

IBN MASKAWAIH

A STUDY OF HIS

Al-Fauz Al-Asghar

By

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Lecturer in Philosophy

Government College, Lahore

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KASHMIRI BAZAR, LAHORE (Pakistan)



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KASHMIRI BAZAR, LAHORE

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PUBLISHED BY
SHAIKH MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
KASHMIRI BAZAR, LAHORE

PRINTED BY
M. MOHAMMAD DIN
AT THE BENGAL ART PRESS
CHANGAR MOHALLA, ANARKALI, LAHORE

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INTRODUCTION

Ibn Maskawaih, physician, philosopher and historian and for some time the friend of the Buwaihid Sultan 'Adaduddualah, died 'full of years' in 1030 A.D. (431 A.H.). To the world, he is generally known either as historian, through his monumental work *Tajarabbul-Umman*, or as a moralist and as the author of his famous *Tahzibal Akhlaq*, not to mention his *Djawidan Khirad*, a collection of ethical aphorisms in Persian. It is a pity that the world is not so very familiar with his very high stature as a philosopher. Chronologically, he stands between Farabi and Ibn Sina. His time coincides with the old age of the former and the youth of the latter, and he embodies in himself the philosophical scholarship of the age. His only philosophical work which appears to be extant is *Al-Fauz al-Asghar* (i.e. 'the smaller work on Salvation'). The name implies that there was to be and there was a larger work also on the same subject, and he states off and on in the smaller work that he was reserving the detailed discussion of some topic for the larger work. What astonishes one, however, is the fact that modern historians of Islamic philosophical thought have either entirely passed over Ibn Maskawaih's great

contribution to philosophy or have given only a very brief account of it. De Boer, for instance, gives only a four-paged account of his ethical philosophy (*History of Philosophy in Islam*, pp. 128-131). *The Cyclopædia of Islam* is silent in regard to his philosophical views.¹ Iqbal (in his *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, pp. 26-31) gives us the only account in English which is based on a study of the *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*. This book, however, is of outstanding importance and deserves detailed and painstaking study.²

I believe that the great importance of this work in the history of Muslim Philosophy rests, among other things, on these factors:

(1) It is a general and extremely terse statement of those philosophical views which had developed along several lines before Ibn Maskawaih and had crystallized as 'Muslim Philosophy' before Farabi died. It is very probable, of course, that Maskawaih's own genius had a lot to do with the process of crystallization.

(2) This work can also tell us that much of what passed for Muslim Philosophy in later ages had already, in essentials, been systematized by Ibn

¹ See also *Outline of Islamic Culture*, pp. 417-419, by A.M.A. Shushtary.

² An Urdu-translation—*Al-Qaul al-Azhar*—is available.

Maskawaih.

(3) The ease and lucidity with which he discourses on various topics indicate clearly that Ibn Maskawaih had long anticipated Ghazali in facility of philosophical expression.

(4) Lastly, this work enables us to perceive how carefully our author—like many another philosopher in Islam—avoids two dangers, (*i*) a collision with orthodox Islam, on the one hand, and (*ii*) a contamination of his philosophical views with the pantheistic speculations of some Sufistic schools, on the other.

I have said above that Ibn Maskawaih's *Al-Fauz al-Asghar* deserves detailed and painstaking study. In the following pages I propose to contribute my humble share towards the performance of this duty.

The book is divided into three chapters and each chapter is devoted to one major problem. Each chapter itself is divided into ten sections. The sections, of course, are devoted to the various aspects of the major problem. There are, thus, thirty sections in all in the book and I propose to work my way through it section-wise. This will constitute Part I of the present work. In Part II the reader will find a general *résumé* of Ibn Maskawaih's philosophical standpoint.

PART I

The three major problems of the Al-Fauz al-Asghar are: (i) the Proof of the Maker; (ii) the Soul and its States; and (iii) Prophethood. Let us now turn to the consideration of the argument in regard to these problems.

CHAPTER I

The Proof of the Maker

1

In the first section, which is more of a philosophical introduction than an argument in the strict logical sense, our philosopher tells us that the problem before him, *i.e.*, the Proof of the Maker, is both easy and difficult. It is easy because nothing is more self-evident and clear to reason than the existence of the Maker. 'That God exists' is a proposition as obvious as (if not more so than) the proposition 'that the Sun exists.' The only difference is that the latter proposition is obvious to the senses whereas the former is obvious to reason. Whoever lacks the latter is thereby debarred from the apprehension of God's existence much in the same way as the defect in the sensory make-up of the bat debars it from the apprehension of the Sun's existence. For this reason the wise in all ages have recommended the purgation and purification of the Soul by means of ascetic and spiritual exercises. Our author believes that there is no other method of knowing God except through such discipline and the gradual develop-

ment of the Soul and Reason which such discipline entails. In this respect, Maskawaih appears to be echoing the teaching of Farabi (and of others too) according to whom purity of Soul is the 'condition and fruit of all philosophising,'¹ though for both Farabi and Maskawaih this 'purity' depends not only upon the ascetic and spiritual discipline referred to above, but also on an intensive training in Geometry and Logic. These two sciences are (in their view) part of the Soul's discipline.

To the question why human reason is, to begin with at least, so very incapable of apprehending spiritual and ontological truths, our author gives this answer. Man is the highest stage in corporeal existence. All combinations of the elements 'end' in (*i.e.* reach their perfection in) the creation of man. Many of these matter-combinations, however, act as veils for Reason which in itself is a luminous essence. These veils of matter keep Reason from the apprehension of the universals and spiritual truths (معقولات). Why? As has just been said, man is the highest stage of development in the world of corporeal existence. The elements evolve from their simple and pure condition to composite manifoldness, and this process of evolution comes to an end with man.

¹*History of Philosophy in Islam*, by De. Boer, p. 110.

The reason why the process of development *does* come to an end with man is that nothing which comes under the category of activity can continue to evolve unendingly. Thus man (among all corporeal existence) is at the farthest remove from the simple elements of which he, like other corporeal beings, is composed. Now if he desires the apprehension of these simple elements, he should learn to reduce mentally the composition which brought him into being, and thus, by a converse movement of thought, reach a perception of the simple and the pure. Ibn Maskawaih here quotes Alexander Aphrodisias in support according to whom "the elements which were first in the composition of man's 'nature' (طبيعته) are the last to perceive after the composition".

Now since the apprehension of even these simple elements which are at the basis of all corporeal existence is so very difficult for man (even though from the side of matter they are so very near to him), it can be easily understood how very difficult for him must be the apprehension of those spiritual and abstract truths which belong to an entirely different plane of being. For theirs is the world of Light (نور) from which man (as a corporeal being) is detached and far.

This argument reminds one irresistibly of

Aristotle's "famous distinction between the order of Nature and the order of experience; in the order of Nature, the general principle is prior to the sensible fact; in the order of experience it is the reverse. To us the particulars of sense are known first; the intelligible principles by which they are explained are known afterwards; but Nature may be considered as starting with principles or laws, and with these in her mind proceeding to the production of particular objects or events" (Joseph: *An Introduction to Logic*, p. 382). We know the individual, for instance, by direct sensory contact and observation. But we do not thus directly know the species to which that individual belongs. We infer the species from the individual and we similarly infer the genus from the species. As far as human experience is concerned, the individual is more concrete than the species and the species is more concrete than the genus. But the genus is the principle of the species and the species is the principle of the individual. To understand each we have first to understand its basic principle. And this understanding is not possible in terms of sense but in terms of Reason which must follow not 'the order of experience' but 'the order of Nature'. Ibn Maskawaih, however, has transferred the distinction from the epistemological to the ontological plane.

To resume: How is one to reach this world of spiritual verities? Ibn Maskawaih follows Farabi's technique referred to above. The seeker should first master the world of physical being by a course of discipline. And then with still more of this discipline proceed gradually towards the world of 'essences'. There is no other method and he quotes Plato in support, according to whom, 'contemplation with pleasure and fortitude of the causes and origin of the world of physical existence enables man to understand the nature of the Real, of the Uncaused Cause and of the Source without Source of the Universe'. And herein lies, according to our author, the supreme Salvation.

There are but two ways, says he, of knowing the truth of things. (a) By means of the senses: this is man's portion as an animal, and (b) by means of Reason (عقل). This second method is peculiar to man. But he cannot use it unless he first 'purifies' himself by a course of strict discipline. The reason is that from the moment of our birth we are used to dependence on the senses, *i.e.*, on our external agents of knowledge. Even when we try to know something by means of Reason, the senses intervene and constrain us to *imagine* the subject in 'the forms of sense' (*i.e.*, in images). For instance, when we think

of 'the Beyond,' Reason declares that it can neither be 'Void' nor 'Full'. But we cannot *imagine* 'the Beyond' without picturing it to ourselves either as Void or as Full. It requires a training of years to shake off this hold of the senses on our Reason. But when this stage is reached how very wondrous is the change! The world of universals and spiritual truths is genuine gold in contrast with the tinsel of the world of the senses. Everything in the latter (including ourselves) changes every moment. But even this truth—that the world of senses is a world of change—is apprehended only by Reason, for the senses themselves cannot perceive the imperceptibly gradual change which everything is undergoing. Universals and spiritual truths, on the other hand, are stable, without beginning and without end. They are 'the real world' as against the tinsel-world of change or 'the sophistical world of the senses', as Plato calls it. That is why the learned and the philosophers of every age have looked down upon the world of the senses as contemptible and degraded. Their gaze is for ever fixed on the universals and on spiritual truths. But they reached this immutable world after long, patient and arduous training in 'discipline'. It is difficult indeed to disconnect oneself from the world of one's fellow-beings. But to

shed the false notions which have been a part and parcel of our being from birth onwards is much more difficult. And this is what the philosopher must learn to do before he is fit to gaze at 'the countenance of Allah' and to participate in His World of Eternal Bliss.

Our author declares that he himself reached his goal by a course of progressive training, first in the mathematical sciences leading on to the study of Logic (the instrument of Philosophy). This was followed by a study of the principles of Physical Science. After a thorough mastery of these sciences he undertook the study of Philosophy itself. And this is what every philosopher should do if he is to reach his goal.

The first section ends here. Plato's influence is clearly noticeable in the above. There is the same contempt for the world of change and becoming, and the same technique of training to reach the 'stage of everlasting bliss'—the stage 'of the supreme Good'.

Let us now turn to his detailed discussion of the Proof of the Maker in the following sections.

2

The second section asserts that *all ancient philosophers have agreed on the affirmation of the Maker.*

Maskawaih quotes Porphyry according to whom the proof of the Maker rests on its self-evidence. But it is self-evident only to the wise, *i.e.*, only to those who have purified their reason by strict discipline. Such people succeed in disentangling themselves from false notions and the snares of Sense, and they affirm the Maker because this is the most important and the most self-evident thing for their reason to do.

