then the light of the majesty of God appears in him.[7] So let the human being strive in this matter, to the measure of what enjoyment occurs from comprehending an atom of the lights of that knowledge (*al-ʿilm*). For if that felicity (*al-saʿāda*) were achieved, then the pleasure strengthens and the delight magnifies, and that [enjoyment] becomes one of the most powerful attractions (*jawādhib*) [which motivate] him to fully devote himself to it.

As for the third station of those considered in this matter: if the master of [spiritual] exercise were lacking the path (*ṭarīq*) of theoretical inquiry (*al-naẓar*) and inferential reasoning (*al-istidlāl*), then perhaps, in [his traversing] the degrees of [spiritual] exercises, powerful unveilings and lofty, overpowering states may be revealed to him of which he would be convinced that they represented the absolute end of the unveilings, and the terminal states of the degrees [of cognitions]. And that [conviction] would become a hindrance for his arriving at that which he seeks. But if he were to practice the path (*ṭarīqat*) of theoretical inquiry (*al-naẓar*) and inferential reasoning (*al-istidlāl*), and were to distinguish the station that is impossible from that which is possible, he would be preserved from this deception. If the person were destined to be

[7] Rāzī here plays on the near homonymy of substance (*jawhar*) and gem (*jawhara*) in Arabic. The substance (*jawhar*) of the soul, upon being cleansed of the bodily accidents and returned to its original state, becomes like a gem (*jawhara*) shining with the light of God.

perfect in the path of intellectual reasoning, was blessed with perfection in the path of self-purification and [spiritual] exercise, and his soul was innately (*fī mabdaʾ al-fiṭra*) supreme [59] in aptness for these states, then that human being would reach the utmost limits in these paths of ascent. It was transmitted from Aristotle that he said, "I was drinking without being sated. When I drank from this sea, I was sated with such satisfaction that after that there was no thirst." Speech cannot explain these states, nor can words convey them. And he who has not tasted (*lam yadhuq*) does not know (*lam yaʿrif*), and he who has not witnessed (*lam yushāhid*) does not believe (*lam yuṣaddiq*). And God knows best the divine secrets (*al-mughayyabāt*).

Appendix IV: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, VII.1.1[1]

[7] Section One: On the various schools of thought [on the spirits]

Know that existence is either necessary by virtue of itself, or it is contingent by virtue of itself. As for the necessary by virtue of itself, that is God, great is His glory. And the Verifiers (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*) agreed that He must be neither space-occupying nor inhere in that which occupies space. As for the contingent by virtue of itself, it is either subsistent through itself (*qāʾim bi-l-nafs*) or subsistent through another. That which is subsistent through itself is either space-occupying or non-space-occupying. And that which is subsistent through another is either subsistent through that which is space-occupying or through that which is non-space-occupying. These, then, are the four classes.

As for the beings that are space-occupying, and the subsistent characteristics, these are surely known. As for the beings that are non-space-occupying, these are called, in the terms of the Philosophers (*fī iṣṭilāḥ al-falāsifa*), "the separates" (*al-mufāraqāt*), and in the terms of another group, they are called "the spirits" (*al-arwāḥ*). [They] are of two classes. These beings can either be said to be: 1) unconnected with bodies through management and modes of comportment, just as they are neither bodies not do they subsist in bodies; or 2) connected with bodies through management and modes of comportment. The Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) call the first [of these classes] the abstracted intellects.

[8] And here is [cause for] an investigation. For the absence of their connection to bodies through management and modes of comportment can either be due to: 1) the perfections of their essences, and their being too lofty to attend to bodies; or 2) their weakness in themselves, and their inability to manage any aspect of the bodies. This is according to the division of what is

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 7-11.

possible. And who is it whose mind comprehends the whole dominion of God and His realm? It is to this class that the Holy Book alludes when it states, “And how many angels in the heavens, whose intercession will be of no avail” (Q 53:26).

As for the second class, it is the substances that are abstracted in themselves from corporeality and from incarnation (*ḥulūl*) in corporeality. These are, however, connected to bodies through management and modes of comportment. And this division is divided into two further classes, for they are either managing: 1) celestial bodies; or 2) elemental bodies. And whereas the proof is established that there is an endless void beyond the world, and yet it is not proven that the world is singular (but rather it is affirmed that it is not impossible that there exist worlds other than this world), then by this assumption there exists, among the types of the holy spirits, that which only God Exalted knows and which the human being knows not at all. The investigation into those states is, however, impossible. And it is for this reason that intellects are limited in the investigation of spirits governing the celestial bodies, or of the spirits governing the elemental bodies.

As for the spirits that are managing celestial bodies, it is apparent that the spheres have something like bodies, and that the stars are for them something like hearts, and that the radiating lines emanating from the bodies of the stars are in the same vein as the subtle, illuminated bodies emanating from [9] the heart and brain and connecting to the rest of the limbs. Further, just as every body possesses a singular soul from which emanates a governing faculty for every part of the body, so too is it not unlikely that specific souls emanate from the universal soul of the sphere, each one related to a particular part and a particular aspect of the sphere.

As for the lower souls: Most agree that human rational souls are substances abstracted from corporeality and from incarnation in the body, except that they are connected to these bodies

through management and modes of comportment.

As for the souls of the rest of the animals, most posit that they are corporeal faculties and not abstracted substances. Some posit that they are abstracted substances; those who posit this are of two camps. The first are those who maintain the existence of transmigration. They posited that the spirits of beasts were once human spirits, which after separating from the human bodies, came to be attached to the bodies of domestic animals and beasts of prey. The second camp are those who denied transmigration. They posited that the souls of domestic animals and beasts of prey and the rest of the animals are souls abstracted from corporeality and incarnation in corporeality. This, then, is the sum of what is to be said on the souls of animals.

People differ when it comes to jinn and demons. The later thinkers of the Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) have not presented convincing arguments on this topic. However, most of the prophets and messengers affirmed [jinn and demons] and were absolutely certain of their existence. The summary [of the views of prophets and messengers] is that they posited that spirits are of two classes: 1) celestial spirits; and 2) lowly spirits. [10] The celestial spirits are the angels, and they are utterly untarnished by evils and deficiencies. As for the lower spirits, they are of two groups. The first of them are the pure, good spirits that are unblemished by blameworthy convictions and wicked deeds. Those are the jinn who are believers. The second group comprises the wicked, evil, harmful spirits. They further said that [those wicked spirits] have a chief, and that he is the most able and most powerful of them. He is called "Iblīs," and the rest of them are his followers. He is with his army facing the army of the angels. The Magi exaggerated and posited that Iblīs is facing God Exalted as well as His angels. And all that occurs in the world of good and comforts is from God Exalted and the angels, and all that occurs in the world of pains and dangers and hateful things is from Iblīs and the demons.

And know that there is yet another species of spirits that have been confirmed by both the majority of prophets and the masters of the talismanic arts. For it is transmitted from the words of the Prophet that he said, "There came to me the angel of the seas, the angel of the mountains, the angel of the rain, [11] the angel of sustenance, and the angel of war." The Messenger of God thus corroborated this statement. So too did the majority of the masters of the talismanic arts affirm this species of spirits, and acknowledge it. The investigation into the existence of this species is therefore necessary.[2]

There are two camps of those who maintain the existence of this species of spirits. The first are those who posit that they are in fact celestial spirits, except that each one of them manages a section of this world—namely, there are spirits governing the mountains, others governing the deserts, as well as those governing inhabited places. And this class also has divisions; some of them govern the states of the rain, still others the crops, and others, wars. And others have said that it is not unlikely that the connection of these spirits governing these things is in fact to one of the bodies of the sphere of ether, for that heat resembles the innate heat. If the innate heat that is in the heart, despite its insignificance, is not devoid of a soul that manages it and connects to it, then how can the subtle heat that exists under the sphere of the moon be devoid of souls that connect to it and manage it?[3] Some said that it is additionally not impossible

[2] This paragraph and the next are flipped in the printed edition. The manuscript, however, maintains what is surely the correct sequence.
See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 283r.

[3] The manuscript and the printed edition contain subtle differences in these sentences in addition to a difference in ordering. I have followed the manuscript in my translation. The manuscript reads:

البحث عن وجود هذا النوع ثم القائلون بهذا النوع من الأرواح فريقان منهم من زعم أنها أرواح فلكية الا أن كل واحد منها مدبّر لقسم من اقسام هذا العالم فههنا أرواح مدبّرة للجبال و أرواح مدبّرة للمفاوز و أرواح مدبّرة للعمرانات و هذا القسم أيضا اقسام بعضها مدبّر لاحوال الامطار و بعضها للزروع و بعضها للحروب و قال اخرون بل هذه الأرواح المدبّرة لهذه الأشياء لا يبعد أن يكون تعلقها بجرم من اجرام كرة الأثير لأن تلك الحرارة تشبه الحرارة الغريزية فاذا كانت الحرارة الغريزية التي في القلب

that many spirits connect to the sphere of air and the sphere of *zamharīr*, for we witness that, in the mountains in which there is much snow, great worms are produced resembling thin straits filled with fresh cold water. If it is not impossible that spirits connect to them, then it is not impossible that spirits connect with these spheres. This is the exposition of the argument on this topic.

And in summary: according to the later Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) such as al-Fārābī and Ibin Sīnā, the levels of separates (*al-mufāraqāt*) are four. The highest and noblest of them is the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence; then the intellects; then the celestial souls; then the human souls. And they do not acknowledge the existence of jinn and demons. However, the lords of sects and creeds, and the masters of the talismanic arts, affirm the existence of jinn and demons and the rest of the classes. And God knows best.

مع قلّتها لم تخل عن النفس يدبّرها و يتعلق بها فالحرارة اللطيفة الموجودة تحت فلك القمر كيف يمكن خلوها عن نفوس يتعلق بها و يدبّرها ...

See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 283r.

Appendix V: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, VII.1.2[1]

[13] The Second Part: On reporting another explanation for the classes of spirits

Know that existents, according to intellectual categorization, are of four classes: 1) they affect, but are not affected in any way; 2) they receive effect but cannot affect at all; 3) they both affect and are affected; or 4) they neither affect nor are they affected at all. These are the four classes, and there are no more than these.

As for the second class, which is that which affects but is absolutely not affected, this is God, Praise Be and Exalted. And the proof of this is that He is the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence, and everything that is necessary by virtue of its essence is necessarily existent in all of its attributes, whether they be negative or positive. And the proof of this is that if His specific essence is sufficient for the occurrence of that positive or that negative [attribute], then they must continue as long as His Self endures; in which case, it is impossible that change occur in anything of His attributes. If His Self is not in fact sufficient for the occurrence of that positive and that negative [attribute], then, in that case, the occurrence of the positive and negative [attribute] is dependent upon the consideration of the state of another. There is no doubt that His identity is dependent upon the occurrence of that positive and negative [attribute]. And this entails the dependence on the dependence on another, which is itself dependent on another; and that which depends [14] on another is contingent by virtue of itself. And the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence becomes then contingent by virtue of Its Essence - and this is a contradiction. So it is established that the Truth, Praise Be and Exalted, is Necessary of Existence by virtue of Its Essence in all of Its attributes, positive and negative. Anything that is like that cannot at all receive effect from another.

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 13-23.

As for the demonstration that He affects what is other than Him, that is that it is established that all, with the exception of the Necessary of Existence, is contingent by virtue of itself, and every contingent by virtue of itself cannot come to exist except through origination by the Necessary by virtue of Its Essence, either through an intermediary or without an intermediary. So it established that the Truth, Praise Be and Exalted, affects everything that is other than Himself, and that He does not receive an effect at all from anything that is other than Himself. Insofar as He is autonomous in His existence, and in all of His positive and negative attributes, He is subsistent by virtue of Himself. And insofar as all that is other than Him is subsistent by virtue of Him, He originates by virtue of His own origination. And that which subsists by virtue of its own subsistence is that which renders all else subsistent. And that which is perfect in its being is subsistent by virtue of itself, and that which renders all else subsistent (*muqawwim*^{an} *li-ghayrihi*), is God, the Everlasting (*al-qayyūm*). The Necessarily Existent is thus the True Everlasting (*al-qayyūm al-ḥaqq*).[2] And it is owing to this mystery that He said in the Holy Book, "God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting" (Q 2:255).

The second class that comprises the existence that is affected but does not affect is matter (*al-hayūlā*). In the book on matter (*Kitāb al-Hayūlā*), I presented that the matter of the corporeal world is indivisible parts (*al-ʾajzāʾ allatī lā tatajazzaʾ*).[3] The Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) hold that the matter of the world of bodies is an existent that is non-space-occupying, but rather whose very form is spatial extension and spatial-occupation.

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[2] Rāzī is playing on the various forms of the root q/w/m. He seeks to demonstrate that God subsists in Himself (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*), and is that which renders all else subsistent (*muqawwim*^{an} *li-ghayrihi*). He theologically grounds his proof in the appellation of God as "the Everlasting" (*al-qayyūm*, one of the ninety-nine names for God in the Islamic tradition).

[3] I.e., in the sixth book of the *Maṭalib*, which treats matter (*hayūlā*). For a survey of Rāzī's arguments for atomism in the *Maṭālib*, see Setia, "Atomism versus Hylomorphism in the Kalām of al-Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."

If you knew this, then we say that those parts insofar as they are in themselves are neither hot nor cold, moist nor dry, collected nor separated. Rather, they are receptive to these [15] attributes and these states. Those states are named by some of them "particles" (*habāʾāt*) and there is nothing in them save the abstraction of receptivity, obedience, and submission. And when there is goodness in granting existence, it cannot prove so save from existence, and receptivity and being affected cannot exist save by the occurrence of nonexistence. It is, without doubt, stated in the Holy Book, "God is the Sufficient; you are the ones in need" (Q 47:38).

If you knew this, then we say that it is evident that existence is nobler than nonexistence, and it is for this reason that the noblest of all existents is that which affects but is not affected, namely, God Praise Be and Exalted; and the lowest of them is that which is affected and does not affect, and that is matter.

As for the third class of existents, it comprises that which is both affected and affects. This class is the world of spirits and souls, and investigation is required on two issues here.

The first is establishing that they are affected. The evidence of this is that the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Itself is singular, and so all that is other than Him is contingent by virtue of itself. These spirits and souls are thus contingent of themselves. That which is contingent by virtue of itself is not originated save by something which affects; so it is established that these spirits are receptive to effect.

The second [issue] is to establish that they affect, and here occurs a key investigation. For regarding the second [issue], there are some who posit that there is only one who can affect, and that is the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Itself. And they argued for this [position] in several ways.

The first argument is that the essence of anything that is contingent by virtue of itself

entails contingency**.** If it were influencing the existence of something else, then the singular essence would necessitate two effects, and this is impossible. This argument is erected through the principles of the Philosophers in two ways. The first is that, according to them, a single [cause] can only produce a single [effect]. [16] The second is that they hold that that which is simple cannot be simultaneously both receptive [to action] and active.

The second argument [on God being the only being that can affect] is that we say that either it is possible that the singular thing produce two effects, or it is impossible. If it is not impossible, then we say that there is no doubt that the Necessary of Existence by virtue of Itself is existent and that He affects the existence of that which is other than Himself. And the assumption of this part is that it is not impossible that multiple effects be issued from a singular cause. And if this is the case, it is not impossible that all existents of the world rely upon Him. On this assumption, proving the existence of the singular cause is known, but proving the existence of all else is uncertain. And adhering to obedience to the known deity is more appropriate than adhering to obedience to the unknown deity. So it is established that the intellect demands that one turn towards the worship of God Exalted, and away from of all that is other than Him.

And this proof is mentioned in the Holy Book when the Exalted said, "Whoever calls upon another god with God has no proof. And his reckoning is with his Lord" (Q 23:117). The meaning of this is that the first deity is known with certainty, and what is other than Him is not known. And restricting oneself to that which is known is more appropriate than believing in that which is not known.

As for the second division regarding the assumption that it is impossible that multiple effects be produced from a singular cause, we say that on this assumption, it is impossible that

that which is contingent by virtue of itself produce an effect. For that which is contingent by virtue of itself has an essence which entails contingency, and if that essence were to entail anything else [in addition to that contingency], then that would involve the production of multiple effects from one cause, which is impossible [according to this assumption].

The third argument is that it is contingency itself that is the cause of the need for something that affects. And the proof of this is that if we suspend contingency from the estimation, then [only two kinds of existents remain:] that which is Necessary by virtue of Itself, or that which is impossible by virtue of itself. And each one of those precludes the need for something that affects [its existence]. So it is established that the cause for the need [for something that affects] is precisely contingency. What is understood by contingency is singular, so the cause of the need for something that affects is also singular. And that single thing is either cause for the need of something specific that affects, or [17] for something nonspecific that affects. The second is invalid, for that which affects and yet is nonspecific in itself cannot possibly exist. Everything that is existent in itself is also specific in itself, and what is not specific in itself cannot be existent in itself. And what does not possess existence in itself cannot be relied upon for the existence of anything else. So it is established that contingency is only in need of something specific, and that every contingent is reliant upon [that specific entity]. It is thus established that there is only one thing which affects. This, then, is the account of that argument.

The vast majority of the people of the world, however, affirm a multiplicity of things that affect. They said, “How can we deny that [there are multiple things that affect], when we see fire affecting while it is burning, and the sun doing so in its shining, and bread and satiety, and water [affecting] in irrigation?” Then they said, “The spirits produce effects in the world of bodies, and

govern and administer them." And they substantiated their position at times with recourse to philosophical views, and at others through prophetic symbols. For do you not see that it was said regarding the attributes of the angels in the Holy Book, "The [angels] apportioning each matter" (Q 51:4) and "and those who arrange each matter" (Q 79:5). And if this is established, then it is apparent that the spiritual world is an intermediary between the divine world and the corporeal world, not in space or place, but in nobility and rank. In the sense that it is affected by the divine world, it is lower; in the sense that it affects the world of bodies, it is higher and nobler. There is no doubt that a degree of the spirits act as intermediaries between these two degrees.

If you knew this, then we say that the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*) comprise levels and degrees.

The first level, which is the highest and most exalted, consists of those who are [18] drowning in the light of the majesty of God Exalted, a complete drowning, such that they do not free themselves from that drowning in order to manage the world of bodies, for their food is unity (*al-tawḥīd*) and their drink is veneration (*al-taqdī*s) and their sociability is declaring God above comparison (*al-tanzīh*). They drown in the light of the majesty of God Exalted and do not occupy themselves with anything outside of God. And those are the angels who are close [to God] (*al-malāʾika al-muqarrabūn*). And indeed the Holy Book asserted these levels with its saying "And those near Him do not disdain worshipping Him, and they do not tire, and they praise night and day, and do not slacken" (Q 21:20).

This class of spiritual beings further comprises degrees that are unending in perfection and deficiency; for the lights of the majesty of God, Praise Be and Exalted, are unending, and thus the degrees of the knowers (*al-ʿārifīn*) in cognition (*al-ʿirfān*) are also unending. Just as there is no description of this class of spiritual beings save [that they are] drowning in the divine

cognitions, and annihilation in that eternal majesty, there is no doubt that the sages of metaphysics called this class of spirits "the pure intellects." For though they are substances subsistent in themselves, they became is if they were the same as those understandings and the same as those graspings by virtue of the multiplicity of their understandings and the power of their cognitions.

And if one were to say, "Given what you have said, then nothing remains for this class of spiritual beings save the reception of existence from the True, and the reception of holy lights from the brilliance of the majesty of the True—and all of that represents passivity and being affected. Wherefore, then, is the [aspect of] affecting [other beings] and [producing] action?" Our response is that although [this class of spiritual beings] is drowning in those divine and holy understandings, it is yet not unlikely that powerful effects emanate from them, either upon the celestial spirits or upon celestial bodies, in [a way akin to] the emanation of light from the sun and life from [19] the spirit. It is by this assumption that they are active. It is also not unlikely that it may be said regarding those intellects that some of them are lower in state than others, and that that which is deficient is perfected by that which is perfect. This is just the case for the sun and the moon, though they are both lofty and noble essences in the corporeal world; for the moon, since it is weaker in state than the sun, certainly came to receive light from the sun. Then, after receiving light from the sun, it commenced in emanating those lights to the lower world. It is not unlikely that the state of the spiritual beings is like that.

As for the second class of spiritual beings, those are [the beings] that attended to governing the world of bodies, and did not exceed in drowning in attendance to the loftier side to the point that they were prevented from connecting to the lower side. Those are the active angels (*al-malāʾika al-ʿamalīya*), and in the terms of the Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*), they are called the

souls.

This class then also comprises variations in degrees of nobility and perfection. For each whose connection with a body is nobler and loftier, is in itself nobler and loftier. As the greatest of bodies is the throne, then certainly the greatest of spirits connected with the world of bodies is the spirit that manages the throne. It is not unlikely that that which is called "the Greatest Spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-aʿẓam*) is that spirit. It is also called, in the terms of the Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*), "the Universal Soul" (*al-nafs al-kulliyyā*), for the body of that soul is the throne, and all that occurs inside the throne is like one of its part or branches. So too are the souls that manage those bodies like branches and fruits of that soul.

Then the second level of souls [of this class] represents the soul that manages the footstool (*al-kursī*), in reference to what He said in the Holy Book, i.e., [the verse that begins], "Who is there that intercedes with Him save by His leave?" (Q 2:255), to His Exalted saying, "His pedestal extends over the heavens and the earth" (Q 2:255). And the reason for calling the eighth sphere "the pedestal" is that the pedestal is a body in which occurs the varying degrees of nearness and elevation, for the [20] stars centered in the eighth sphere are bodies of various magnitudes. Those stars that human sight can grasp are arranged in seven levels in terms of magnitude. The smallest of them is a body that is at the lowest of the levels of magnitude; above this is that which is the sixth largest. And so forth they rise level by level, degree by degree, until they reach the first magnitude. And for this reason, there are various degrees that occur in the density of the eighth sphere; thus, it is called the pedestal. As it is the case that the Yemenite Sirius is the largest of them in scale, its position must be at the loftiest degree, and the highest and furthest level. And I say that there is no doubt that each one of these stars has characteristics and effects, and only God knows them.

The third level of the souls consists of spirits that govern the sphere of Saturn, and so it goes for the rest of the stratums of the heavens, and the bodies of the stars in their varying degrees, and the inter-distance of their levels, until it ends at the spirit that governs the sphere of the moon.

Then after these levels are the spirits governing the sphere of ether, then the sphere of the air, then those spirits that govern the divisions of this world. For the terrestrial globe is divided into four divisions: 1) the greatest of these being the seas; 2) then the deserts; 3) the mountains; and 4) the populated areas. And it is not unreasonable that there would occur, in every one of these divisions, a single spirit, or multiple spirits, that govern them. And all that we have mentioned has been enunciated by the masters of inspiration and revelation (*tanzīl*), for the Prophet said: "There came to me the angel of the seas, and he said such and such, and there came to me the angel of the mountains, and he said such and such, and there came to me the angel of the rains, and he said such and such, and there came to me the angel of wars." And "the treasurer of heaven is so-and-so, and the treasurer of the fire is so-and-so." Since each of these divisions is hypothetically possible, and evidence cannot be found to reject them, [21] and the masters of revelation and unveilings reported their existence, then their existence must be acknowledged.

Here, there are [further] discussions:

The first discussion is that the sages clarified that every sphere has an intellect and a soul. And they also clarified that every sphere can be further subdivided into six divisions according to the six directions. For every sphere, there is a right and a left, a front and behind, an above and below. It is thus not unlikely that there exists a spirit that governs each one of these six divisions. And the Philosophers established the existence of an intellect and a soul for the whole of every sphere, and they also clarified that every sphere can be subdivided into six divisions according to

the six directions—making the total, then, eight. And this is indicated by God Exalted's saying, "And they will carry the throne of your Lord above them on that Day, eight of them" (Q 69:17). Then it is also not unlikely that branches and effects proceed from every one of those strong and overpowering spirits, and God knows best their number. This is indicated by His Exalted's saying: "And you will see the angels surrounding the throne, singing the praise of their Lord" (Q 39:75).

The second discussion is that there are people who said that existents are of three classes, just as we [previously] demonstrated. These include: 1) those that affect but that are not affected, and this is the most noble of the classes; 2) that which is affected, but does not affect, and that is the lowest class; 3) and that which in one sense affects, and in another sense is affected—and that is [22] the level that is an intermediary between the two previous levels.