Thus are philosophers in agreement with the Prophets (on whom be peace) who have always emphasized God's Unity and Justice. The Prophets are the spiritual healers of man just as physicians are the healers of his body. And just as the latter sometimes resort to force and pressure to compel the patient to take medicine which is for his good, similarly the former have to use means to enable man to shed the evil customs, the false notions and the snares of Sense which stand in the way of the purification of his reason. Reason purified of all sensuous alloy is man's sole means to spiritual bliss and his sole guide to his Real Good.

3

The third section is devoted to *the Proof of the Maker on the basis of motion (change)*. The argument

rests on the thesis that 'for every physical body there is necessary a motion which should be peculiar to it.'

The proof in brief is this: For every physical body there can be one of these two conditions: (i) It has *either* been brought into existence out of nothingness; *or* (ii) it is composed of some existents. In both cases motion is involved. The question is: *to what agency is this motion to be ascribed?*

The 'determination' of a body (*viz.*, that which sustains it as an entity) is according to that 'form' which is peculiar to it; and it is this peculiar form which 'determines' the body's essence and substance. This substance or essence is its nature (طبيعته). Now a body's 'nature' is the cause (but not the ultimate cause) of its special motion. Its nature moves it towards its perfect end and makes it perfect, but it is also obvious that the perfect end of a thing is in agreement and harmony with it. Hence we should understand that when a moved body moves, it feels attraction towards its 'perfect end' or 'completion'. It is also obvious that whatever is sought after and is the goal of endeavour, is the cause of the seeker and the lover. Now every cause is naturally the antecedent of its effect. Hence it follows that since all physical bodies are in motion, and since a mover

for them (who should be their cause) is also necessary, an argument based on motion for the existence of the Prime Mover and the Ultimate Cause of all that exists is the clearest and most obvious.

A word may be said before we pass on to consider the rest of this section. The argument is Aristotelian but as it stands it needs some propping-up. (i) It is taken for granted that every moved thing moves towards its perfect end. But this assertion needs both exposition and justification. Our author accepts it as obvious. That 'everything is in motion' can be accepted as a thesis for which a great deal of empirical evidence could have been cited even by the ancients. But that everything is necessarily moving towards its 'perfection' or 'perfect end' is purely an assumption unless, of course, the thing's ultimate dissolution or disintegration be also regarded as in some sense its 'perfection'. (ii) The next step in the argument is also unsatisfying. To declare that 'whatever is sought after and is the goal of endeavour is the cause of the seeker and the lover' is to use the term 'cause' in a teleological sense. But to declare further that 'cause is the antecedent of its effect' is to use the term in its physical, efficient and mechanical senses; and to mix the mechanical and teleological senses of cause to infer a Mover

for the motion of all existents is not very satisfying. It is quite possible, of course, that the brevity of the treatment of the subject in this book is responsible for this lacuna in the argument. But it must be admitted that the argument as it stands is not very convincing.

Let us return to the author. As the argument based on the fact of physical motion is in his view the best proof of the Maker, he naturally proceeds to tell us in brief of the different types of motion. Physical bodies, says he, can have six types of motion, *viz.*, the motion or change involved (i) in composition, (ii) in decomposition, (iii) in growth, (iv) in decay, (v) in change of states, and (vi) in translation in space. They are explained as follows:

Motion is a *change* which can assume three forms in a body. *Either* it will be (a) change in the quality of the body, *or* (b) in its space, *or* (c) in its essence or substance.

Translation or *change in space* will *either* involve movement of the entire body in space (and this will be rectilinear motion), *or* of only a part of the body (in other words, curvilinear motion). In the latter case, if motion is from centre to periphery, it is the motion of composition; *and* if from periphery to centre, it is the motion of decay.

If motion involves a *change in the quality of the body*, it will either be change in quality *without* a change in the body's substance, *or* it would be change in quality *with* change of substance, *i.e.*, the motion of disintegration or decomposition. In this second case, if we think of that (new) substance into which the body has changed (after change of quality and substance) the motion involved has been that of composition. In such a case the disintegration of the old substance implies the creation of the new.

4

The thesis of the fourth section is twofold: (a) *the Mover of each moving object is different from it*; and (b) *the Mover of all things cannot Himself be subject to motion*. The proof is as follows:

(a) (i) Every object which is subject to motion is either one of the elements or is composed of these, and is either living or non-living. In the former case, if the motion pertains to the essence of the object, then it is necessary that it should move even at its 'centre and special place'. But if it stops moving at this 'centre and special place', then it should be able to stop (just as animals do) at other places too. But this contradicts experience because we observe that all elements keep moving as long as they do

not reach their 'special place and centre' and stop moving when they do. The same argument applies to compounds of elements in non-living bodies.

(ii) Let us now consider the case when the moving body is also a living body (*i.e.*, plant or animal). Can motion belong to the essence of such an object? The author says, No. Suppose, for instance, that we separate some 'noble' part from this 'whole', the living body. Now if the supposition be true that motion belongs to its essence, it should follow that even after the separation of the 'noble' part it (*i.e.*, the rest of the living body) should continue to move (and similarly the separated 'noble part' should continue to move). But observation shows that if a really important or 'noble' part is separated from the living body motion ceases. Thus whether the moving object be an element or a compound of elements and whether it be a living body or one devoid of life, it is not the author of its own motion.

It follows, therefore, that the Mover of every moving body must be different from it.

Thus far our author.

A word of criticism may now be offered. The pivot of the argument in the case of the motion of the elements, is the concept of 'the centre and special place' of the element concerned. One could wish that

this term had been explained in some detail. And in the case of the living bodies the whole argument hangs upon the significance of 'the noble part' which is conceived as separated from the rest of the living body. To begin with, we are not told the exact significance of the term 'noble part'. And then there is nothing in the argument to disprove the supposition that this 'noble part' itself initiates the motion. And further to declare—on the basis of observation—that motion ceases after the separation of the 'noble part', is very vague. It is true that the motion of the object 'as a whole' ceases when the 'noble part' called 'life' is separated from it, but the motion of the parts themselves does not cease. The motion involved in disintegration, for instance, goes on.

Ibn Maskawaih, however, offers us another and a more self-contained argument in support of his contention. Here is it. The motion of a living body is either an attraction towards an object or a repulsion from it. In either case, the object which attracts or repels must be different from the body attracted or repelled. The same is true of non-living bodies.

(b) Now can the Mover of all things Itself (or Himself) move? If It (He) does move then It (He) must have a Mover which latter must have another and so on in infinite regress. This is impossible.

From this it also follows that this Mover of all things cannot be a body, for a body (as is evident from the preceding argument) cannot but move.

Further, this Mover of all things must be regarded as the First and Ultimate Cause of the *existence* of all things. This implies that 'existence' is for all things only accidental but for the Prime Cause it is *essential*. The reason, according to our author, is that all philosophers are agreed that an attribute which is accidental to one object is bound to be essential for some other. Now whatever is accidental to an object is an 'effect' and every 'effect' is change or motion for which a mover is necessary. We must ultimately reach the Mover Who is the Cause of all effects but is not Himself the effect of any Cause. This Mover is God. Thus for God and only for God does existence pertain to the essence. The very idea of God, in other words, involves the idea of His existence. Hence He is the only Necessary Existent. And Whoever is the Necessary Existent must also be the Eternally Existent.

This, in brief, is Maskawaih's statement of the ontological argument for the existence of God, and it must be admitted that it does not suffer by comparison with the traditional Western version.

5

We pass on now to the fifth section whose thesis is: *God is One.*

Here is the argument in brief. Suppose that the True Cause or Author (of the universe) is more than one. It follows that the several Authors will agree in being Agents or Causes but will differ from one another in their essence. Obviously that in which they will agree will be different from that in which they will differ. Hence each of these Agents will be a complex of his essence and some quality which He has in common with the others. But composition is motion for it is an effect of some cause. It follows that each of the Agents will need another Agent to bring him into being and so on in infinite regress. But this is impossible. Hence in the last resort we must posit an Agent Who is One.

Here Ibn Maskawaih raises the very vital question: *How can a manifold of acts issue from the One Agent, especially acts which appear to contradict one another? How can the many be created by the One? From the One Agent only one act should follow.* Maskawaih says that there are only four possibilities:

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(i) The agent may be composed of different powers and capacities; e.g., man is such an agent.

His different powers issue in different acts. But different powers imply composition and this cannot be true of God. Hence this possibility does not apply to God.

(ii) The agent's different acts may issue in different media; *e.g.*, fire melts iron but hardens clay.

(iii) The agent's different acts may be due to his use of different means or instruments; *e.g.*, the carpenter uses one instrument for boring a hole and another to hew wood with.

Now these two possibilities (ii) and (iii) cannot be true of God for their acceptance involves the violation of two truths: (a) that only one can issue from the One; and (b) that there cannot be an effect without a cause. But there is a fourth possibility.

(iv) Many acts may issue from the agent but not only from his essence. They may also issue through the medium of other objects. On this supposition the agent will act in some cases in virtue of his essence but in others through the medium of other objects. For instance, the essential quality of ice is 'cooling', but as an accident and through a medium it causes heat also. It closes the pores of the body through its coldness and that leads to increase of warmth within the body. Only this analogy, says Ibn Maskawaih, suits the One Agent.

But there appears to be one serious defect in the argument. Who creates the multiplicity of objects through which as media some of the acts of the One Agent can issue? Our author tries to overcome the difficulty by enumerating the Neo-Platonic series of emanations. The farther the 'distance' of the emanation from the Primal One the grosser it is. At the last stage of (mental) analysis we reach the primordial elements with whose combinations in ever more complex forms the ascending series of evolutionary stages of development in the world takes shape.

Ibn Maskawaih declares that the argument is based on Porphyry according to whom it was first propounded by Aristotle. We shall see later on (Chapter III, Section 1) that as far at least as the evolutionary part of it is concerned, our author is being unjust to himself.

6

From the proposition 'God is One' the transition to the proposition *God does not possess a body* is logical according to our author's premisses and this is the thesis defended in the sixth section. The argument is as follows:

It has been discussed in the preceding sections that there can be no body without composition,

manifoldness and motion. Now none of these qualities can be found in the Prime One. Composition cannot be found in Him because it is an effect which must have a cause. How can the Prime One have a cause? Similarly, manifoldness cannot be found in Him because it contradicts His Oneness. And lastly, motion cannot be found in Him for it is an effect and requires a Mover. How can the First Mover have a mover and be an effect of some one else's motion?