So too are the bodies of the [lower] world divided into these three divisions. The first division consists of bodies that affect but are not affected by the rest of the bodies, and it includes two stratums: the throne and the pedestal. The second division consists of bodies that are receptive to effect from the rest of bodies, but do not affect others, and these are of two lower stratums. The highest of [these two lower stratums] is the subtle sphere, being the sphere of fire and air; and the lower of them is the dense sphere, and that is the sphere of water and earth. And the first division is the nobler, and the second is the baser of them. In between these two divisions, there exists a third division that receives effect from the two higher spheres and conveys it to the two lower spheres. It is the seven heavens in which exist the seven planets. [Receiving and conveying of effect occurs because] these planets are positioned in the epicycles (*aflāk al-tadwīr*), and these epicycles are positioned in the deferents (*al-aflāk al-ḥāmila*). When the epicycle reaches from the depths of the deferent to its climax, then the planet comes into

contact with the sphere that is above it at one point, and lofty powers are acquired from the higher sphere. Then when the planet descends from the climax of the epicycle to its depths, and the epicycle descends from the climax of the deferent to its depths, then the planet comes to meet the sphere that is under it at one point, and that power derived from the upper sphere is thus conveyed to the lower sphere. The beginning of the event appears in Saturn when it is in contact with the planetary sphere at one point, and its end is when the moon is in contact with the sphere of ether at one point. So it is established that these seven spheres are like seven causes between the throne and the pedestal, and the world of elements.

The third discussion is that you know clearly what we remarked upon, which is that the world of [23] spirits begins from the noblest and descends to the lowest [levels**]** until, at the final level, it reaches the earthly spirits. These earthly spirits, in relation to the celestial spirits, are like the relation of the bodies of people to the bodies of the spheres, or like the hearts lodged in these [human] bodies to the planets, which themselves act as the hearts of those spheres. Just as the relation of the bodies to the bodies and the hearts to the hearts is like nonexistence in relation to existence, just so is the relation of the lower spirits to the higher spirits.

There is vast variation in the human spirits in nobility and baseness. And after the human spirits are the animal souls, and after them, the vegetative souls (these being the final ranks of souls and spirits).

And the fourth class of existents represents the existent that neither affects nor is affected at all. However, the existence of this class violates reason. Since we have proven: that existence is either necessary or contingent; that that which is necessary is singular; that every contingent is an effect; and finally that the singular Necessary is something that affects [the contingent]—if that is established, then it is clear that existence, if it is necessary by virtue of itself, is something

that affects, and if it is contingent by virtue of itself, is something which is affected. Thus the proposition asserting the existence of something that neither affects nor is affected is impossible.

Appendix VI*: al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, VII.2.6[1]

[101] Section Six: On the strong proofs considered for proving the existence of the soul

The first argument is that the parts of this body are subject to change. As that which is signified by one's saying "I" is not subject to change, the body consequently is not that which is signified by one's saying "I."

The proof of the truth of the first premise [is illustrated in] several ways.

The first is that the body of the person is a substance that is hot and wet. If heat it is active in humidity, it produces vapors that rise from it, which in turn necessitates the disintegration of the person's body. It is for this reason that the body requires nourishment, so that the nourishment provides the replacement of that which disintegrates. It is thus established that disintegration and deterioration are always occurring in the person's body.

The second is that when the person's body was a child, it was something small, yet when it developed to be a youth, it became large. That requires that its parts be subject to change.

The third is that the person may be fat, then become lean, then become fat again. Certainly, then, the parts [of the body] have changed by growth and reduction.

[102] The fourth is that we witness that this body is subject to deterioration because of the discharge of a great amount of moistness from it, and because of the discharge of sweat and filth (*wasikh*). For if the person goes to the hamam and exerts himself in cleaning [his] skin from filth, such that the exterior of the skin, if the scrubbing and rubbing is repeated, will come to bleed, then exits the hamam, waits a week, and then returns and enters the hamam a second time, he will find a great deal of filth on [his] skin [once again]. That is because the parts that were naturally attached to the body the first time were alive, then in this second time, they became dry

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 101-127.

and separated from the body, and life disappeared from them. And these considerations all indicate that all the parts of this body are subject to change, deterioration, and disintegration.

The second premise is our statement that that which is signified by every person's saying "I" endures continually from the beginning of life to the end. The matter in this is evident, and is indicated in several ways.

The first is that I know necessarily that I am now exactly the same as that which existed twenty years ago. We showed in the beginning of this book that the most evident of knowledges for the human being is his knowledge of the existence of himself, and just as I know that I exist now, so too do I know that I was that which existed twenty years ago. In fact, I am the same as that which was born in such and such a year. And this indicates that the necessary knowledge occurs in every person that he endures from the beginning of life to the end.

The second way of proving this desired conclusion is that if that particular person were not enduring from the beginning to the end of his life, then he would need to acquire knowledges anew in every moment. This is the case, for if that [person] who learned and acquired knowledge passed away and something new occurred after him, then this new being has not acquired that knowledge and did not attain it. [103] It must be that he does not acquire that knowledge save by a new acquisition. As [the person] does not require this new acquisition, we know that the substrate of knowledges endures from the beginning of life to its end.

The third way [of showing that the person endures continually from the beginning to the end of life] is that if the first [existing version of the person] were to perish and the second come, then this second [instantiation of the person] is not the first and [thus] has no information about the state of the first at all. So it is necessary [in such a case] that the person not have knowledge of his past states, and that he does not acquire knowledges save of the present states. As this is

not the case, we know that that which each person signifies by saying "I" is something that endures from the beginning of life to its end.

So it is established by these explanations that the body is not enduring [throughout the entirety of life], neither in its aggregate nor in something of its parts. Yet it is also established that the person endures. Further, it is one of the axiomatic truths (*min al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*) that that which endures cannot be the same as that which does not endure. This therefore requires that the person be something other than the body and other than these sensible organs that make up this body. This is [in fact] the desired conclusion.

If one were to say, "Why is not permissible to hold that the person is an expression of particular parts that spread through the parts of the body, in the way that fire spreads in charcoal, water in the flower, and oil in the sesame seed, and that those parts need not be of the genus of the elemental bodies, either simple or composite? In either case, [those parts] would be receptive to disintegration, separation, and fragmentation. At that point, the above-mentioned argument returns to the fact that [these parts] are not enduring, whereas the human being endures, and thus the person must be something different from them." We therefore say that we have two positions here.

The first [position addresses the quandary], why is it not permissible to say that bodies differ in essence, with some being these elemental bodies that are either simple or composite, and others being bodies that are different from them? The bodies that are [104] the soul are living in themselves, and active in themselves. If it is agreed that those noble, spiritual, luminous bodies penetrate the body, then the body endures as living, active, and grasping. If the humoral temperament (*mizāj*) of the body is corrupted and the viscous components overpower it, and it becomes such that it no longer receives the effect from the essence that is called the spirit (*al-*

rūḥ), then the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) separates from the body. This is a possibility that must be proven false.

The second position is that we concede that those parts that are the human being are similar to the rest of the bodies in the entirety of [their] quiddity save that the Willing Agent (*al-fāʾil al-mukhtār*) causes it to endure inside the body, preserved from change and disintegration, from the beginning of the time of life to the end time of death, at which point it separates. And the Willing Agent does with it as He wishes, either bringing it [a state of] rest and comfort, or torturing it with a variety of torments and afflictions.

And the reply is that you must know that the Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) defended against this possibility based upon two premises:

The first premise is that they brought forth proofs that all bodies are alike in the entirety of [their] quiddity. The account of this proof has come previously.

The second premise is that God, Praise Be and Exalted, produces the emanation [of creation] universally, and it is impossible that He endow one of the cases with a property and effect that does not occur in the second. This premise is purely philosophical.

If this is established, we say that those original corporeal parts are equal to those subsidiary parts that are receptive to disintegration in the entirety of [their] quiddity. If this is established, we then say that the relation between the states that entail disintegration and deterioration, and all of the parts that exist in this body, is equal. And it is impossible to say that the God of the world bestowed some of those parts with endurance and preservation from disintegration and annihilation without there being a specific cause. For we have said that the emanation [of creation] is universal, and that the preponderance without a preponderator (*murajjiḥ*) is rationally impossible. If the matter is [105] like that, then deterioration and

disintegration occur in all the corporeal parts, at which point this inquiry is rejected and the inference is completed. And God knows best.

The second argument on this matter is that we say that that which is signified by every person's saying "I" is something known by him, despite [the person] being ignorant of all of the external and internal parts. And that which is known is different from that which is not known, and thus the soul must be different from all of these external and internal parts.

As for the first position, the evidence of it is that the human being, when he is intently interested, says, "I thought," "I saw," and "I heard," even though when he is saying these things he is unmindful of his face, his hand, his heart, his brain, and the rest of his organs. That [fact] demonstrates what we have discussed.

The second position is [in regards to the statement that] that of which one is ignorant is different from that which is known. This is axiomatic (*badīhī*); otherwise, this would require the conjunction of opposites, which is impossible. At this point, it becomes clear that the soul is different from the body.

It may be said that this speech begs certain inquiries:

The first inquiry regards why it is not permitted to say that that which is considered in the person's being a person is particular parts in his heart or in his brain. Rather, that which is considered in his being a human being is his heart along with his particular form, or his brain along with his particular form. We do not uphold this. And if it were the case, surely he would know himself despite being ignorant of all of the organs such as the heart and the brain and the rest.

The second inquiry regards whether this proof in itself shows that the person being an abstracted essence is false. [106] For at the time that you discussed, just as the person is ignorant

of the heart and the brain, he is all the more completely ignorant of the abstracted essence. This demonstrates what you have mentioned, namely, not only that the soul does not consist in the heart and the brain and other [parts of the body], but even more so that the person does not consist in the abstracted essence.

The third inquiry regards whether the proof that you have mentioned pertains to all other animals, in which case you must also establish for them rational, abstracted souls. And that is unlikely.

The reply to the first inquiry is that we say that we have proven in the chapter (*bāb*) on the negation of prime matter (*hayūlā*) that the body is space-occupying and cannot be an attribute that subsists in another substrate. Rather it is an entity (*dhāt*) subsistent in itself and independent in itself. If this is established, then we say that the self of the person (*dhāt al-insān*)[2] either is, or is not, space-occupying (*mutaḥayyiz*). If his self were a space-occupying essence, then that which is aware (*ʿālim*) of that self must be aware of spatial occupation; otherwise, the single thing must be simultaneously knowing and ignorant, which is impossible. It is not, however, necessary [that one be aware of one's occupying space]; for if [the person] is intently interested in a matter, he would at that time say, "I said such and such," and "I did such and such." At that time, he is knowing of his particular self despite the fact that he is then ignorant of the meaning of spatial occupation that extends in six directions. It is thus established that if his self were space-occupying, then every person that was aware of (*yaʿrafu*) his self would also necessarily be aware of [his self being] space-occupying. It is further established that [the person] is aware of himself while he is unaware of [being] space-occupying, so his self must not be space-

[2] The manuscript differs in stating *dhāt al-insān*, which I follow in my translation rather than the less comprehensible *dhālika al-insān* as in the printed edition. See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 300v.

occupying. And if his self is not space-occupying, then his self must be an abstracted essence. This is the desired conclusion.

As for the second inquiry, which is his saying that "this speech in itself indicates that his self cannot be an abstracted essence," we maintain that this is not necessarily the case. For the abstracted essence is a particular self [107], and its being non-space-occupying and not subsisting in that which is space-occupying is a negative qualification. This negative qualification is different from that particular self; and if this difference occurs, then it is established that it is not impossible that that particular self be known while that negative qualification remain unknown. On the contrary, if his particular self were space-occupying (as it is the assumption that this is the case), then the spatial occupation of the soul of that self would not be a matter different from it, and it would be necessarily impossible that [that person] know that particular self while being ignorant of the spatial occupation. As this is not the case, it is established that that particular self is not space-occupying. The difference between the two is manifest.