Maskawaih fortifies his argument by means of a syllogism. It has already been proved that 'the First Mover is not moved'. The simple converse of this proposition is: 'nothing moved is the First Mover'. It has also been proved above that 'every body is moved'. Join these two propositions in Fig. I:

Nothing moved is the First Mover.

Every body is moved.

Therefore, no body is the First Mover. Now the converse of this conclusion is: 'The First Mover is not a body'.

7

The seventh section maintains that *God is Primal Being*.

The argument is brief and is based on these propositions: (i) that 'God is the Necessary Existent'.

This has already been proved above (Section 4 (b)). It means that to think of God is to think of Him as existing. (ii) His Being is neither possible being nor did it come into being. This proposition is implied by (i). The second proposition cannot be denied because then motion would have to be asserted of God, which is false. The two propositions entail the conclusion: God's Being is Primal Being.

Here Ibn Maskawaih would like us to note an important point. God's Being is One and Unique, *i.e.*, it is different from and free from the admixture of anything around us. Nor does it resemble anything that we can conceive. How then can human tongue describe it? He suggests as follows:

We must perforce use the language we commonly use, but in describing God's Being the following points should be borne in mind:

(i) It should be realized that the description is at best only metaphorical.

(ii) Of any pair of antonyms the word with the better significance should be used for Him; *e.g.*, in each such pair as 'existent and non-existent', Omnipotent and weak, 'wise and ignorant,' etc., the better word should be used to describe God's Being.

(iii) We should use only those words for God which were used for Him by the Prophet (on whom

be peace).

(iv) Even when we ascribe the highest attributes to Him we should realize that He is still better because He created the attributes, and the Creator is always better than His creation.

(v) We should realize that in no other way is it possible to know Him for He is different from and superior to all that man can know and conceive.

This last recommendation of our author's appears like a flat and unceremonious denial of all Sufistic pretensions to the contrary, and the next section only tends to confirm this view of the matter.

8

In the eighth section our philosopher defends the view that *one can know God only by the negative argument and not by the positive argument.*

The positive or the direct argument is not possible in this case for to prove anything thus directly of God one should first prove or justify the premisses necessary for the deduction. But since God is prior to all things we can prove no such premiss in His case. And when we note further that He is One (*i.e.*, that nothing can be a part of His Being), that He has neither essential attribute (in the sense that it is a part of His essence) nor accidental attribute (in the

sense that though it is not a part of His essence it can yet be predicated of Him in a metaphorical sense), the impossibility of knowing Him directly becomes evident.

Only the negative argument can be used. We can argue like this. Since the contradictory of a certain statement is false or impossible, we should accept that statement. For instance, we can prove that these assertions are false—that 'God is a body', that 'He is moving', that 'He is not a unity', that 'He is created', etc. Therefore, we accept the truth of the contradictories of these statements. We accept that 'God is not a body', that 'He does not move', that 'He is a Unity', that 'He is not created', etc. We should add, however, that even these statements are only metaphorically true of God for He transcends everything with which we can compare Him even in a negative way.

Now it is obvious that this view of Ibn Maskawaih's (and of some others' too) in regard to the impossibility of a direct knowledge of God's Being is valid only if we restrict the connotation of 'knowing' to conceptual analysis and description. But this 'knowledge about' something is not the whole significance of the term 'knowledge'. There is also 'knowledge by acquaintance' which in the case of God

would be a direct vision of His Being or 'Countenance', and this is what the mystic claims to reach and possess in this world by means of his own plan of ascetic discipline and the pious Muslim hopes to achieve in the next as a reward for his deeds in this. It appears, therefore, that Maskawaih's defence of the negative argument leaves the mystic's claim of direct gnosis untouched.

9

The thesis of the ninth section is: *All things owe their existence to God.* The truth of this proposition, says our author, is involved in the truth of the two propositions that 'God's Being is Primal' and 'that He is superior to all things because the effect is always worse than the cause.' But how does the process of existence start from the Necessarily Existent? Here we come across that hierarchy of existents (the procession of emanations from the One) which, in the present writer's opinion, at least, is the least original, and generally speaking the most monotonous part of traditional Neo-Platonism in Islamic Philosophy.

The Agent Intellect is the first to derive existence from God, and then and through the mediation of each soul or emanation, the Heavens (and Celestial

Spirits), the Human Body and so forth come into being. Each of these existents is imperfect when it is compared with what precedes it in the order of creation, but is perfect when compared with what follows it. The tedious details of this scheme need not be mentioned here. Instead let us consider the vital part of the argument.

Since everything ultimately owes its being to the First and Real Cause it is obvious that the universe would disappear the instant His Beneficence is withdrawn; for though it is true that the substance is self-subsistent as against the accident (which may disappear leaving the substance intact), yet the substance of a thing is itself as ephemeral as its accident when it is contrasted with the Being of the First Cause.

This truth, says Maskawaih, is evident in another way also. Everything is composed of 'form' and 'matter'. Their coming together in a thing is 'composition' which involves motion. There should, therefore, be a Being Who does not move but Who creates both 'form' and 'matter' and combines them at the moment of the creation of an object. This Being will Himself transcend both 'form' and 'matter.'

10

The last section is devoted to proving that *God created all things but did not create them out of something already existing.*

Our author declares that Alexander (of Aphrodisias) contested the view that 'nothing can be created except through some other thing'; for instance, that only horse begets horse, only man begets man, and so forth. His contention, on the contrary, was that the possibles that became actual existents were not created out of something already existent. Maskawaih's own argument is as follows:

All change and diversity, all life and death, all coming into being and passing out of it, are due to diverse combinations of 'form and matter'. Now the forms of things change from time to time but matter remains constant. How then can the processes of combination take place? There are, says our author, but three possibilities:

(i) *Either* the old form still remains when a new one is added to it or is superimposed upon it. But this is impossible for two opposed forms cannot exist in the same body.

(ii) *Or*, the old form vacates place for the new form by itself migrating into another body. This also is false because migration is a property of bodies.

Forms cannot migrate of themselves into different bodies.

(iii) *Or*,—and this is the only valid supposition, according to our author—the old form simply becomes non-existent when the new one appears. Now just as one form disappears into nothingness, similarly, can a new form appear out of nothingness. And since ‘form’ and ‘matter’ are always together, what is true of ‘form’ is true of ‘matter’ also. Both are created out of nothingness. Ibn Maskawaih explains this process in a very concrete way. Every animal really originates, says he, from a non-animal, for the seminal fluid is not itself animal. This fluid is made of blood and blood of food and food of plants and plants of elements and elements of the simple atoms and these latter of ‘form’ and ‘matter’. The seminal fluid was first in these forms. Now ‘form’ and ‘matter’ are just existents and are always together. And we have just to accept their appearance out of nothingness.

Thus is it proved, according to our author, that the ultimate origin of all things is in the ‘disintegration of non-being’. (This phrase, however, is misleading, for if anything is to disintegrate it should first be. And this cannot be true of non-being.)

CHAPTER II

The Soul

The general thesis of this chapter is that *the Soul exists and that it is a self-subsisting substance which is not subject to death and annihilation. Further that it is not 'body' nor yet attribute nor a mixture of attributes.*

1

Let us now turn to the first section. That *the Soul is not body* is proved by our philosopher as follows:

(a) A body can accept a new form only when it surrenders its existing one; *e.g.*, silver can assume the form of a ring only after it surrenders the form of a button. Now the Soul is absolutely different from the body in this respect, for it is always assuming new forms while still retaining old ones. And the larger the number of forms the perceiving Soul thus assumes, the greater its capacity for successful perception later on. The argument gathers great force when we note that the capacity to perceive and to reason is the *differentia* of man. When, for instance,

we are told that a certain person is 'superior' to another what we mean is not that he is superior in body and physical prowess, but that he possesses greater capacity for perceptual and rational apprehension: in other words that he is superior in his 'humanity', *i.e.*, in what truly makes one a 'man'.

(b) Contrast man with animals. Every organ (external as well as internal) of an animal serves some purpose which is peculiar to it. Every organ is thus an instrument, but an instrument implies the existence of some one who can use it. This user of instruments must obviously be different from the instruments which it (or he) uses. Now the user of the physical instruments of the body cannot itself be the body because every part of the body is an organ or instrument. It must, therefore, be the Soul for it has the additional advantage (not being body) of not occupying space. For this reason it can use the entire system of instruments called the body as its instrument,

2 & 3

The next two sections deal with *the Soul's apprehension of objects*. Or as the author puts it: *The Soul apprehends all existents*, present as well as absent, 'sensibles' as well as 'universals and abstract

and spiritual truths'. Here is the argument in brief.

All existents are either simple or compound, and either material or non-material. How are these different types of existence apprehended by the Soul?

Ibn Maskawaih agrees with (what he calls) the Aristotelian view of the matter according to which the Soul has a single capacity for the apprehension of all these different forms of existence; for had the Rational Soul one faculty for the apprehension of 'the universals and spiritual truths' and quite a different one for the apprehension of the 'sensibles,' it would have been impossible for it to correct (as it in fact does) the illusions of sense-perception by means of Reason. Since it has one and the same power or capacity for both purposes, it can distinguish between sense-perception and imagination, between fact and fiction and between the true and the false. What happens is that for the apprehension of the universals and spiritual truths the Soul has to turn to itself (for guidance), whereas for the apprehension of the sensibles it has to turn to some instrument, *viz.*, to the sense-organs, for help. If the organ or instrument be unsound, the apprehension either cannot take place or is fallacious. For instance, it is impossible for a man born blind to apprehend light or colour. Similarly, it is impossible for a

colour-blind man to apprehend truly that particular colour for which it does not possess a sound sensory receptor.

It has just been said that for the apprehension of the 'universals and spiritual truths,' the Soul has 'to turn to itself' for guidance. This means that absorption in a purely intellectual exercise, say the thinking out of an abstruse problem, is not possible as long as externally aroused sensuous stimuli continue to distract the thinker. The more successful the thinker is in getting rid of sensuous distractions, the more successful is his thought and the keener the happiness and bliss attending the process. Such bliss is enjoyed by him alone who has 'returned to himself' *i.e.*, to his essence. Now the man who has 'returned to himself' is the man who is absorbed in a task befitting his 'essence' *i.e.*, his Reason. In short, the more successful the Soul is in shedding the bonds of matter (*i.e.*, the snares of Sense) the more free and potent is the exercise of its thought. Sensibility, imagination and intellection and the apprehension of *a priori* and spiritual truths are the ascending stages of the Soul's apprehension of objects; and each higher stage represents a greater degree of emancipation from the bonds of matter.