As for the third inquiry, its rejoinder is that if it were established that animals grasp their particular selves (*anfusahā al-makhṣūṣa*) while being ignorant of the reality of spatial occupation, then the question would be necessary. Yet there is no way for us to know [the reality] of this premise. Even under the assumption that we establish for them abstracted souls, it is still not necessary that they be rational souls (*nufūs^{an} nāṭiqa^{tan}*), for abstraction from matter is a negative qualification, and sharing in a negative qualification does not demonstrate equivalence in the entirety of the quiddity.

The third argument [for the existence of the soul] is that if the soul were a body, then it would either consist of the body insofar as it is a body, or of the body that is characterized by

particular characteristics. Both possibilities (*qismān*) are false, and thus the statement that the soul is a body is false. The restriction [of the soul being a body to these two possibilities] is evident. As for it being impossible that the soul consist of the body insofar as it is a body, the proof of this is that what is understood by something being a body is that [it is believed to partake in] something shared between all bodies. Yet that which is understood by this human being [is not believed to be something that partakes] in a shared matter between all bodies. That indicates not only that that which is understood by this human being is abstracted from corporeality, but further that the soul cannot consist of the body characterized by particular characteristics. And the evidence for this is that according to this assumption, the essence of the soul is an essence [108] composed of the body and specific accidents. And the composite essence cannot be more powerful than a part of it, for the composite essence is in need of every one of its parts. And that which is in need is in a weaker state than that which it needs, just as that which is needed is more powerful than that which needs it.

If this is established, we say that if the human soul were an essence (*māhiyya*) composed of body and accident, then the soul would need to be weaker in state than the accident, at which point it must be said that just as the accident is an existent that is not subsistent in itself, but rather requires a substrate in which to subsist, then that which every person indicates by their saying "I" must also be an existent that is not subsistent in itself and must rather be in need of a substrate in which to subsist. But it is known necessarily (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī ḥāṣil*) that every person finds his self to be a self that is self-subsistent and that does not require a substrate in which to subsist. It is thus necessary that the soul not consist of a particular body characterized by particular accidents. Therefore it is established that if the soul were a body, then it would either be abstracted in its being a body, or it would be a body characterized by specific attributes.

As both possibilities are shown to be invalid, it therefore must be the case that the soul is not a body.

One may note, "This argument also applies for you (*lāzim ʿalaykum*) because the particular soul either consists of the soul insofar as it is a soul or consists of the soul insofar as it is characterized by particular attributes. The first is false, for the soul insofar as it is a soul is a concept shared between all souls. Yet this person insofar as he is *this* person is not a concept shared between all people. The second is also false, save for if one of the parts of the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of this soul were the accident, and that which is one of the parts of the quiddity [109] of the accident cannot be an essence (*jawhar*). It is thus established that what you have mentioned regarding the body also arises exactly for you with regards to the soul."

We say in reply: Why is it not possible that the self of every soul be distinguished from the rest of the souls in its particular reality, while its sharing in being a soul need not mean that it must be similar in its particular realities? For the meaning of it being a soul is that [souls are] entities that govern the body, and equality in concomitants and effects does not demonstrate equality in essence. The difference is evident.

The fourth argument is that if the soul were a body, then it would either consist of the body insofar as it is a body, or of a particular body characterized by specific attributes. Both possibilities are false, so the statement that the soul is a body is also false. The containment [of the soul being a body in these possibilities] is evident.

The invalidity of the first possibility is evident, as we have shown in the previous proof. The argument regarding the demonstration of the invalidity of the second possibility remains. We therefore say that the characteristic by virtue of which the particular human being is in fact a human being is either subsistent in the aggregate (*majmūʾ*) of those parts, or in each one of the

parts of that aggregate, or in a single part of that aggregate.[3] All three possibilities are false, and thus, so too is the statement that the person is a body also false.

Regarding the proof that that the first possibility (*qism*) is false, this is because that aggregate occurs with the occurrence of those parts. It can either be said that those parts are one in the sense that that aggregate became a singular thing, or that meaning does not hold. The first is false, for it is either necessary that that unity (*waḥda*) subsist in many substrates, or that that unity be preceded by another unity to no end—and this speech is impossible. The second is also false, for if a unity did not occur in that aggregate by which it would consist of a single thing, and the attributes by which that particular person became particular existed, then there would need to be a single attribute that would subsist in many substrates. This is impossible for two reasons.

[110] The first is that it would require the instantiation of the singular accident in many substrates, which is impossible.

The second is that, since those attributes subsist in each one of those parts, this goes back to the second possibility, which is that those attributes subsist in every one of those parts. We say—and have said—that this second possibility is false. For if every one of those parts is characterized by attributes by virtue of which this particular person is a particular person, then it must be said that that body is not a single person but is rather many people. But necessary knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī*) occurs for every person that he is a single human being, not

[3] The printed edition is missing key words in this sentence. The manuscript reads:
فنقول الصفة التي باعتبارها صار الإنسان المعين ذلك الإنسان إما أن يكون قائما بمجموع تلك الأجزاء أو بكل واحد من ذلك المجموع أو بجزء واحد من أجزاء ذلك المجموع.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 301v.

multiple people. If this notion is not known necessarily, then human beings have no necessary knowledge whatsoever! Thus, it is established by this demonstration that this possibility is false.

The third possibility is that that which is characterized by attributes by virtue of which the particular human being [is human] is a single atom of those that do not subdivide. We say that we have refuted the existence of the atom, and this argument (*kalām*) has thus become entirely void. However, if we were to hold the existence of the atom, [the argument] would still be false.[4] For it is established that the Principle emanates in a universal manner, and it is thus impossible that the particular entity be specified with a determined characteristic unless it be specified with a particular preparedness by which it becomes more inclined to [embody] that characteristic. The specification of the single atom with the preparedness for receiving life, knowledge, and capacity is impossible, for the rest of the atoms would each be knowing and capable were they characterized by that preparedness. We thus would posit that the knowing and capable [atom] is entirely singular, which is absurd.

If all else save for that atom were not characterized by that preparedness, but rather by a preparedness contrary to the preparedness to receive life, knowledge, and capacity, then that atom would be dominated by the rest of the atoms according to that preparedness**.** For according to this assumption, there is no atom characterized by that preparedness save that [single] atom. And all that is other than it is described by being contrary to [111] that state. It is known that if that which obstructs is at the extreme of victory and power, then it prevents the occurrence of

[4] As Rāzī holds atomism to be true in the *Maṭālib* and rejects hylomorphism, he is evidently speaking in the voice of the Philosophers (*al-falāsifa*) here and in subsequent sections. Yet he is careful to note that the argument that the soul may consist of a single atom, regardless of whether the material world consists of atoms and accidents or of matter and form, is false. In subsequent arguments which refer to the negation of atomism, he similarly notes that the argument for the non-spatiality of the soul would still hold were atomism to be true (as he in fact believes it to be).

preparedness in that which is dominated. In fact, that which dominates turns the conquered into its own attribute and its own state. It is thus demonstrated that it is impossible that that single atom is specified with that preparedness. If this is impossible, then it is also impossible that it alone be characterized by the attribute which consists of human-ness (*al-insāniyya*). It is established by what we have said that if that which were characterized by the attribute consisting of human-ness were the body, then that which is characterized by the attribute would either be the group of atoms, or each one of that group, or one [atom] in itself. It has been shown that the three possibilities are false, and thus the proposition that it is the body which is characterized by the attribute consisting of human-ness is also false.

The fifth argument [for the existence of the soul] is that we say that if the living, capable, knowing being were the body, then each one of those parts (*ajzāʾ*) would be receptive to these attributes, with the acquisition [of each part's] preparedness either conditioned upon each of the other [parts] being like that, or with one side being conditioned upon the second with the second not conditioned upon the first, or with each side['s acquisition] being independent of the other.[5] The three ways are false, and thus the proposition that the living, capable, knowing being is the body is also false.

As for the demonstration that the first possibility is false (i.e., that the acquirement of the preparedness in this part is conditioned upon the acquirement of the preparedness in that part),

[5] I rely on the manuscript here, which most importantly omits a negation included in the printed edition. The manuscript reads:

الحجة الخامسة أن نقول لو كان الحي القادر العالم هو الجسم لكان كون كل واحد من تلك الأجزاء قابلا لهذه الصفات إما أن يتوقف على كون كل واحد من الأجزاء كذلك و إما أن يتوقف حصول الاستعداد في أحد الجانبين على الثاني و لا يتوقف الثاني على الأول و إما أن يستغني كل واحد من الجانبين عن الثاني و الأقسام الثلاثة باطل.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 302r.

this dependence occurs on the second side and each one then relies upon the other. That is circular, and circularity is false.

Regarding the demonstration that the second possibility is false, this is because on this assumption each [112] one of the parts would be independent in the reception of life, death, ignorance, knowledge, capacity, and incapacity, and this requires the proposition of the occurrence of two kinds of impossibilities:

The first [impossibility] is that with the assumption that life, knowledge, and capacity occur in all the parts, then each one of them would be alive, knowledgeable, and capable to a certain degree, and the single person would not be a single person but instead many people. And the knowledge of this being invalid is necessary.

The second kind of impossibilities [that occurs due to this supposition] is that if the acquirement of this state for every one of those parts did not rely upon the acquirement of the second part, then it would not be impossible that one of those parts be dead, ignorant, incapable, while the second would be living, knowledgeable, and capable, and it would also not be impossible that one of the two parts be characterized by knowledge of the thing whereas the second part be characterized by ignorance of that thing. And it is not impossible that one of the parts attempt an act while the other attempts to reject and refrain from that action. At that point, the state of those parts becomes comparable (*musāwī*^{yan}) to a group of people, some of whom are knowing of something while others are ignorant of it, and some attempting an action of some sort with others opposing it.[6] As necessary knowledge arises of the impossibility of these meanings, this possibility is shown to be invalid.

[6] I follow the manuscript here, which states:
وحينئذ يصير حال تلك الأجزاء مساويا لحال جماعة من الناس في كون بعضهم عالما بالشيء حال ما يكون الثاني جاهلا به و كون بعضهم محاولا نوعا من الأفعال ما يكون البعض الثاني مانعا منه.

As for the third possibility (i.e., that one of the sides depends on the other, while the other is in no need of the first), this too is false for two reasons.

The first [reason] is that those parts resemble each other, as founded upon the proposition of the similarity of bodies. Things that are similar in quiddity cannot vary in concomitants and effects.

[113] The second [reason for the falsity of the third possibility] is the specialization of that single part with that particular preparation along with the rest of the parts being in contrast with it in that attribute. We have proven that it is impossible. Thus, we have proven by what we have discussed that the three possibilities are invalid, which proves false the proposition that the soul is a body.

The sixth argument on this matter is that we hold that one must acknowledge the existence of a single thing that is characterized by all kinds of perceptions (*al-ʾidrākāt*) of all kinds of things perceived (*al-mudrakāt*), [that single entity] being that which produces those actions. This being the case, the soul must not be a body and not be corporeal. This proof is accomplished with the establishment of three premises.

The first [premise] is that that which is characterized by all perceptions is a singular thing.

The second [premise] is that that thing, just as it is characterized by all perceptions, is also that which produces all actions.

The third [premise] is that, this being the case, it must be said that the soul is not a body nor does it subsist in a body.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 302r.

The evidence for the truth of the first premise is that when we see the color of honey, we judge that its taste is sweet. And that which judges (*al-qāḍī*) between two things must also be present with that which is judged (*al-maqḍī ʿalayhumā*). It is thus necessary that something exist that is itself that which perceives [both] colors and tastes such that it can judge that that color is [associated with] that taste.

Further, if we hear a particular voice, we judge that the owner of this voice is so-and-so whose image is such-and-such. Here again it is necessary that a singular thing be itself both that which hears the voices and sees the images such that it can judge that the owner of this voice is himself the owner of that image. It is thus demonstrated that there must exist something that is itself perceiving of all that is sensed with the five senses. We then say that [114] that which perceives is also the same as that which imagines. For if we imagine the image of Zayd, or we imagine his voice (or we imagine the taste of honey or its smell, the heat of fire, the coldness of water)—if we sense one of these perceptions by one of the five senses, we judge that this sensed object is exactly the same as what was imagined. And that which judges (*al-qāḍī*) between two things must also be present with that which is judged (*al-maqḍī ʿalayhumā*). The existence of a thing that is in itself that which senses, as well as what imagines, must then be affirmed. We then say that the faculty of estimation is broadly understood as consisting of a faculty that judges individuals which are sensed [to be coupled with] particular concepts that are not sensed, such as the judgment that this person is an enemy, or that another is a friend. And that which judges (*al-qāḍī*) between two things must also be present with that which is judged (*al-maqḍī ʿalayhumā*); thus, one must acknowledge the existence of a single thing that is itself grasping of this form as well as this concept, such that it can judge that form [to be coupled with] this concept. We then say that the cogitative faculty is that which is capable first of combining some of the forms with

each other, and secondly of combining the concepts with each other, and thirdly of combining some of the forms with some of the concepts, then fourthly of deconstructing them from each other. There is no doubt that this composition (*tarkīb*) and this deconstruction (*taḥlīl*) is a judgement that asserts certain aspects and negates other.

Once again, that which judges (*al-qāḍī*) between two things must also be present with that which is judged (*al-maqḍī ʿalayhumā*). There must therefore be a single thing that senses all, and which itself imagines all, and is itself that which grasps the forms and concepts, and which is itself that which manages them entirely at times by combining [concepts and forms] and at other [times] by deconstruction. We then say that we can judge this person to be a person rather than a horse. That which judges (*al-qāḍī*) between two things must also be present with that which is judged (*al-maqḍī ʿalayhumā*), and there must therefore be a single thing that is itself grasping of this particular and this [115] universal, such that it can relate that universal to that particular, sometimes by deconstruction and sometimes by affirmation. It is clear with this demonstration, about which there is no doubt, that that which is characterized by all of the universal and particular graspings, and which manages them by composition and deconstruction, must be a single thing. This is the desired conclusion.

The second premise in demonstrating that that single thing that grasps must itself be that which produces all action: The evidence of this is that the human being acts with intention and choice. And the meaning of willful action is that if [the person] is convinced that something is entirely beneficial, or is primarily so, then this conviction necessitates the occurrence of desire for that action. If that desire occurs, then one who is capable of action acts. If, however, he is convinced that a particular action is heinous, either wholly or primarily so, then that conviction brings about aversion for that action. If that aversion occurs, then one who is capable of action

refrains from the action. And if this is established, then it is proven that that which perceives (*al-mudrik*) must itself be characterized at times by desire and at other times by aversion. If that which is characterized by desire and aversion is something other than that which perceives, then this desire and aversion would occur in the thing that is void of perceptions and convictions. At this point, then, the occurrence of that desire and that aversion would not be due to that conviction, which we have presumed to be its cause. This is absurd. Further, the comprehension of one who desires something or who is averse to something has pointed to that desired or avoided thing. It is thus established that that which desires the action or inaction must be itself grasping (*mudrik*^{an}) of that thing. It is evident that that which produces an action is itself that which desires that action, and as that which desires is itself that which perceives (*mudrik*^{an}) [the object of action], then that which acts is itself that which perceives.[7] This demonstration is irrefutable [in proving] that [116] that which acts, desires, and grasps is one thing in itself, and that the [separate] allotment of these states to distinct entities is an argument that is entirely irrational.

It is of remarkable note regarding this topic that Galen said, "The heart is the origin of anger, happiness, and sadness," and further, "The faculty of perception occurs not in the heart but in the brain." This statement is entirely irrational. For if the conviction that something is incompatible for the humoral balance (*al-mizāj*) does not occur, then it is impossible for it to become the object of anger. And if the conviction does not occur that that thing it is proper for humoral balance, then it is impossible that happiness about it occurs. The argument that the heart

[7] I follow the manuscript for this sentence, which states:
و الظاهر أنّ الفاعل للفعل هو الذي أراد ذلك الفعل فلما ثبت أن ذلك المريد هو بعينه الذي ادركه ثبت أن الفاعل بعينه هو ذلك المدرك.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 302v.

is the substrate of sadness, happiness, and anger, while at the same time being void of perception, is entirely irrational. What we have stated is thus established, namely that it is entirely evident and manifest that that which perceives all kinds of perceptions, and that which desires or hates, and acts or abstains from action, must be a single thing.

The third premise regards the demonstration that the knowing, capable being is a single thing which must neither be a body nor subsist in a body (*wa ghayr ḥāll fī jism*). And the evidence of this [is shown in] two ways.

The first is that if [that entity] were a body, then that body would either be the aggregate of this body, or a body inside of it or inside an organ found in it, or a body outside of it. All three ways are false.

For we have stated that it is impossible that that body consist of an aggregate of this body, for we know that hearing, sight, imagination, thinking, and remembering do not occur in [117] the hands nor the feet nor in the majority of organs. The knowledge of that is necessary, for it is impossible that the entirety of the body be characterized by those attributes. Indeed, we have said that it is not possible that that body be a body existing inside of the body, for if that body were entwined with (*mushābik*^{an} *fī*) all of the parts of the body, then we are back to the first impossibility. If it occurs in a specific point in the body, then this is false, unless we were to find a specific point in our bodies encompassing something characterized by all of these attributes. We know necessarily (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī ḥāṣil*) that we do not find a point characterized by all of these attributes in this body.

If they were to say, "Assuming that you do not know that point [in the body], still the absence of knowledge of something does not demonstrate the knowledge of its absence." We then say that each person's knowledge of himself is necessary knowledge that precedes all

knowledge, as evidenced by the fact that as much as I know or am convinced of something, I know of my being knowing of that thing or convinced of it. And my knowledge of myself precedes my knowledge of myself as knowing that thing or being convinced of it. It is thus established that my knowledge of myself is the most evident of necessary knowledges. If that which is signified by my saying "I" consists of that body that exists in that particular point of the body, and that thing itself is characterized by all of these attributes (which are hearing, seeing, taste, smell, touch, imagination, thought, remembrance, and discernment), then the human being, as much as he knows his being characterized by one of these attributes, thus knows his self. If it were the case that that knower is that thing contained within that point [in the body], then we would know necessarily that that knower, characterized by those attributes, is the thing that exists in that point, and we must know necessarily that the thing signified by my saying "I" is the thing pertaining to that point. As this is not the case, we know that it is impossible that the thing characterized by these attributes be a body occurring in a particular point of this body.

[118] As for the third possibility, which is that that thing is a body external to the body, it is known necessarily to be invalid. And if these three possibilities are proven to be false, then it is established that that thing is not a body.

The second way in showing that that thing [that comprises being human] is not space-occupying is that we say that that space-occupying [entity] is either divided or undivided. Both possibilities are false. As for it being impossible that it be divided, this is because that which is characterized by these attributes is either an aggregate of those divisions, or each one of them, or a particular one of them. All of these are false for the same demonstration mentioned in the previous proof.

Regarding it being impossible that it be undivided, as we have negated the atom (*al-jawhar al-fard*) we have thus achieved the intended end, and if we were to have affirmed the existence of the atom then we have shown [your argument] to be false in the same way that we mentioned in the first proof. And God knows best.

The seventh argument is that the soul of every person is a single thing. This being the case, it is impossible that it be a body.

As for the demonstration of the first position, that is that the most known of knowledges (*al-maʿārif*) and the most evident of evident things is every person's knowledge that he exists and his knowledge that he is singular.

As for the demonstration of the first, the proof of this is that if I know something, then I judge myself to be knowing of that known thing, and the judgment of something by something is preceded by the conceptualization of the two terms (*ṭarafayn*). This requires that my knowledge of myself precede my knowledge of that thing, such that I judge myself to be knowing of that known thing.

The evidence of the second [most evident knowledge, i.e. that I am a single thing,] is that if I were not a single thing, and were rather a multiplicity of things (and were to consist of the aggregate of them), then every one of those things would be knowing of the state of its self and would be ignorant of the state of the other. At that point, that aggregate would not be [119] knowing of the aggregate of those states. And if I were a multiplicity of things, then it would be necessary that I not be knowing of the states of myself, and it is known that that is false. Rather, we say that it is known necessarily that that which is signified by my saying "I" is a single thing that is singular and not multiple. The difference between my knowledge that I am a single thing, and between the judgment of a group of individuals of people that they are a single group, is

known necessarily. Indeed, it is of the most evident of necessary knowledge. It is thus established that each person's soul is a single thing. Yet that which is space-occupying or which subsists in that which is space-occupying cannot be singular based on the negation [of the existence] of the atom (*al-jawhar al-fard*). Alternatively, were the existence of the atom affirmed, it is yet impossible that the soul be an atom. That indicates that the soul is not space-occupying nor does it subsist in that which is space-occupying; this is the desired conclusion.

This then is the explanation of all the strong ways to prove the existence of the abstraction of the soul.

The eighth argument proving this desired end is that the light of reason (*badīhat al-ʿaql*) stipulates that a single thing, in relation to [another] single thing, cannot be simultaneously the cause of its perfection and its deficiency. If this is established, then we say that we know necessarily (*bi-l-ḍarūra*) that perseverance in much contemplation (*afkār*) of the subtle sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-daqīqiyya*) necessitates perfection of the state of the soul. For the soul, due to these contemplations, moves from potentiality to actuality in the intellectual perfections, and becomes luminous, radiant, shining, and delighted. And perseverance in much contemplation, as mentioned, necessitates deficiency in the state of the body, and its destruction; for when occupation with those thoughts and drowning in them occurs, dryness overwhelms the brain, the state of digestion is weakened, and the state of the body worsens. So it is established that perseverance in the aforementioned contemplations necessitates both the perfection of the state of the soul and the deficiency of the state of the body. If the soul were exactly that body, or a part of its parts, then the single thing, in relation to a single thing, would simultaneously be the cause of perfection and deficiency. And that is impossible. [120] It must then be said with certainty that

the soul is something other than this body, and other than every one of its parts—and that is the desired conclusion.

And know that the aforementioned consideration is specific to the theoretical faculty (*al-quwwa al-naẓariyya*); but this is also evident in the [spiritual] exercise of the soul (*riyāḍat al-nafs*) through fasting and detaching [oneself] from the world of bodies. Experience indicates that if the person were to persevere in eating, drinking, and taking delight in bodily things, his intellectual faculty becomes deficient and is corrupted, and nothing of it remains with him to which he can turn or from which he can take heed.[8] This is well known through a saying which goes, "bellies destroy intelligence (*al-baṭna tadhhab al-fiṭna*)." But if the human being exerts himself (*rāḍa nafsihi*) in resisting foods, and abstaining from the bodily pleasures, and sits in a dark room in which he sees nothing and hears nothing, and attempts to eliminate sensible forms and bodily inclination[9] from thought and imagination, and perseveres in this state for an extended period of time – then his soul comes to be at the extreme of perfection, and his body at the extreme of weakness and emaciation. And this consideration indicates that all that is a cause of the felicity of the soul is exactly that which becomes a cause for the distress of the body. And all that is a cause of the distress of the soul, is exactly that which causes felicity of the body. And that indicates that the soul is something other than the body and is not a part of this body or its organs.

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[8] The printed edition omits a key section of the text which can be found in the manuscript. The manuscript states:

اعلم أن الاعتبار المذكور مختص بالقوة النظريّة وهو أيضا قائم في رياضة النفس بواسطة التجويع و الانقطاع عن عالم الاجسام فإن التجربة دلّت على أن الإنسان إذا كان مواظبا على الأكل و الشرب و التفرج و التنزه بالجسمانيات فإنه تختل قوته العقلية و تفسد و لا تبقى معه فيها شيء يلتفت إليه و يعتبر به.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 303v.

[9] I follow the manuscript here in translating *mīl* rather than *mathal*. See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 303v.

Here is a third way that relates to the first two ways, which is that sleep in relation to the body is like death in relation to the soul, and life is like wakefulness. And that is because, for the person in a state of wakefulness, his soul is as if it is asleep to the world of the unknown (*ʿālam al-ghayb*), ignorant of the states of that world, in resistance to it. If the person sleeps in accordance with his body, then at that point wakefulness occurs in the soul and it connects to the world of the unknown and comprehends some of the states of that world. These are true dreams, which are indicative of the states of the unknown things. If it awakens, and wakefulness occurs for the body, then the soul sleeps and is cut off from the world of the unknown.