4

The fourth section discusses *the difference* (as well as the resemblance) *between 'the mode of Reason' and 'the mode of Sense.'*

To begin with we have to note the following definitions:

Intellection is the apprehension of 'universals' and of *a priori* truths.

Sense-perception is the apprehension of 'the sensibles'.

(1) There is one thing common to both and this common factor also distinguishes them from physical objects. This common factor is that in the act of apprehension both accept impression or influence from their respective objects. Now it is this acceptance of 'influence' from their respective objects which makes them 'actual' *i.e.*, changes their 'capacity' into 'actuality'. The potential becomes the actual under the stress of the external impression. Consider now a *physical object*. As soon as it is subjected to external influence it degenerates; *e.g.*, when water is subjected to the influence of fire it loses not only its natural coldness but also disappears if this influence is prolonged. Thus the reception of external influence which disintegrates the physical object actualises the powers of sense-

perception and intellection, *i.e.*, makes them perfect.

(2) As far as apprehension is concerned, Sense and Reason, or Sensibility and Intellection, resemble each other in another respect also, but in this respect they both resemble 'matter'. Matter has the capacity of accepting all possible forms, but before it has accepted any form in particular, it is itself the 'negation' of all forms. This is true of Sensibility also; *e.g.*, in vision the eye which has the capacity to 'accept' (*i.e.*, to sense) all possible colours, 'negates' all colours before it accepts, for the time being, any colour in particular. In other words, vision which is the capacity of apprehending all possible colours does not itself possess any colour, for had it a colour of its own, its capacity to sense other colours would to that extent have suffered. In a similar way, Intellection, which is the capacity to apprehend all possible universals and abstract truths, is not itself any such thing. Human Reason, in short, does not possess any form *peculiar* to it, for had that been the case its capacity to apprehend all possible forms would to that extent have suffered.

The Rational Soul should, therefore, be regarded as *simple*, for every compound is a composition of form and matter and this (as we have seen) is not true of the Soul. From this it is also evident that

the Soul is not corporeal for all bodies are compounds of form and matter whereas the Soul is not a compound. Nor is the Soul an 'accident' for then it should have possessed the attributes of corporeal things, which it does not. We must, therefore, admit that the Soul is *simple* and that it is *not material*.

Thus far we have considered the resemblance between Sensibility and Intellection. But there are also vital differences between the two. These differences should now be noticed.

(i) Sensibility suffers fatigue or even collapse if the object of Sense be extraordinarily strong or the stimulation be too long-drawn-out. For instance, our sense of sight is dazed or even injured if the light be too strong. On the contrary, the greater our attention to and preoccupation with universals and abstract truths, the stronger and more efficient is our capacity to apprehend other objects of that sort.

(ii) Further, when Sensibility turns from the apprehension of an intense object to one which is less intense (*i.e.*, comparatively), the sensuous apprehension of the latter becomes difficult and even impossible. For instance, after the intense glare of sunlight, it is (for a time) impossible to apprehend objects in a room. Reason, on the contrary, gains strength from its mastery of difficult abstract

problems and is thereby rendered the more capable of solving easier ones. Sensibility suffers, of course, because of its dependence on the organs of the body which cannot adequately 'face' unusually intense objects. These organs, however, are instruments which not only help Sensibility which uses them but also *limit* it. If the Rational Soul were to use these instruments, it would not be helped but hindered in its work. That is why Reason is at its best when it 'turns to itself for guidance,' as it does, for instance, in its apprehension of such (*a priori*) truths as that 'two is the half of four' or that 'there is no third state between affirmation and negation.' No such truths can be derived from Sense.

(iii) The dependence of Sensibility on the body has already been noted above. This dependence entails the consequence that with the gradual decline of bodily vigour, Sensibility also will gradually lose its keenness. But since Reason suffers no such decline with the advance of age and, on the contrary, becomes even more mature, it follows that it is entirely independent of the body in the performance of its proper functions. Our author believes that he is supported in his opinion by Aristotle and Abu-al-Khair, according to the latter of whom the Soul in old age is like a man in a state of intoxication.

In other words, it is the weakness and aberration of the body which hinders the Rational Soul from proper activity and not anything in the Soul itself.

5

The fifth section defends two assertions:

- (a) *That the Soul is a substance, living and everlasting.*
- (b) *That the Soul is not itself life but bestows life on all living things.*

Let us consider the second assertion first.

(b) To begin with, we have to ask the question, 'What is life'? According to our author, it appears to consist in the connection of the Soul with the Body. Death is their separation. But the Soul is not itself 'life' and for the following reasons:

(i) Had the Soul been 'life' it would have existed with some body living. In that case it would have been 'material form', itself dependent upon a body. But it has already been proved that the Soul is not 'material form'.

(ii) The Rational Soul disdains the pleasures (and desires) of the body. But nothing disdains and spurns that on which its own existence depends. Hence the Soul is not the life of the body.

(iii) Life and 'material form' which are in the

body, subserve it. But we find that the Soul controls the body, just as the ruler controls his subjects. Hence the Soul is neither the life of the body nor yet its material form. Instead it bestows life on the body.

(iv) The reasons mentioned above also tell us why the Soul does not gain strength from the strength of the body nor yet weakens with the decay of the body.

The different powers which the Soul possesses are like so many instruments which it uses to cope with its environment. Itself it is different from and superior to them.

(a) Let us now consider the first of the two assertions which form the thesis of this section.

That the Soul is everlasting and not subject to death follows from the truth that it is a self-subsisting substance. It has a special motion of its own which has no connection with the organs of the body. As a matter of fact the organs of the body serve as hindrances in its performance of its special functions. It has already been shown in the third section that the more successfully the Soul contrives to get rid of sensuous distractions, the more efficient is its apprehension of the universals and spiritual truths. Hence the decay of the body leaves the Soul unaffected

except in so far as the apprehension of the 'sensibles' is concerned for which, of course, organs are necessary.

Now since the Soul is neither body nor yet an accident, but a pure substance or essence, it can have neither antithesis, nor suffer annihilation, nor disintegrate. None of these conditions can be predicated (as being true) of it.

6

In the sixth section our author reinforces his contention of the last section by citing some 'arguments of the ancient philosophers' to the effect that the Soul is not subject to death. Here are the arguments:

(1) The Soul bestows life on all living things. Hence 'life' (in some sense) must belong to the Soul's essence; *i.e.*, to bestow life on others must be part of its nature. Now since life pertains (in some sense) to the substance or essence of the Soul, it cannot 'accept' or be subject to death, which is the antithesis of life.

Ibn Maskawaih declares that this argument was elaborated by Plato and his school. It can be expressed very briefly thus:

Death is the contradictory of or antithesis of life.

But of two contradictories only one can be true of a thing. Now life pertains to the essence of (*i.e.*, is true of) the Soul. Hence the Soul cannot be subject to death, *i.e.*, death cannot be truly predicated of the Soul.

(2) Here is the second argument. Everything which can disintegrate does so on account of some *defect* in it. But the Soul is without 'defect'. Hence it cannot disintegrate; *i.e.*, it is not subject to death.

In this connection our author discusses the nature of *defect*. 'Defect', says he, is 'near unto' disintegration; disintegration is near unto 'non-being'; and non-being is near unto 'matter'. Hence whatever object is devoid of 'matter' is also devoid of 'non-being'. Similarly, the absence of 'non-being' implies the absence of 'disintegration'. And what does not disintegrate cannot be 'defective'. It follows from this that 'matter' is the source of all defect, *i.e.*, of all decay, disintegration, death and evil. Now the Soul is neither matter nor even the 'form' of matter. Hence it cannot decay or die.

The argument, then, assumes this form:

If an object is free from 'defect', it does not disintegrate;

The Soul is free from defect;

Therefore, the Soul does not disintegrate; *i.e.*,

it is not subject to death, and is, therefore, immortal.

(3) The third argument is that the Soul is self-moved, and whatever is self-moved does not disintegrate.

The argument may be better expressed, according to our author, in another way. If of two contradictory things, one is the resultant of a power, then the other contradictory will be the antithesis of that power. For instance, cold is the contradictory of heat and heat results from fire. Hence, cold is the contradictory of fire also. Now since death is the contradictory of life which pertains to the essence of the Soul, death cannot be true of the Soul.

7

The seventh section deals with *the nature of the Soul and its 'life'*—the 'life' which 'protects' it and makes it immortal and everlasting.

It has been said above that the Rational Soul bestows life on the body. This view led philosophers to believe that life is of the essence of the Soul and that looked at from the point of view of the body, it is self-moved. The question now is: *What sort of motion is peculiar to the Soul?*

The Soul is a substance but it is not corporeal.

It is not body. Now 'body' can have six types of movement (see I—3). None of these, however, suits the Soul. The motion best suited to the Soul is *circular*. The Soul is never and nowhere without this motion. Now since this motion is not bodily motion, it is not spatial either. Nor is it external to the substance of the Soul. Hence Plato says that this peculiar motion is of the essence of and pertains to the substance of the Soul. Herein also consists the life of the Soul.

These three propositions (*i*) that circular motion pertains to the essence or substance of the Soul; (*ii*) that it is not subject to the limitations of space and time; and (*iii*) that the Soul is self-moved;—express the nature of the Soul.

Maskawaih here quotes two questions which, he says, Plato asks in the *Timæus*. (*i*) What is that changing thing which has no being? (*ii*) And what is that being which is not subject to change and becoming?

(*i*) The first is 'time' or/and 'motion in space and time', for its 'measure of being' is found in some 'instant' (of time). Now the relation of 'instant' to 'time' is the relation of the 'point' to the 'line'. And since whatever being 'time' has in the past or the future, is to be found in some 'instant', it follows

that it is always in 'change and becoming' and does not deserve the status of 'being-substantive'. Hence we should say that 'time' is always in 'change and becoming'.

(ii) Now what is that being which is not subject to change and becoming? Obviously only such things are meant as are higher and better than 'time,' for whatever is 'higher than' time is also 'higher than' physical motion. Such things are not subject to 'past and future'. Their being is near unto immortality.

The *Soul's motion* can have two directions. It may be *movement towards Reason*, or it may be *movement towards 'matter'*. In the former case, the Soul receives 'light' while in the latter case, it confers 'light' on 'matter'. Now the motion of the Soul towards Reason is what Aristotle calls 'divine effulgence' and Plato 'Ideas'. And it is this motion which pertains to the substance of the Soul and is its 'life'. Herein also lies the significance of the saying of the wise: 'all living things are souls.'

Obviously this motion which is peculiar to the Soul is not anything like the motion of corporeal bodies. It is not spatial and it is not subject to loss. Now what cannot be lost is permanent and what is permanent is also changeless. Hence this peculiar

motion of the Soul bears the 'form of changelessness' and is for that very reason entirely different from the motion of corporeal bodies. But the Soul's motion is superimposed on them and enables them to perform motions peculiar to them, *viz.*, their several spatial motions.

The first to receive this peculiar circular motion was 'Heaven' and its spatial motion is, therefore, the purest and the noblest. In virtue of this circular motion 'Heaven' is stationary 'as a whole' but moves in its parts. Hence in its 'change and changelessness' it is most like the Soul. Now just as Heaven derives its motion from that of the Soul, in a similar way our movements are inspired by the former.

The Soul is always in this circular motion to receive its perfection from the First Reason which is God's first creation. The First Reason, however, itself does not move for it is already perfect whereas motion is a means to perfection.

8

The eighth section tells us that *the Soul can have but two states: (i) goodness which is the perfection of the Soul; and (ii) badness which constitutes its degradation.*

We have already seen that the motion of the Soul is either (i) upward towards Reason, the first creation of God and the recipient of unceasing grace from Him. This movement constitutes the Soul's *Ascent*. Or (ii) the motion of the Soul is downwards towards 'matter', *i.e.*, towards the physical organs of life in order to ensure completion of the various corporeal bodies. This downward motion takes the Soul 'out of itself' and constitutes its *Descent*. In the language of Islam these movements are known as 'the Right' (يمين) and 'the Left' (شمال). Of course, these motions are not physical.

The first motion is really *attention* towards Reason. It enables the Soul to be absorbed in itself and thus to be one with God Who created it. God—the Unique One—bestows 'uniqueness' and continuity on all existents. The motion of the Soul towards the organs of Sense, on the other hand, creates in it change and manifoldness which separate it from its essence and develop in it a kind of 'badness' befitting this condition. That is why Plato has said that 'philosophy is the practising of voluntary death', for this voluntary death means the voluntary repudiation of all attraction towards sense and 'matter'. He bids the philosopher cultivate this 'voluntary death', *i.e.*, to learn to shed the bonds of

matter so as to be fit to receive that 'natural life' which bestows divine light on man and unites him with God. This 'natural life' is the Soul's movement towards Reason. Herein lies salvation for the wise. The man of vision should, therefore, avoid the undesirable things of the world and should protect his soul from the impurities of evil desires, for they kill the Rational Soul.

This practising of 'voluntary death' does not mean, says our author, a withdrawal from the world. For man is by nature a social being. He cannot live without assistance from his fellows. Consider, for instance, how he differs from the animals. Every animal has been endowed by his Maker with the necessary means of survival. There are the organs of offence and of defence, organs to secure food, and so forth. There is indeed a twofold endowment for animals. They have (i) an appropriate physical structure and (ii) they have also a natural instinct which is for them 'divine inspiration' and guidance. But man is different. He is born helpless in every sense of the term. A life-long dependence upon others is ordained for him. But he has Reason which animals are without. Hence he soon learns to supply his wants. He lives through rational co-operation with others. They serve and support him in his

period of helplessness. He must do likewise. He must serve others just as they serve him. And this is but just. Only rational co-operation with others can ensure a just arrangement and continuity of human society. Hence the sects of the ascetics and monks are really unjust and sinful, for they depend for sustenance upon others and make no just return. *A just return, however, does not mean equality in quantity but in quality.* For instance, a scientist's return for sustenance received from society may not be great in quantity but it is certainly great in quality. Similarly a good general can achieve that with his thought which the physical sacrifice of thousands of his soldiers cannot possibly do. In short, every man owes more to his fellows than he is aware of and he is bound in justice to make a proper return. He should, therefore, 'acquire' the world, *i.e.*, he should try to achieve the 'goods' of the world for the sake of but not at the cost of the welfare of his Soul.

This is best done, says our author, by following the law of Islam.

9

The ninth section discusses the problem of *the Soul's well-being and how to acquire it.*

True wisdom (Hikma), says our author, is of two kinds; *theoretical* and *practical*. The former enables man to arrive at correct judgments, while the latter develops in him a noble state of mind from which right action follows necessarily. The Prophets (on whom be peace) were sent by God to inculcate these two forms of wisdom in man. He who followed them found his salvation, while he who spurned them rendered himself fit only for hell-fire.

He who desires to test the teaching of the Prophets at the bar of Reason turns to the teachings of the wise and the philosophers. These latter have devised an art, *i.e.*, a technique to save themselves and others from the mistakes which are all too common in matters relating to theoretical knowledge. Consider how many people let fly their arrows of conjecture and how few of them hit the mark. Hence a technique of right thinking was necessary. This technique is Logic. It helps one distinguish between true and false judgments. Armed with the standards and laws of Logic, one should first ponder over those matters which are closest to his own nature, *viz.*, physical phenomena. Then one should proceed gradually to the study of the heavens and the spirits of the spheres and then to abstract truths and ontology. This would be training in 'theoretical wisdom.'

Training in 'practical wisdom' is ensured by the study of Moral Philosophy. This should be followed by the study of Civics and Politics. The true philosopher is he who has imbibed both wisdoms.

We are now in a position to understand the nature of the Soul's well-being and the path leading thereunto. He who aspires after this well-being should (after receiving the training referred to above) first try to discover the nature (*i.e.*, the quality, composition and so forth) of the corporeal world. He will find that there are innumerable powers which sustain and govern this vast universe; that these powers have diverse interconnections among themselves; and that all of them are ultimately connected with another world which cannot be expressed in corporeal terms. That other world is 'spiritual' and pure and its function is to control and govern the world of corporeality which it penetrates 'in a spiritual manner' just as the forces which govern the motions of physical bodies penetrate them. This second and higher world sustains the lower but is not itself sustained by it. But man cannot understand this higher world without a profound study of the lower. This higher world, however, serves as a means to the discovery of a world yet higher, *viz.*, the world of supreme wisdom

and wondrous secrets utterly unlike anything to be found in the other two worlds. It sustains the second world even as the second sustained the first. This third world itself leads the seeker on to the discovery of a yet higher world which in its immensity and purity is as superior to the third world as that is to its next lower one.

When man has made himself at home in the knowledge of these four worlds he is perforce led to ponder on the origin and source of the order and the wisdom which he finds pervading everywhere therein. He seeks to know the Cause of causes Whose Purity can admit of no admixture, Who bestows power and grace on all and receives naught from any, Whose Oneness can admit of no manifoldness, the Source and End of All, the Origin of all Wisdom and the Fount of Purest Uniqueness. At this stage the seeker after wisdom realizes why all the best names and attributes which he can think of for this Supreme Being are inappropriate for Him, for He is the Source of all good qualities and is, therefore, superior to them.

It should also be noted here that the man who has reached this stage of wisdom derives such spiritual bliss from it that no bodily pleasure can even remotely compare with it. No body can deprive him

of this bliss and its measure only increases when he shares it with another. He also realizes that this stage itself has many stages in it which are known only to him who has experienced them. Such an one has acquired true gnosis of his Lord and he may even behold His Countenance in so far as it is within the reach of man to do so. From this high stage of wisdom he also realizes that God, the First, the One and the Pure encompasses, sustains and ordains all that is, just as Reason encompasses the Soul and the Soul Nature and Nature the Corporeal World. No higher existent stands in need of sustenance from its lower existent but all equally depend upon God.

10

We come now to the tenth and last section of this chapter. It is devoted to the *consideration of the human Soul after its separation from the body.*

To begin with, our author declares that corporeal existence is so very different from spiritual existence—and these are for him the only two types of existence—that it is not at all possible to form any adequate conception of the spiritual world on the basis of what we know of the corporeal world. At best only a metaphorical approximation can be hoped for.

The corporeal world is one of spheres, each outer sphere encompassing and embracing the inner one without any void in between. Further, each outer sphere is 'purer' than its inner one, just as, for instance, water is 'purer' than earth, air 'purer' than water, fire 'purer' than air, the first Heaven (the Heaven of the Moon) 'purer' than fire, and the Heaven of Heavens 'purer' than all Heavens.

In the world of spiritual existents, similarly, some existents 'encompass' others. But as the space-factor does not exist in this world, 'encompassing' signifies the 'ordering and determination' of the lower existent by the higher. For instance, when it is said that Nature encompasses all spherical existents, what is meant is that it 'orders and determines' them and that it generates their motion. Nature 'penetrates' each physical body, or is in each such body without being in it in a spatial sense. Similarly, the Soul encompasses and is purer and nobler than Nature, and Reason encompasses and is purer and nobler than the Soul and (and on the same analogy) God encompasses and is purer and nobler than every other existent.

There is another vital distinction between the corporeal and the spiritual forms of existence. As the space-factor is not involved in the latter, 'union'

or 'separation' of two or more existents does not imply any quantitative increase or decrease in (the volume of) the result. Reason, for instance, encompasses the Soul. Now any increase in the number and complexity of the experiences and apprehensions of the Soul does not imply any quantitative increase in the Soul which apprehends, understands and distinguishes each of these states of experience. The multiplicity of its experiences does not entail any complexity in the Soul itself. Even in the world of Sense we see that the larger or smaller number of light waves from the stars does not in any way adversely effect the purity of resulting light.

In a similar way our philosopher bids us understand the purity of the human soul. It can have different states after its separation from the body, but these states are not to be imagined as 'united' or 'separate' in the physical and spatial sense.

It has been said above that the Soul encompasses Nature and Reason encompasses the Soul. This encompassing of the lower by the higher implies not only the 'determination and ordering' of the lower by the higher but also the cognisance of the lower by the higher. Each higher existent is fully cognisant of and completely orders and determines (*i.e.*, confers 'grace' upon) its next lower existent, but not *vice*

versa, The only thing which the lower existent knows about its next higher existent is that the latter exists. But the lower existent can only receive as much of 'grace' from the higher as it is fit for. The good soul is always receiving this grace, for its various stages of development are mutually related, similar and proportioned. The bad soul, on the contrary, is always in sorrow and pain because it has received its 'perfection' in the badness of its own form and is, therefore, cut off from divine grace. It remains in that state of degradation which best suits its substance.

It is obvious that the well-being of the lower plane of existence consists in its ascent to the higher plane. Hence the sensuous objects in which we try to seek our well-being are not its real sources. They are only shadows and copies of it and as soon as we reach the higher plane we begin to dislike and abhor those very objects which attracted us so much at the lower plane. It is well-known that we do not feel attracted in adult age towards objects which were our dearest possessions in childhood. Similarly, our soul, after its separation from the body, will consider all those objects degraded and of no value which in its earthly span of existence were its chief sources of well-being and happiness. The Soul will have

assumed in that higher plane of existence a form of being superior to the one which goes with 'humanity' on the earthly plane and its well-being will, therefore, be in accordance with that form of being. Our philosopher compares the Soul with the chick which was at first the egg, but which after having evolved its proper form breaks through the shell and discards it.