It is established by these three ways that the life of the soul, its felicity, and its awakening, [121] require the death of the body, its suffering, and its passing away, and that the life of the body, its felicity, and its awakening require the death of the soul, its suffering, and its sleeping. And that is one of the best proofs that the soul is something other than the body, and other then each of its parts. And that is the desired conclusion.

The ninth argument in demonstrating that the soul is not a body is that we say that if the comprehending, intelligent, acting soul were a body, then it would either be an aggregate of this body or a part inside of it, or a body outside of it. This is all false, and thus the proposition that the soul is a body is also false. And if we said, why is it not permitted that it consist in an aggregate of this body? That [the soul is not the aggregate of the body is shown by the fact that] we know necessarily that most of the parts of this aggregate are void of understanding and perception. The bones do not have any sensation, the humours have no sensation whatsoever, and the vapors too have no sensation – and this is with regards to the basic organs.

As for the complex organs, we know necessarily that the legs and the hands and most of the external and internal [limbs and] organs are not the substrate of understanding,

comprehension, and perception. If this is established, then most of the simple and complex organs are void of knowledge, understanding, and perception, and thus it cannot be said that the aggregate of the body is that which knows, is capable, desires, and acts. And if we maintain that it is not permissible that that which knows, is capable, desires, and acts is a body inside the body, [this is because] were this the case then that body is acting by contact and by reliance upon the rest of the bodies. Yet it is known that the less that there is need for instruments, the easier is the action. And the more there is need for instruments, the more difficult is the action. There is no doubt that that body is not in contact with all of the parts of the body, because the single body cannot occur in many places at one time. It must be then said that its effect on some of the parts of the body is easier than [122] its effect on the other parts. It is known that it is not like that, for its effect on the eye's sight is similar to its effect on the ear's hearing. It is thus established that the effect of the soul on the employment of all organs is equal.

We thus have proven that if [the soul] were a body inside the body, this equality would not occur, at which point it is necessary that the soul not be a body that exists in the body.

If it is said, "Why is it not permissible to say that the soul is a body that is entwined (*mushābik*^{an}) with this body, then some of its parts would be entwined in the eye, some in the ear, some in the heart, and some in the brain? By this assumption, each part of the soul controls a part of the body." We maintain that this is false for several reasons.

The first is that, upon this assumption, the human being would consist of an aggregate of many parts that are dispersed in various limbs. And we have proven in the previous section that the person must be a single thing characterized by all of the knowledges, all of the perceptions, all of the capacities, and that he in himself be that which produces all actions. And that proves false what you have raised.

The second aspect of [our] rejoinder is that, assuming that the matter is as you have argued, then nonetheless it must be that every one of those parts is independent in managing that particular [limb or] organ. And if this were the case, then the engagement of one of those parts with its particular action must not obstruct another part from its particular action. And it is known that this occurs. For if the person is occupied with anger, desire is impossible; if he is engaged with desire, then anger is impossible; and if he is absorbed in thought, then both [anger and desire] are impossible.

[123] The third aspect of this reply is that this question would be resolved if we said that there occurs in every part of a body a part of the soul, such that it is said that every one of them moves that part without needing anything of the instruments. And at that point, the relation of the soul to all actions would be the same. It is known that that is false, otherwise all the organs would necessarily be equal in [each] being a single principle organ, independent in being receptive to the faculty of life. It is known that it is not like that, for the heart and the brain are stronger in their connection to the soul than the rest of the organs. It is thus established by these demonstrations that it is not permissible that the soul be a body that pervades the body.

As for the third possibility of the soul being a body that is different from the body and which is not inside of it, this is far from being rational and no one maintains it. Since the three possibilities have been shown to be false, there [only] remains a fourth possibility, and that is that the soul is an essence abstracted from corporeality and its relations, and that its connection to all the parts [of the body] is equal, and thus its engagement with employing some of the parts [of the body] is not more difficult for it than the use of other parts. This is the desired conclusion.

The tenth argument is that if it were the case that the soul were the body, or one of the organs of the body, then resurrection (*al-ḥashr wa-l-nashr*), reward (*al-thawāb*), and punishment

(*al-ʿiqāb*) would be impossible. Were this the case, then the human being would be the vilest of animals, and the creation of [the human being] would be purely in vain. As these consequences are false, the statement that the soul is the same as this body or is one of its organs is false. The establishment of this proof relies upon the confirmation of [certain] premises.

The first premise addresses the demonstration that were the soul to consist of this body or of one of its organs, then the doctrine of resurrection (*al-qawl bi-l-baʿth wa-l-qiyāma*) would be false. Its proof is that we witness that this body, along with all of its organs and parts, is divided and rent asunder and ceases to exist [124] altogether. The light of reason shows it to be impossible that something return to the exact state it was in before perished and ceased to exist. If they say, "Why is it not permissible to be said that the human being consists in particular parts, and if the person dies and those parts and organs disperse, that which disappears is the attributes and accidents. Yet those parts themselves remain, so there is no doubt that that person in himself remains if those accidents return to [those parts], and that this human being existing in this state is the same person that existed before that." We say that this is false, for by the assumption that the human being consists in a particular body, it is thus impossible that it be said that that human being may consist abstracted from those bodies, for those bodies were once existent before they were combined and characterized by those attributes, and this person was not in existence [at that point]. And if that person died after his being alive, and those parts dispersed, then those parts remained [in existence] despite the fact that the human being did not endure. So we know that by the assumption that the person is a body, the particular person cannot consist abstracted from corporeality, but rather must consist in a body characterized by particular attributes (these being knowledge, capacity, and life). If the person were to consist in an aggregate of those entities along with these attributes, then when these attributes cease to exist, one of the parts which is

expressed in the realization of this human being insofar as he is this human being also ceases to exist.

As it is established by the light of reason that the return of that which is nonexistent is impossible, then it is established that the return of that accident that is one of the parts of the essence of that person is [also] impossible. It must then be that the return of that exact person is impossible. It is thus established by what we have said that if the soul were to consist in this body, or in one of [the limbs or] organs of this body, then the doctrine of resurrection (*al-baʿth wa-l-qiyāma*) would be false, as would the enduring of the soul after the death of the body be false. This evidence is strong in establishing the desired conclusion.

Regarding the demonstration of the second premise, which is our saying that if the doctrines of resurrection (*baʿth*) and [125] the survival of the soul after the death of the body are false, then the human being must be the vilest of all animals, the evidence of this is that the human being is distinguished from the rest of the animals by the faculty of the intellect. The intellect entails suffering (*shaqāʾ*) in [the human being's experience of] the bodily pleasures, and felicity (*saʿāda*) in the intellectual perfections (*al-kamālāt al-ʿaqliyya*) from which it benefits after death. And the proof of this is that the intellect prompts the rational person (*al-ʿāqil*) to contemplate the past, the present, and the future.

As for the contemplation of the past, if the person remembers all that came to pass of reviled matters, then intense sorrow settles in his heart because of its past occurrence. And if the person remembers all that occurred of pleasant states, then intense sorrow settles in his heart due to their passing and disappearance.

As for the contemplation of present states, these are either of good or bad [states]. For if it were [contemplation of] good [states], then the mind entails distress for a number of reasons.

The first is that it fears their disappearance, and the pain of anxiety immediately arises.

The second is that there is no comfort that cannot be exceeded by another, higher level [of enjoyment]. If the intellect recognizes this, it longs for the superior degree [of comfort], and disdains the measure [of pleasure] that has been obtained; thus, distress and pain occur.

Thirdly, the pleasure [one takes] in all that occurs is transitory, and its having been obtained strengthens the desire and the seeking for more, for much effort is a cause for the obtainment of stable faculties. As for the contemplation of future states, this too necessitates intense anxiety and complete panic, for one knows that they may occur in accordance with, or contrary to, one's desire.[10]

What we have said is thus affirmed, namely that the intellect necessitates that the obtainment of these bodily comforts be spoiled and linked with anxiety, discomfort, and emotional pain (*ʿalam al-qalb*). Yet the rest of the animals are devoid of intellects, and their benefit from the corporeal pleasures is free of the disturbance that occurs because of the intellect. It must be then that their benefit from these corporeal pleasures is more perfect than that benefit which occurs for the human being from them.

[126] If this is affirmed, then we say that the intellect's being that which necessitates perfection and happiness must mean that this [fulfillment and joy] occurs after death. If the aim here is that the soul does not survive at all after the death of the body, then there would be no benefit that would occur for the intellect after the death. We have shown that [the intellect] is one of the strongest necessitating causes entailing the spoiling and disturbance of these corporeal

[10] Parts of these sentences are missing from the printed edition. The manuscript states:
إنما كلما حصل فإنّه يزول الالتذاذ به و حصوله يقوي الرغبة في طلب الزيادة لأنّ كثرة الفعل سبب لحصول الملكات الراسخة و امّا التفكر في الأحوال المستقبلة فهو يوجب الخوف الشديد و الفزع التام لأنه لا يعرف أنّه يحصل على وفق المراد أو على خلاف المراد.

MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 306v.

pleasures and the invalidation of their benefits. At this point it becomes clear that if the soul were not to survive the death of the body, then the human being would be the vilest and most contemptible of animals, and the weakest and most worthless of them. For its distinction from the rest of [the animals] is by nothing other than the intellect, from which there is no benefit save in the diminution of goods and the spoiling of pleasures and comforts. And when the light of reason (*badīhat al-ʿaql*) attests that this resulting conclusion must surely be false, and that the human being is the noblest of animals and the highest of them in power and worth due in fact to the occurrence of the intellect in him, then it is evident that the perfection, majesty, and loftiness of the intellect (which is the cause of the devaluing of the temporal corporeal goods) must absolutely be in its obtaining the perfections which occur after the death of the body. And this indicates that the soul is not the body, and that it survives after the death of the body.

As for the demonstration of the third premise, which is our maintaining that if the soul were not to endure after the death of the body then the creation of the human being would be in vain, the evidence of this is that this person is either created for good, peace, and comfort, or for harm and tribulation, or, alternatively, that [the creation of humanity] does not fall into these two possibilities.

The second possibility is unlikely, as we have proven that good is dominant and evil is dominated.

The third possibility [too] is false because this meaning (*maʿna*) occurs [only] when [something] continues [in a state of] original nonexistence. It remains solely that the truth lies in the first possibility, which is that [the human being] is created for attaining paradise, comfort, wisdom, and goodness. So we say that the substrate of attaining those [127] goods is either this corporeal life, or that which occurs after it. The first is false, for this life (*dār al-dunyā*) is one of

hardship, trial, and tribulation. The establishment of these premises will come in the book on ethics[11] through the censure of this corporeal life by way of thorough examination (*istiqṣā'*). And as this possibility is proven false, it is established that the goal of the creation of these human souls is for their attainment of goods and felicities after the death of the body. And this indicates that the soul is other than the body, and other than all of its parts, and that the soul survives the death of the body either in state of felicity and well-being, or in a state of torment and suffering.

This is the end of what we have to say on proving the existence of the soul. And God knows best.

[11] i.e., in *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*.

Appendix VII: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, VII.3.19[1]

[279] The Nineteenth Part: On the ranks of souls in cognitions and knowledges

Part One: The Ranks

Know that the sages defined these as four levels:

The first level consists of the material intellects. And they are the souls of children that are void of all cognitions and knowledges, though they are undoubtedly receptive to knowledges; and it was called "material" (*hayūlāniyya*) for this meaning.

The second level is the dispositional intellect (*al-ʿaql bi-l-malaka*). For we have shown that acquired knowledges cannot be obtained except by the mediation of axiomatic knowledges (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*). And these axiomatic knowledges occur first in the mind, and then the human being synthesizes some of them with others. Those syntheses cause that of which one was previously ignorant to become known. At this degree, there is variation in two respects:

The first is in the multiplicity of those axiomatic knowledges, and their paucity.

The second is that their possessor can either find it easy to synthesize axiomatic knowledges, [280] such that those syntheses lead to the obtainment of knowledges by [deduced] conclusions [of the syllogisms], or it may be that this is difficult for him.

And know that the levels of ease and difficulty are not precise, but rather are as if infinite. And just as it is not unlikely that their lowest extreme is at a dolt who finds no ease at all in acquiring and seeking [knowledge], so too is it not unlikely that their upper limit is at one who is perfect, for whom those syntheses occur in a complete manner and in the best sequences, without there being any effort in the seeking. And the masters of this perfection are the great prophets and perfect sages; and of the Sufis there are some who called this kind of knowledge divine (*al-*

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 7, 279-84.