The Soul's motion towards its next higher existent uplifts it. Herein lies its well-being. Similarly, the Soul's motion towards the world of sensuous enjoyment degrades it. Herein lies its badness and its fall. Sensuous desire prevents the Soul from its proper upward movements and acts as a barrier between it and its well-being. This does not mean, however, that all sensuous desire is to be rooted out. If sensuous desire is controlled and guided by Reason, *i.e.*, is in the interests of the Soul's upward movement, it can serve just as servants and slaves serve their master. It is only when the slave starts controlling the master that disaster follows.

Our author admits that it is as difficult to convince the person tied fast in the snares of Sense that the so-called happiness he feels is not true happiness, as to convince the man born blind that there is such a thing as light. Such people, says he, should be treated with kindness and taught their good according to the measure of their intelligence.

CHAPTER III

On Prophethood

1

The first section of this chapter on Prophethood deals with the *various stages of being and their mutual connections*. Here also Ibn Maskawaih gives us a sketch of his Theory of (Biological) Evolution.

In order to understand the significance and status of 'Prophethood' in the scale of being, it is necessary, according to our author, to appreciate properly the various stages which lead up to it. To begin with, it is to be noted that all existence 'from the centre of the earth to the highest' level of the ninth Heaven' is *one, one 'whole'* which is an *organism* containing different parts. But this, 'whole' of existence is made up of two worlds. There is (i) the world of becoming, *i.e.*, of composition and decomposition; and (ii) the world not subject to change and becoming, or to decomposition and death. This latter world is the world of stars and the heavens. But the two worlds and their stages are so intimately interconnected that there is no void anywhere.

The earliest centre or nucleus of being which

resulted from the composition of elements was that wherein the Rational Soul (burst through the stage of the non-living and) assumed the form of the *plant*. The plant is superior to the mineral in that it can move and assimilate food. But in the world of plants itself we can discern three distinct stages of evolution. (a) Plants of the first stage, *e.g.*, wild grass and jungle weeds, grow spontaneously. They neither need care to preserve their seed nor do they need any planting of the seed to ensure their growth. This is the lowest stage of plant life. (b) Plants of the next higher stage also grow spontaneously, but in addition they develop branches and preserve their kind by means of the seed. Other plants of this group also develop trunk and leaves and flower and fruit and need the care of the gardener to preserve their being, to flourish and to ensure the continuity of their kind. (c) Plants at the next and the highest stage of development, *e.g.*, the fig, the olive, the apple, the pomegranate, etc., need not only the care of the gardener but also pure and fresh water to feed on and good soil to grow in. Some plants of this third group are nobler still and their stage of being is the highest of all in the vegetable kingdom because they approximate very closely to the animal stage of being. The noblest of these noble plants is the date-

palm which has such a marked differentiation of sex that the female plant (which alone bears fruit) cannot fructify unless the germinal pulp of the male (which in its odour closely resembles human semen) is properly grafted in it. This is practically coitus at the plant stage. The nobility of the date-palm is most delicately described by the Prophet (on whom be peace)—‘Respect the date-palm for it was made of Adam’s left-over clay’. One thing is to be noted in this connection. The nobility or lowliness of any particular form of plant life is in direct ratio to the degree of its acceptance of the influence of the Rational Soul. The lowliest plants approximate in their nature to the mineral, while the highest—the date-palm—is almost animal.

Consider now the world of *animals*.

(a) The least that an animal should do to transcend the stage of plants is to be able to detach itself from the earth and indulge in spontaneous movement. But there is very little of real sensibility at this humblest of all stages of animal existence. A very rudimentary type of cutaneous sensibility alone is present at this stage. Slugs, snails and oysters are animals of this kind. Touch them, for instance, without picking them up at once and you will observe their attempt to root themselves to the

earth. In other words, they try to reduce themselves to the plant stage of existence. (b) The next stage in the evolution of (animal) life is represented by those animals which can move about very freely and in which there is also to be found a keenness of sense of a fairly high order. But many of these animals do not possess all the five senses. Only some higher animals do so. And among these higher animals also we find not only varying degrees of keenness of sensibility but also a capacity to accept training from man. The falcon and the horse are such animals. Of course, all animals of this group are not equal in this capacity. (c) The highest stage of evolution in animals is reached in the ape and his like which resemble man so closely in mind and body that a little more of development would bring them into the fold of the lowest species of man.

As in the case of plants so also in the case of animals, the nobility or otherwise of an animal is in direct ratio to the degree in which it has accepted the influence of the Rational Soul. The highest animal is one in which this influence has been so intense that not only has the animal's intelligence increased but he has also learnt to stand on his hind legs. But even then such an animal is lower than the lowest species of man; *e.g.*, such men as are to

be found, says our author, at the extreme end of Negro-land or in some islands or in the North and South. Such men are *almost* animals just as the highest animals are *almost* men. Like animals these 'subhuman' men cannot properly understand their good nor are they (again like animals) capable of imbibing wisdom and science from the civilized peoples in their neighbourhood. Naturally these civilized nations make them work in their own service in the same way as they do animals.

But from this stage onward, the influence of the Rational Soul is seen to increase in intensity, stage by stage, in human-kind until we come across men of extraordinarily keen intelligence;—scientists, artists, thinkers, experts in industry and in manufacture and so forth. But nobler far than even these gifted people are those unique men of keenest intelligence and strongest apprehension whose bright gaze can penetrate into the future as if through a thin veil. Such men are near unto the angels. They are 'the Prophets'.

Thus far Maškawaih.

Readers of Rumi's great *Mathnavi* are familiar with the famous lines in which he traces the evolution of the spirit from the humblest stage of existence, *viz.*, the mineral, to that of man and beyond.

Ibn Maskawaih preceded Rumi by about two hundred and fifty years and it is his profound reflection into the problem of the evolution of life that the great Sufi poet echoes. It is worthwhile quoting these verses to enable the reader to compare the vision of the profoundest Mystic poet with the elaborate hypothesis of the great philosopher-scientist.

“Low in the earth
 I lived in the realms of ore and stone;
 And then I smiled in many-tinted flowers;
 Then roving with the wild and wandering hours,
 O'er earth and air and ocean's zone,
 In a new birth,
 I dived and flew,
 And crept and ran,
 And all the secret of my essence drew
 Within a form that brought them all to view—
 And lo, a Man!
 And then my goal,
 Beyond the clouds, beyond the sky,
 In realms where none may change or die—
 In angel form; and then away
 Beyond the bounds of night and day,
 And Life and Death, unseen or seen,
 Where all that is hath ever been,
 As One and Whole.”¹
 (RUMI: Thadani's Translation).

¹ Quoted from Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 185-186.

2

The second section develops the view that *man is the 'smaller world' in comparison with the 'larger world' of the Universe* and that man's various capacities and powers are as intimately interconnected and evolve in the same way from lower to higher stages as do those of the 'larger world'. This view reminds one of the earlier Greek view of 'man and the universe' being 'microcosm and macrocosm', respectively. Our author, however, works out the analogy in his own instructive and terse manner.

He maintains that whatever is found in the 'larger world' of the universe is also found in the 'smaller world' of man. The former has the four elements, land and sea, sandy deserts and mountain ranges, inhabited places and desolate wastes, minerals and plants and animals and man. Now there is something in man's composition to correspond to everyone of these things in 'the larger world'. It is to be noted, however, that man is not a simple substance. He is the result of composition. Hence he cannot contain in himself the elements in their pure and unalloyed form. Fire, for instance, is a pure element, but it would kill man if it were put in its pure form in his body. But he has his gall-bladder attached to his liver. This is the seat of fire in his

body and the fountain of bile. Similarly, man's spleen corresponds to the earth-element and is the source of black-bile. Blood corresponds to the air-element with its hot-moist attribute and phlegm with its cold-moist attribute corresponds to the water-element.

So much about the elements in man's composition. Our author, however, expresses the analogy in a slightly different form also. Man's heart is the source of heat and dryness and is, therefore, like fire; his blood is the source of heat and moisture and is, therefore, like air; his brain is the source of cold and moisture and is, therefore, like water; and his bones are the source of cold and dryness and are, therefore, like the earth.

The analogy holds also in the details. For instance, secretions from mouth and eyes correspond to the natural springs and streams of the earth; bodily vapours to clouds; perspiration to rain; the larger and smaller arteries to valleys with streams and springs flowing therein; the hair of the body to plants; parasites (lice, germs, etc.) to land-animals; germs inside the body to animals in water; the upper part of the body to inhabited places; the eyes to stars; the minor and serious ailments of the body to storms and earthquakes and other catastrophes; and so forth,

This is not all. The larger world is spherical in form, for the sphere is the best and noblest of all forms. Similarly, the best and noblest part of man, the seat of his senses and of his intelligence and the general instrument of his soul, *viz.*, his head, is spherical in form. But this spherical ball of the head would suffer injury if it were permitted to roll about on the ground. Hence it has been placed on top of the body like the lord of a realm. There is this further advantage in keeping the head on top of the body, for it is thus at a distance from the heart, the seat of his bodily heat. The brain needs the most delicate kind of warmth. It would be seriously injured if it were exposed to the direct heat of the heart. Hence extremely delicate arteries in touch with the heart carry a rarified form of warmth up to the brain and keep it alive and in order.

We need not pursue Maskawaih's ingenious analogy any further. Instead, we pass on to the next section in which he carries his evolutionary thesis a step further.

3

The thesis of this section is that *the five senses of man evolve towards a 'Common Sensibility' (which is higher than these) and that with God's grace this*

evolution can continue towards a stage still higher.

To begin with, the question is: how does the Rational Soul unite (as it in fact does, though temporarily) with the body? Our author's view is that in order to effect the union the two—Soul and Body—must incline towards each other, the Soul by decreasing its inherent subtilty and the Body by decreasing its corporeality and density. Consider, for instance, how food sustains the body. The stomach digests the food and passes it on to the liver where it loses a great deal of its density and changes into blood. The blood is passed on to the heart. The heart with its heat makes the blood more refined and sends it on in a most rarified form and by means of extremely delicate arteries to the brain where some vapours are produced whose delicate warmth combines with the native cold of the brain to produce an appropriate state called 'the Natural Soul'. Now the greater the purity of 'the Natural Soul' the greater the capacity of the brain to accept the influence of the Soul.

The impressions of all the (special, *i.e.*, the five) senses are pooled in a 'Common Sensibility' which not only receives these impressions but can also distinguish between them. The difference is that whereas a special sense can receive and distinguish

between the forms of the different impressions of its own kind only in a discrete way, the Common Sensibility can receive them all together. This it can do because it is itself Form and cannot be subject to other forms. Now this Common Sensibility represents the highest development of the 'Natural Soul' of the Body.