ʿ*ilm al-ladunī*), taken from His saying, "And we taught him knowledge proceeding from Us (*wa ʿallamnāhu min ladunnā ʿilm*^{an})" (Q 18:65).

The third level is the actual intellect (*al-ʿaql bi-l-fiʿl*). It is at this point that acquired knowledges occur in a complete, abundant manner, except that they are not present in his intellect. Rather, it is the case that when he wishes to summon them, he is capable of doing so without need for additional toil and effort.

The fourth level comprises those knowledges that are present in actuality (*ḥāḍira bi-l-fiʿl*), brilliant, complete, perfect, exact. This is what is called the acquired intellect (*al-ʿaql al-mustafād*). If the human soul reaches this limit, then it has entered the last of the human ranks, and the first stations of the angels.

This, then, is the explanation of the state of cognitions and knowledges, according to this division.

Part Two: The Graspings

They said that grasping is either a grasping of particulars, or a grasping of universals. If it were a grasping of particulars, then it is either [the case] that that grasping is conditioned on that which is grasped being present—that being sense perception—or it is not conditioned on it [being present], and that is the imagination. As for [281] the grasping of universals, that is the intellect. Then they posited that sensation grasps that which is sensed along with its specific matter (*māddatihi*). As for imagination, it abstracts some degree of abstraction from that matter (*mādda*). Thus, if the person imagines something, it is not reliant on its being present in external reality. The intellect, however, abstracts [its object] entirely from matter.

Know that these words are familiar and well-known, and they did not investigate into them at all. Discussion into them is [possible] in several respects.

The first is that if the intellectual form is a specific accident inhering in a specific soul, and that soul bases many knowledges, inclinations, desires, and characteristics upon it, then this intellectual form is entirely linked to it and accompanies it. How can it be said, then, that it is an abstracted form? For if they said that the intention of "its being abstracted" is that it would be abstracted if these connections were removed from it, then we say, why is it not also said by this interpretation that the sensible form is an abstracted form?

The second [discussion] is that the argument for the existence of the abstracted form is internally inconsistent. For its being abstracted is itself a qualification additional to its essence which is in conjunction with it. The argument for its being abstracted makes its very being abstracted impossible.

The third [discussion] is that they explained, on the topic of logic, that the universal has five predicables: the genus, the differentia, the species, the property, and the general accident. As for the genus and the differentia, they are parts of the constitution of the essence. And the accident that occurs mentally cannot be part of the constitution of the essence that exists externally. As for the species, it is the essence, and the essence that exists externally such as the sphere, the sun, and [282] the moon cannot be the same as the accident that inheres mentally or be equal to it. As for the property and the general accident, they are of the attributes subsisting in the external essence, and so it is impossible that those attributes be the same as the accident that inheres mentally. It is therefore established that the statement on the form that inheres in the soul being an abstracted universal essence is speech that has no truth to it whatsoever, and no foundation. Rather, the truth is that that which inheres in the soul is knowledge of these essences and awareness of them, and this knowledge is a specific accident and a specific attribute inhering in a specific soul at a specific time. The statement that that form is a universal, abstracted form is

meaningless speech.

Part Three: we say that just as the faculty of vision (*al-ibṣār*) is dependent upon conditions, so too is inner sight (*al-baṣīra*).

The first condition for vision is that its object not be in the extreme of manifestation, like the sun, for sight is perplexed by it (*yataḥayyar fīhi*) because of its intensity. And it must also not be in the extreme of hiddenness, like the atoms or the levels of mixtures. So too is it like this when it comes to the intelligible: if it is at the extreme of manifestation, like the separates (*al-mufāriqāt*), the intellect is incapable of grasping them, and if it is at the extreme of hiddenness, like the levels of the last kinds of simple and composite qualities, so too are intellects incapable of comprehending them completely.

The second condition is that as long as the person moves their gaze from side to side in many movements, they will not see the object of vision, if it is present. This is the case as well for the rational soul; as long as it moves its spiritual eye from intelligible to intelligible, it is unable to perceive. And those movements are called thought, deliberation, and intellectual discernment (*al-naẓar al-ʿaqlī*). And just as the eye's discernment (*naẓar al-ʿayn*) is an expression of the pupil's shifting from side to side seeking vision, so too is the intellect's discernment (*naẓar al-ʿaql*) an expression of the shifting of the pupil of the intellect from side to side seeking to grasp the intelligible.[2]

[283] The third condition is that the faculty of vision can only grasp its objects as a result of the air being luminous due to the arising of illuminating things. And so too is the intellect not able to see except by the arising of spiritual illuminators (*al-nayyirāt al-rūhāniyya*). The

[2] Rāzī is playing on the multivalence of the Arabic word *naẓar*, which signifies both physical and mental perception, depending on the context. It is also this word that Rāzī employs to describe the rationalist path of "theoretical inquiry and inferential reasoning" (*al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*).

illuminators of the corporeal world are four: the sun, the moon, the stars, and fire. The greatest of them is the sun, then the moon, then the stars, and fire. And so too are the illuminators of the spiritual world four: The First Cause — Exalted and Hallowed; and after Him is the Greatest Spirit, which is the noblest of the holy spirits; and after it is the degrees of the angels, which is on the level of the stars; and after it is the human intellect, which is at the position of fire.[3]

And the levels of the human spirits are of two kinds. The brilliance and power of some of them is due to the purification and cleansing of the soul from not-God Exalted. For others, it is due to the composition of apodictic proofs. And the first of these are the prophets and the saints, and the second [group] are the sages.

And know that the light of the intellect has weaknesses, just as fire has weaknesses. The first is that when the light of fire is mixed with much smoke, its appearance darkens, and the brain dries out. So too is the light of the intellect mixed with the smoke of specious arguments (*al-shubahāt*).

The second [weakness] is that the light of fire possesses both brilliance and burning. So too does the light of intellect have brilliance if it meets with proofs and burning if it meets with specious arguments.

And the third [weakness] is that the light of the lamp is extinguished for the least reason. So too is the light of the intellect extinguished with the least specious argument.

The fourth [weakness] is that while the lamp shines when placed in a small room, when it

[3] Conspicuously missing from this description of the illumination of the intellect's objects is the Active Intellect, which plays a crucial role in illuminating the intelligibles for the human mind in Ibn Sīnā's system. Rāzī, however, rejects the existence and function of the Active Intellect, and here focuses more broadly on God, then the Universal Soul, the celestial intellects and souls (more numerous than in Ibn Sīnā's cosmology), and the human intellect (abstracted from matter for Rāzī as it is for Ibn Sīnā). For a thorough discussion of Rāzī's cosmology, see Chapter III of this dissertation.

is placed in a vast desert, its light lessens, and it becomes as if it is dark. Just so is the lamp of the intellect; [284] whereas its light is evident if it is used in inferior pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-ḥaqīra*), like arithmetic and geometry, if it is employed in the lofty pursuits (*al-maṭālib al-ʿāliya*), it is extinguished. Indeed, when the spirit seeks cognition of itself, it becomes as if it were extinguished, and these specious arguments, which are explained in this book, befall it.

The fifth [weakness] is that the appearance of the light of the lamp is conditioned upon a partition existing between it and between the disk of the sun. If it is placed facing the disk of the sun, it is extinguished. So it is the case as well for the lamp of the intellect; if it is placed facing the world of purgatory spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-maṭhara*), it is extinguished.

The sixth [weakness] is that the light of the lamp, even if it continues for long, will eventually die out. While we may make it last, its light becomes obsolete upon the rising of the sun. So too is this the case for the light of the lamp of the intellect. Either it is extinguished by flights of vanities and specious arguments, or it remains to the end of life—but upon the death of the body, lights from the world of the unseen (*ʿālam al-ghayb*) are revealed to it such that, upon encountering them, there remains no effect of the light of its intellect.

Appendix VIII: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya,* VIII.2.1[1]

[103] Section One: On distinguishing this way from the previous way

So we say: Know that those who subscribe to prophethood (*nubuwwāt*) consist of two groups. The first are those who say that the appearance of miracles by [the prophet's] effort is proof of his veracity. We are subsequently guided by [the prophet's] speech in verifying the truth and invalidating what is false. This is the account of the first path to which the masters of religions and sects subscribe.

The second account is that we say that we first recognize what is true and correct regarding beliefs, and what is proper in works.[2] If we recognize that, and then we see a person who summons people to the true religion, and we see that his speech has a strong effect in directing people from that which is false to that which is true, then we recognize that he is a true prophet who must be followed. This way [of recognizing prophethood] is closer to reason (*aqrab ilā l-ʿaql*) and contains fewer specious arguments (*shubahāt*). Its confirmation is necessary, but it is preceded by premises.

The first premise: Know that perfection of the human being is in knowing the true for its own sake, and goodness [104] is that it be employed in action (*ʿamal*). What is meant by this is that the perfection of [the person's] state is limited to two matters:

The first of them is that his theoretical faculty becomes perfect such that the forms of things, and their realities, are revealed in it in a way that is complete and perfect, and free of defect and error.

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[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 103-108.

[2] I am following the manuscript here, which states:
و القول الثاني أن نقول إنّا نعرف أولا أن الحقّ و الصدق في الاعتقادات ما هو و أن الصواب في الاعمال ما هو...
MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 370r.

The second is that their practical faculty become perfect such that its owner obtains a disposition (*malaka*) by which he can perform good works. And what is meant by good works is states that necessitate aversion to bodily felicities, and necessitates desire for the world of the hereafter (*ʿālam al-ākhira*) and for the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*). It is apparent by this that there is no felicity for the human being save by reaching these two states. This premise is one about which the prophets agreed on its veracity, and the sages of metaphysics also concurred on its truth. One sees no person of perfect intellect in this world who does not support it.

The second premise [that supports recognizing prophets by their message] is that people are divided into three classes:

The first are those that are deficient in these cognitions and in these works, and they are the common people and the masses.

The second are those that are perfect in these two stations, except that they are not able to treat those that are deficient, and they are the saints.

The third are those that are perfect in these stations, and who also can treat those who are deficient. They are able to endeavor to bring those who are deficient from the depths of deficiency to the pinnacle of perfection. Those are the prophets, peace be upon them.[3]

The third premise [which affirms recognizing a prophet by his message] is that the degrees of deficiency and perfection in the theoretical and practical faculties are as though infinite in terms of power and weakness, paucity and abundance. This is also known necessarily (*maʿlūm bi-l-ḍarūra*).

[3] Here, the printed edition contains the sentence "This class is known exactly." al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 104. This sentence is missing from the manuscript, and I have chosen not to include it in my translation for the sake of clarity. See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 370v.

The fourth premise is that although deficiency is pervasive in human beings and prevalent in them, [105] there must be among them someone who is perfect, and far from deficiency. The proof of this has two aspects:

The first is that we have shown that perfection and deficiency occur in various levels among people. Just as we witness people who are extreme on the side of deficiency, poor understanding and comprehension, such that they are close to animals and beasts, so too is this case on the side of perfection; it must be that there exist those who are exceedingly perfect, and among them there must be someone who is the most perfect and the most excellent. And he would exist at the last ranks of humanity, and the first ranks of the angels.

The second [aspect of the proof that there must exist one who is perfect] is that induction (*al-istiqrāʾ*) shows what we have mentioned. That is because the elemental body is a genus under which there are three species, namely, minerals, plants, and animals. And the sound mind attests to the fact that the most noble of those three is animals, the middle of them is plants, and the lowest is minerals. Then we say that the sound mind attests to the fact that animals are a genus under which there are many species, the noblest of which is the human being. Human beings, too, contain many types, including the Africans, the Indians, the Arabs, the Byzantines, the Franks, and the Turks. There is no doubt that the best of the types of the human being, and the closest of them to perfection, are those who reside in the middle of the inhabited world. These are those who reside in the place known as Irānshahr. This type of people is also varied in perfection and deficiency, and there is no doubt that among them there is a single person who is the best and most perfect of them. As such, it is established that in every age, there must be a single person who is the best of them and the most perfect in the theoretical and practical faculties. The Sufis call him "the Pole of the World" (*quṭb al-ʿālam*), and they believe in him.

Since the noblest part of that which inhabits this lower world is the human being, in whom exists the theoretical faculty by which he acquires the holy lights from the world of the angels, and the practical faculty by which he is able to manage this corporeal world in the best manner and most perfect way, then the existence of that single person who is the most perfect of people [106] who are to be found in that age (*dawr*) is the fundamental aim (*al-maqṣūd al-ʾaṣlī*) of this material world. There is no doubt that the essential aim is the perfect one, while the deficient is an accidental aim. It is thus established that that person is the one who is perfect, and it is established that that person is the Pole of this material world, and all else is as if subordinate to him. And the community of the Shiʿīs and the Imāmīs[4] call him "the Infallible Imam" (*al-imām al-maʿṣūm*) and "the Lord of the Age" (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*), and they say that he is in occultation (*ghāʾib*). They believed in two descriptions also. Whereas he is void of defects which exist in everyone else, he is "infallible" in those defects. And he is also "the Lord of the Age" for, as we have shown, that person is the essential aim in that time and all that is other than him is his followers.[5] And he is also in occultation from people, for people do not know that that person is in fact the best and most perfect of all the people of this age. And I say that perhaps they do not recognize that person as the best of the people of the age because he, himself, knows the state of himself but cannot know the state of others, and that that person is not recognized by others and also does not recognize himself. This is as it was related in the divine narrations, that God Exalted said, "My saints are under my shrines, not recognized other than by me."

[4] I follow the manuscript here in separating these groups with a *waw*. See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 370v.

[5] The manuscript includes an additional sentence here which makes the paragraph more cohesive. It reads:

و هو أيضا صاحب الزمان لأنا بيّنا أن ذلك الشخص هو المقصود بالذات في ذلك الزمان و ما سواه فالكل اتباعه ...

See MS Kayseri, Reşit Efendi 503, fol. 370v.

This is thus established, that in every age there must exist a person characterized by the attributes of perfection. So must it be the case that in successive ages there must be an age in which a single person is the best of all of those who are each the Lord of his Age, unrivaled in his time. And that age which contains the likes of that person does not occur but once in roughly a thousand years. That person is the greatest messenger, the noble prophet, the originator of Laws, guide to the truths; and his relation to the rest of the Lords of the Ages is like the relation of the sun to the rest of the planets. Then, there must occur among the Lords of the Ages a person who is the closest of them to [107] the Lord of the Age in the virtuous attributes. That person, in relation to them, is like the moon in relation to the sun. And he is the Imam Arising (*al-imām al-qāʾim*), his position being the establisher of his Law (*muqarrir sharīʿatihi*). As for the rest, the relation of every one of them to the Greatest Lord of the Age is like the relation of one of the moving planets to the sun. Yet the relation of the masses of people to the Lords of the Ages is like events of this world in relation to the sun, the moon, and the rest of the planets. And there is no doubt that deficient intellects are perfected by the lights of the intellects of the Lords of the Ages, and are strengthened by their power. And this speech is rational and derived through this induction that aids sureness and certainty.

The fifth premise [establishing that a prophet must be recognized by his message] is that that person that is the most perfect of the perfect ones, and the best of the eminent and the learned, is at the last, highest horizon of humanity. And you have learned that the last of every type is connected to the first of the type that is nobler than it. And that which is nobler than humankind is the angels; and thus the last of humanity is connected to the first of the angels. Since we have demonstrated that that person who exists at the highest point of the stages of humanity must be connected to the world of the angels and mixed with them, and since freedom

from bodily attachments, power over the world of bodies, and having no need in their actions of the corporeal instruments are among the traits of the world of the angels, then that person who is characterized by what is appropriate of these attributes has little regard for corporeal things, is powerful in his comportment in them, and is intensely pulled towards the world of the spirituals (*ʿālam al-rūḥāniyyāt*). His theoretical faculty is thus perfected by the varieties of manifest holy truths (*al-jalāyā al-rūhānīya*) and divine cognitions (*al-maʿārif al-ilāhiyya*), and his practical faculty effects bodies of this world through various modes of comportment; that is what is intended by the miracles. Then, after the completion of these two stations, his spiritual faculty is effective in perfecting the deficient spirits in their theoretical and practical faculties. When you recognize that the rational souls differ in essences, then some of the souls are powerful and perfect in the theoretical faculty and weak in the practical faculty. Or the opposite is the case and they are powerful in their acting upon bodies of the material world but feeble in [108] divine theoretical cognitions. Or they are perfect and overpowering in both, but that is exceedingly rare; or they are deficient in both, which is the case for the majority of people.

If you know these premises, then we say that the sickness of rational souls is in two things: turning away from the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) and turning towards creation (*al-khalq*). And their cure is in two things: turning towards the Truth and away from creation. Whosoever summons people to turn towards the Truth and away from creation is the True Prophet. We mentioned that the levels of this kind of person are variegated in power, weakness, and deficiency. The more perfect is his capacity for contributing to this truth, the higher is he in the rank of prophecy. And the weaker is his rank in this regard, the lower is his rank of prophecy.

This [concludes] what we have stated on the explanation and demonstration of the state of prophecy. And God knows best.

Appendix IX: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, VIII.3.4[1]

[161] Section Four: On the universal conditions considered regarding the care (*riʿāya*) of this species [of spirits]

The verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*) agreed that certain things are required for care (*riʿāya*) [of the spirits]:

The first condition is that whoever performs something of these practices, then doubts them, will not benefit from them. And this is the case for several reasons:

The first is that the effects of the spirits of the planets are stronger than the effects of their bodies. If the conviction of the truth of the practices strengthens, then the human spirits come to be supported by the lofty spirits, just as the lower materials are supported by the lofty bodies. Certainly, the effects consequently strengthened. But if strong conviction does not exist, those spiritual influences disappear, and corporeality remains void of spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*). Surely, the effect consequently weakens. And it is for this reason that Ptolemy said, "The knowledge of the stars is from you and from them."

The second reason is that the lofty spiritual beings are privy to what is in our hearts. Just as if one presents oneself to a king in this world and requests something from him, then it becomes apparent to that king that that man does not believe in his word and does not heed his deed, then that king will not endeavor to grant his request, so too is it the case here.

[162] The third reason is that if one does not believe in the soundness (*ṣiḥḥat*) of those practices, then he evidently will not exert himself in [fulfilling] all of those conditions. Certainly, then, the aim [of the practices] will fail.

The second condition [to ensure the care of the spirits] is that, if one draws near to the

[1] al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 8, 161-66.

spirits in some way and yet finds that there is no effect, then he must not cease or abandon that practice. For one who knows how to approach the great king of the kings of the earth understands that bearing much toil in this science (*ʿilm*) is negligible. Aristotle said, "I was occupied with this science (*ʿilm*) day and night, and if I found an effect, I thanked it, and if I did not find an effect, then I would not blame it. Though the time grew long, and the days flagged, and mastering something was difficult, I still would not desist from my desired end until I reached it." And the way of the seeker in this science must be one of a lover when his beloved will not forgive him, or the way of one who desires to reach the attendance of a king who does not accept him, for he goes to the greatest lengths in hope of achieving the desired end. This is key.

The third condition [of the care of spirits] is that there are some people who think that the person can only obtain that which his destiny bespeaks.

And know that people are of three ranks in this:

The first rank [of people] are those whose innate destinies bespeak their being prepared for this science. If those occupy themselves with this science, they will reach their desired end. However, just as the levels of proficiency and deficiency in aptness are unending, so too are the levels of achievement unending.

The second rank [of people] are those whose destinies bespeak neither that which allots nor that which obstructs; and if these persevere in the practice, they will reach a consummate lot.

[163] And the third rank [of people] are those whose destinies bespeak that which obstructs. Just as the levels of forbidding signs are unending, so too are the levels of impossibility unending.

Know that success in this science requires the human being's departure from the limit of

humanity and entrance into the world of angels, as well as the perfection in everything dear—even more so in the most perfect of perfections and the highest of levels. The person need not believe that everyone is in fact suitable for this science; if a person studies this science and yet derives no benefit from it, he should not take that as proof that the science is invalid. For we see that one may tire oneself in learning a base profession or lowly crafts for years, and yet one does not learn them as one should. This is a testimony to even the basest of professions—what then might we say of the loftiest of crafts!

The fourth condition is that it is agreed upon that one of the conditions of this science is exceeding in perfection, and the cause of this has several aspects:

The first is that it has been established that the rational souls are of the same genus as the celestial spirits and therefore produce effects (*fa-takūn muʾaththira*). If this craft is perfected, then complete power over spirits and bodies is acquired. If others learn that someone studies these practices, and strong aversion as well as the complete desire to thwart and degrade those practices arises in their hearts, those practices will be completely foiled.

The second is that spreading this science is contrary to the good of the world. For one man's takeover of the entire world is something that is contrary to the order of the world.

The third is that the thing that is dear is guarded and concealed with utmost care, while the absence of such excessive protection indicates that this is not the case for it. So we have shown that weakness of conviction in [this science] weakens these practices.

[164] The fifth condition is that they agreed that performing these practices at night is more appropriate than during the day. Aristotle said, "The sun is an overwhelming power, and it overwhelms all the spirits by the perfection of its reign, and nothing of them is able to act. Further, the senses are occupied during the day with the sensibles, and so the assembly of the

heart (*jamʿiyyat al-qalb*) does not occur; at night, the senses are idle, and thus the assembly of the heart is more perfect."

And Hermes said, "The best practice is that which is hidden from the eyes of people and the rays of the sun. For the eyes of people attract, by their spirituality, the power of magic (*nīranj*), and the power of the sun thwarts the power of magic (*nīranj*)." Then he said, "Practice the definitive magics (*al-nīranjāt*), and the summoning of desire, and their vapors, all at night, and guard them from the [people's] eyes and the [sun's] shining."

The sixth condition is that they agreed that the more receptive is the master of this practice to the ways of piety and goodness, the more his practices will be perfect; for good is predominant in the nature of the world, whereas evil is dominated. If his practice cooperates with the victorious, dominant side, then that practice is better and more perfect.

The seventh condition is that he does not eat anything of animals, and he limits what he eats of bread and salt and vegetables. The reason for this is that human souls are enamored with bodily pleasures, and if one reaches them, then one becomes occupied with and immersed in them, and abandons the loftier side. Yet if one does not experience them, and remains deprived of them, then one returns by his nature to the original side (*al-jānib al-aṣlī*) and the innate station (*al-markaz al-fiṭrī*).

The eighth condition is that he not employ the spiritual beings (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*) in base matters, but rather in great, triumphant matters in accordance with what is appropriate to it and to every spiritual being (*rūḥānī*). He must be wary of [165] returning to them for every desire, for that is a kind of impropriety (*sūʾ al-adab*) and leads to the destruction of the seeker.

The ninth condition is that the practitioner of these practices be proficient in four matters:

The first is that he understand and be knowledgeable of the metaphysical sciences (*al-*

ʿ*ulūm al-ilāhiyya*) [i.e., theology]. For the soul obtains a kind of power from this science that is not otherwise achieved in the rest of the sciences.

The second is that he be knowledgeable of all three divisions of the science of the stars: 1) the condition (*al-hayʾa*) of the skies and the earth [i.e., astronomy], for knowledge of this will attract his spirit to the loftier side; 2) the constellations, such that he knows the positions of the planets as they really are; and 3) the science of astrology (ʿ*ilm al-aḥkām*), to the point that he knows the effects of the planets both in solitary states and in conjunction.

And the third kind of sciences important for the master of this craft is the science of ethics. This allows him to know what is virtuous and what is blameworthy, such that he can purify his soul of what is blameworthy and adorn it with virtuous morals.

The fourth key matter is that his soul be one that is alive, not deadened. The meaning of "the alive soul" being that, if something appears to the soul from the world of spiritual beings (ʿ*ālam al-rūḥāniyyāt*), it yearns and trembles, his heart is provoked, and his soul is humbled.

As one person's proficiency in all four of these matters is rare, there is no [166] doubt that achieving perfection in this science is also rare.

The tenth condition [to ensure the care of the spirits] is that [the practitioner] be steadfast and dignified of heart, capable of sitting in empty places and deserts far from people, and that he be sweet-smelling of body and far from filth. And God knows best.

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