Higher than Common Sensibility, however, is the power of Imagination which is located in the fore part of the brain. Higher still is the power of Memory, the treasure-house of the forms of sense, located somewhere in the back part of the brain. But the highest power of all is Intellection through which Reason 'moves' towards the Abstract. This power is to be found only in man and is located somewhere in the middle of the brain. Intellection forms the *differentia* of man and the greater and keener is it in a man, the higher is he than animals and the greater his capacity to receive the influence of Reason. Such a man will always tend towards the discovery and apprehension of those 'abstract and eternal Verities'—*a priori* truths, as we should say now—which are outside the limits of time and becoming. This, however, is not the final stage of man's evolution. There is a still higher stage of insight, *viz.*, the stage of 'the Prophet' or the man of

inspiration. What sort of a stage is that? The next section on Inspiration discusses this problem.

4

What is inspiration?

The man of divine insight, says our author, can belong to one of two classes. (i) Either he is one who has *progressed*—in the evolutionary sense discussed in preceding sections—to the stage where the eternal Verities and divine secrets begin to appear to his soul as ‘self-evident truths’ so that there remains not the slightest need of argument and proof; or (ii) he is a man who has no need to pass through the above-mentioned stages of progress because his mind is so pure and so full of light that the abstract and divine truths of themselves (and on account of their inherent unity) begin to *descend* on it. In such people the influx of divine influence is in the reverse order to what takes place in normal cases. Reason influences Intellection; the latter Imagination and Imagination Common Sensibility. We know how the man in a dream sees and hears the forms of sense as Imagination presents them. In a somewhat similar manner, the man of inspiration beholds the Verities because he can shed the bonds of the Body. As he is under the influence of Reason he does not

fall into those errors which so often mislead the dreamer. And since there is no distinction of past and future in the case of the 'universals' which reflect the sensibles, he can as easily recapture the past and predict the future as he can experience the present.

In short, 'divine insight' is possible for man in two ways. The first path of development, *i.e.*, evolution of mind and insight from the low to the high, from the apprehension of the sensible to the apprehension of the divine Verities, is traversed by the philosophers. The philosopher *ascends* to divine insight. On the contrary, 'the Prophet' *i.e.*, 'the man of inspiration', receives divine influence directly from above and then *descends* from the high to the low, *i.e.*, from the apprehension of divine Verities to the world of the sensibles. This is the special privilege of the prophets. But since both philosophers and prophets traverse the same distance, it is but natural that their results harmonize. That is why it is always the wise and the philosophers of the age who hasten to accept and confirm with their evidence the teaching of the prophet of their age. The only difference is that the philosopher, in his statement of the Verities, tends more and more to shed the language and the forms of matter, because this was

the very nature of his ascent. The prophet, on the other hand, is compelled—again by the nature of his ‘descent’—to communicate to others the Verities he has immediately and directly apprehended, in the language of the ‘material forms’ which are the stuff of which the ordinary man’s imagination is made. But since the prophet has to communicate the Verities to every type of man, he selects only such forms of expression as can appeal to the mind of the ignorant layman as well as to that of one intellectually endowed. Of course, as soon as the prophet discovers a better endowed man among his followers he starts educating him in a way which is not possible for the others. And this is but just. Each man should receive as much of food—physical and spiritual—as his body and soul are capable of assimilating. That is why, for instance, the amount and nature of the teaching the Prophet (on whom be peace) bestowed on Abu Hurairah was different from the teaching he imparted to Ali (with both of whom Allah be pleased).

5

That Reason is a king and by its very nature commands obedience is the thesis of the fifth section.

It must be obvious from the preceding discussion,

says the author, that the superiority of the prophet to all men lies in the fact that his share of/in Reason is the greatest and his apprehension of the Verities the keenest and the most comprehensive. But why should a greater share of/in Reason be the ground of one man's superiority to others? The only answer is that Reason is by its very nature lord and master and compels obedience and attention. Do we not see that animals instinctively fear and obey man? And is it not so because man is wiser than them and can, therefore, master them even though his body lacks all those instruments of offence and defence which they possess? Similarly, do we not see that the ordinary man instinctively comes for advice to and obeys one who is better endowed with Reason than he is? And is it not true that the natural and unforced homage which a man receives from his fellows is in direct ratio to the 'amount' of Reason he possesses?

It is true, of course, that some people have always denied the prophets and spurned their teachings. But the explanation is that obedience to that teaching would have entailed on their part renunciation of many of their cherished goods and even more cherished bodily pleasures. In their heart of hearts even these people fear the prophet and know that

what he says is true. But attachment to sensuous pleasure perverts their nature and they cannot see their own Good. Such people do not follow their *nature*; they run counter to it. They do not (because they cannot) deny Reason and the truth of the prophetic teaching. Only they are so engrossed in the snares of sense that the light is gone out of their hearts and they are blind.

6

The prophet is distinguished from the rest of mankind by his possession of certain qualities which the ordinary mortal lacks. The most important of these qualities, *viz.*, Reason, has already been noted above. Our author now turns to the consideration of another quality which the prophet possess in common with certain other gifted people, *the capacity, namely, of having true dreams.*

Now dreams occur in sleep. What is sleep? The organs of the body, physical organs as they are, cannot go on working indefinitely. Work results in fatigue and fatigue is a state of decomposition. The fatigued organ needs a period of rest and recuperation before it can be fit for another spell of work. Sleep results, and it is the period of rest and recuperation. After hard work the soul finds that its physi-

cal instruments are not fit to use. But it cannot remain idle. Since, however, the body is undergoing some restful sleep, the Soul is deprived of external stimuli to work upon. It, therefore, turns to a manipulation of those old sensuous impressions which are stored in the memory. The result is dreams, fantastic and otherwise. If, however, the Soul turns to Reason for occupation (instead of to old sensuous impressions) during the period of sleep, it beholds things and events which are yet to materialize. The result is a true dream, one of the qualities of prophethood. Some other people, however, can also have this experience (of a true dream) though only very rarely. The prophet is always in this state. But this capacity to experience true dreams cannot be acquired. It is a gift of God and one of the prerogatives of the prophet.

7

In the seventh section our author tells us of *the difference between 'a prophet' (nabi) and 'an oracle' (kahin)*.

Oracular phenomena, says he, and other phenomena like them generally appear when the birth of a prophet is near at hand. The reason is that whenever a Form is taking shape in the heavens, a

Form which is to result in an extraordinary event or in a tremendous revolution, many things take place in the terrestrial world which resemble that Form in some manner. But since that Form is yet incomplete in heaven, these phenomena which resemble it are also very incomplete and imperfect. As soon, however, as that Form attains to perfection in heaven, there appears along with it a perfect being to receive it. But as 'heaven' is always in a state of change, only very few people—at the most one or two—become the recipients of that perfect power which necessitated that Form. But the person who is born either immediately before or immediately after that Form has attained to perfection or completion, remains defective in power.

The perfect Form materializes in the terrestrial world as 'a prophet'. He represents in himself the perfect influence of the perfect Form. The powers which immediately preceded him or succeeded him (and there is always a plenitude of such defective powers at the time) are by contrast exposed in all their imperfection and defect. But only those defects predominate in any particular place at the time of the advent of the prophet whose corresponding excellence and perfection it is the purpose of Almighty God to reveal through him. That is why the *Muta-*

kallemin (the Scholastics) have said: 'God sends *that* prophet to a particular nation who is endowed in all its perfection with a quality which is the peculiar excellence of that nation.' The prophet's perfection in that quality reduces to naught that people's own claims to excellence. And this is but right, for had any other quality been vouchsafed to the prophet, his nation would have said to him: 'We do not know this sort of thing. Had we known it we could have done better than thee'.

The oracle (*kahin*) represents one of these defective powers. He feels its influx in his soul and tries to act to complete it. But since the power is itself defective, it can only express itself in sensuous matters. Arrows, marbles, birds, etc., become his instruments of 'prediction'. Sometimes he indulges in metre and rhyme to induce oracular intensity in what he says, while at other times he deliberately talks in equivocal language to safeguard against error and consequent betrayal of his pretensions. But not all that he says is false. He does experience, in so far as his oracular gift is genuine, occasional glimpses of the world behind the veil, but since he does not understand the true import of his vision, he predicts things which are impossible. The really sincere and balanced member of this fraternity,

however, takes care not to exceed his powers and as soon as he comes across the prophet of his day he expresses his faith in him. Our author believes that Suád bin Qarib (سواد بن قارب) and Taliha (طليحة) were *kahins* of this type.

8

In the eighth section Ibn Maskawaih distinguishes between 'the prophet appointed' (نبي مرسل) and the 'prophet not appointed' (نبي غير مرسل), the former alone being appointed by God for the reform and purification of some community or people. The 'prophet appointed' has so many virtues and excellences united in his nature that he is easily the noblest and greatest of all men. But the 'prophet not appointed' possesses only eleven (as against the forty of the other) distinguishing marks of which ten can be found even in his *khalifa* or vicegerent. Our author does not tell us what these eleven distinguishing marks are. Only one quality (says he) is peculiar to such a prophet, *viz.*, that he possesses a power or capacity to receive light and grace from God. Like 'the prophet appointed' he also does not need development from the lower and sensuous stage of apprehension to the higher plane of spiritual illumination. In the case of both, spiritual illumination is

a gift of God. But whereas 'the prophet appointed' has to retranslate his experience in intellectual and sensuous terms to share it with his followers (whose betterment is his divinely appointed mission), 'the prophet not appointed' does not need to do so or cannot do so.

(It may be noted here in parentheses that this distinction of our author's does not find any sanction either in the Quran or in Islamic Theology. The 'prophet not appointed' turns out to be in essentials the *Wali* of Sufistic terminology.)

9

The *Varieties of Inspiration* are discussed all too briefly in the ninth section.

Our author believes that there are as many varieties of inspiration as there are capacities in the human soul. The reason is that whatever of grace and illumination descends from God on the Rational Soul of man is received by the latter either by means of all its powers or through some of them. Hence there must be a variety of inspiration corresponding to each of these powers.

Now the powers of the Soul pertain either to man's Sensibility or to his Reason. Each, of course, has several sub-forms. As far as the former is concerned,

only those senses can be comparatively fit vehicles of inspiration as are least alloyed with 'matter'. In other words, only those senses can serve this purpose which can perform their proper function without coming into contact with the body apprehended. Sight and hearing are two such senses in man. Of course, some contamination with matter does remain even here. Hence the apprehension of divine Verities and abstract truths through them cannot be considered pure.

Better far is it for the Soul to receive inspiration through its non-sensuous powers, and better even than that is to receive it through one unitary power. But our author does not tell us clearly what that unitary power is. Reason, most probably.

10

The last section of the chapter (and also of the book) discusses *the difference between the prophet and the false prophet* (متنبي).

The prophet, endowed as he is with all the noblest qualities which can be the portion of a human being, is so immersed in the contemplation of the divine Verities and secrets, that he has no appetite left for those sensuous enjoyments and pleasures which the unillumined mortal finds it so difficult to resist,

Now the 'false prophet' lacks the supreme bliss of the prophet and can desire only those sensuous and carnal pleasures which suit his low nature.

The prophet can apprehend divine secrets and Verities in two ways. (i) He may behold these truths with his eyes and hear them with his ears, in the same way as he has his other waking experiences. Or (ii) he may only hear but not (be able to) see, and it may appear to him that he is hearing something from behind the veil. When the prophet receives inspiration according to the second of these methods he feels intense fear which, however, is soon succeeded by peace and intense certitude. There is no third way.

When the prophet has received inspiration, it is his duty to show his people a 'path' to follow, *i.e.*, to reform and purify them. In performing this duty he has to undergo hardships compared with which death itself is an easy way of escape. But since his heart is the focus of a peculiar power and his tongue has a peculiar charm in it, he succeeds in attracting people towards his 'path'.

The 'false prophet' lacks all these qualities and has to try all sorts of means to camouflage his inherent incapacity and depravity. But this trickery cannot work for a long time. He is soon exposed and

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his sensual nature betrays him at every step. People ask him (just as they ask prophets) about ultimate things and about the beginning and end of the world. He repeats what the prophets have said, but his replies cannot carry conviction for he does not understand and cannot explain what he says. His replies are too constrained and incoherent to pass for truth. He lacks, in short, that 'grace' which sustains the prophet.

Here ends the book with the author's promise to elucidate points in need of elucidation in his 'Larger Work on Salvation' which was to follow.

PART II

In Mas'umi's Philosophical Studies

1—God

It would perhaps be desirable now that we have worked our way through the pages of the *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*, to review the salient features of Ibn Maskawaih's thought, and to this task we should now turn.

From the fact that Maskawaih has selected only three problems, *viz.*, the problems of God, Soul and Prophethood, for discussion in the *Al-Fauz al-Asghar* we may infer that these are in his view *the* chief problems of all philosophy. In a similar way, we may perhaps say that the order of their treatment in the book is also the order of their importance in the mind of our philosopher. And even a superficial view of the matter leads one to appreciate Maskawaih's point of view. Just as the supreme, *i.e.*, the inescapable fact for the psychologist is the fact of his own consciousness at any particular moment, similarly the supreme and inescapable fact for the man of intense religious consciousness is the fact of God. If such a man also happens to be a man of exceptional intellectual attainments, the problem of God naturally becomes for him the most important

problem of philosophy. There is no doubt that Maskawaih was such a man.

God, with all His Omnipotence and Omniscience, cannot create another God; cannot, in other words, duplicate Himself without ceasing to be God. God cannot be a creation. Hence 'the best' that He can create is something in His own image; something, that is, which may reflect His Divine nature. This something will also possess an unceasing urge towards Him and a capacity to develop in itself something that might echo the Perfection of His Being. Such a creation is the Soul. 'Reason' (which for Maskawaih as for many another philosopher in Islam influenced by the Neo-Platonic tradition) was God's first creation lacks that individuality and concreteness and that capacity to posit 'the I' or 'egohood' for itself which the Soul possesses. Now a Perfect Soul, *i.e.*, a perfect image of God, is a Prophet. Hence the problems of Soul and Prophethood are second in importance only to the problem of God.

It is obvious that Maskawaih regards God as the Supreme Fact. This fact is to be apprehended in its obviousness rather than inferred or proved to exist. But direct apprehension of this Supreme Fact is possible only for Reason. It is not open to Sense. The 'fact' of God's existence is obvious only to the

Rational. 'That God exists' is as obvious a truth as 'that the Sun exists'. Both are directly apprehended, but the latter truth is directly apprehended by Sense while the former is directly apprehended by Reason. The former is *a priori* if the latter is *a posteriori*.

In the ordinary man, however, Reason and Sense are intertwined. Hence it is difficult for him to apprehend the *fact* of God's existence. Two alternatives are open to him.

(a) If he desires direct apprehension of God's existence in all its obviousness, he should purify his Reason of all sensuous associations. Reason unclouded by Sense will at once reflect God's existence in all its Glory and Perfection. The philosopher should aim at such apprehension and this ideal can be achieved, says our author, if a course of strict discipline—physical, moral and intellectual—be indulged in to ensure the purification of one's Soul and Reason from the alloy of Sense. We are not told the details of this process of purification. But it is clear that Maskawaih does not consider physical asceticism and moral discipline as being sufficient for the purpose. The purification should be, at least, in its higher stages, intellectual as well, and our author follows the lead of Plato and Farabi in proclaiming the necessity of a thorough training in Geometry and

Logic, and in the principles of Physical Science and Philosophy. Purification of Reason by means of the Sciences is essential for 'the return to God' because Reason alone can apprehend abstract truths and universals. Divine Verities are not exactly 'abstract truths and universals' but they certainly can be said to have greater affinity with these than with the gross corporeality of the particulars which alone Sense can apprehend.

(b) But since even the best purified philosopher cannot transcend the limits of his humanity, the necessity to *prove* God remains. Now the best proof would be one in which Reason and Sense combined to give unanimous evidence. Our author believes that 'the proof of God's existence from the fact of physical motion' is such proof, and it may be regarded as the Soul's indirect approach to God. As regards the question; * Why should the Soul seek an approach to God? ' we need only say at this stage that 'salvation' according to our author, consists only in a 'return to God'.

Let us now examine this proof. The motion of physical bodies is a fact which one has merely to accept on the basis of sensuous experience and explain. Bodies move. Why? And how? Our author declares that every physical body has either (i) been

1. Motion

brought into existence out of non-Being or nothingness, or (ii) is composed of some existents. In both cases motion is involved. The only question is: to what agency is this motion to be ascribed? Maskawaih believes that all motion is ultimately *from* God and should also be *to* God.

If a physical body be in motion we can ask two questions. First, 'what is its *origin*?' *i.e.*, what is the *efficient* cause of the motion? Secondly, 'what is its *end*?' *i.e.*, what is its final or *teleological* cause and goal? To the first question Maskawaih replies that the mover of each moving body is different from it. Motion cannot pertain to the essence of a body and for this reason. Every moving body is either an element or a complex of elements and either living or non-living. Now observation tells us that all elements (and also all non-living complexes of elements) keep on moving as long as they do not reach their 'special place and centre' and stop moving when they do. Now had motion belonged to the essence of the object it should have continued to move even at its 'special place and centre'. But it does not, says Maskawaih.

Motion cannot belong to the essence of a living body either. For as soon as a 'noble part' is detached from the whole called the 'living body', the latter

ceases to move; *e.g.*, a dead body cannot move by itself. But what about the 'noble part' itself? Does it continue to move? Our author says, No.

Now it must be admitted that it is difficult to appreciate the argument in its entirety unless the terms 'noble part' and 'special place and centre' are explained. This unfortunately has not been done. Hence difficulties. A dead body, for instance, cannot move as a whole, but does it not move in its parts? Maskawaih was too great a biologist not to have known of the motion of molecular disintegration which characterizes a dead body. What exactly does he mean then?

But he supplements this argument with another much more self-contained. The motion of a body is either an attraction towards something or a repulsion from something. In either case it is obvious that this something must be different from the object moved. It is to be noted that in this argument motion has been considered from the teleological point of view. In the last the causal standpoint was 'efficient.'

Maskawaih concludes that the mover of each moving object is something different from it. But observation shows that there is a long chain of objects in motion. Can this chain be endless, or must a non-

moving Mover be posited at 'the beginning'? But the chain of moving objects cannot be endless for it would involve infinite regress, a contingency which gives a shudder to philosophers. Hence it must be admitted that the Ultimate Mover of all moving objects does not Himself move. And this Ultimate Mover is not 'body' either, for a body being subject to composition cannot but move.

The fact of physical motion then involves necessarily the existence of the Prime Mover, God.

Now since it is God alone Who imparts motion to all things—(and all composition and decomposition, all growth and decay, all integration and disintegration, all life and death, are only different forms of motion—it follows that the *existence* of all things is dependent on God and therefore 'an accident' as far as these things themselves are concerned.) And here our author cites a dictum from his predecessors. (What is 'accidental' for an object must be 'essential' for some other object. Now since existence is an 'accident' for all moving objects, it can be 'essential' only for that Being Who does not Himself move, God then exists in His own right, *i.e.*, He exists because He is God. The very concept of His Being as the Prime Mover necessitates His existence.)

It would seem that this is a much better way of putting the matter than the ontological argument of traditional Western Philosophy.

The concept of the Prime Mover, God, necessitates the proposition that 'God is One', for two reasons. The first has already been stated by implication, *viz.*, that the infinite regress involved in the chain of moving objects must stop with *an* unmoved Mover. For the idea of two unmoved movers of the *same* chain of objects does not stand to reason. The second argument against a plurality of prime movers is briefly this. Suppose there is such a plurality. Then each of these movers will agree with the others in being a mover and differ from them in something which marks him/it off from others. Hence the nature of each of these several prime movers will be a complex of the quality which he/it has in common with others and the quality which forms his/its essence and distinguishes him/it from the others. The nature of each of these movers will, therefore, be the result of a composition which involves motion which, of course, cannot be true of the Prime Mover. Hence there is only One Prime Mover.

Here we have to note how Maskawaih tackles the (to him) very vital question: How can a manifold of acts—acts which even appear to contradict one

another—proceed from the same Mover? How can 'the many' follow from 'the One'? This was one of the most puzzling problems which the ancients (and their medieval successors) had to face. The root of the trouble appears to have been the belief that the proposition—'From the One only one (act) can follow'—was an axiomatic truth. That it is neither the one nor the other could have been easily seen by them but for their original bias, for if 'the one' which is supposed to follow from the One is at all different from its Author, then this supposition is not one iota more rational or irrational than the other supposition that from the One a 'multiplicity' can follow. One could wish such a view had been taken of the problem, for then one ground at least for the importation of the Neo-Platonic series of Emanations into Islamic Philosophy would have ceased to exist. Maskawaih, however, believed in the *a prioriness* of the dictum, 'From the One only one can follow'. Hence he tries to solve the problem of multiplicity by declaring that whereas some acts of the One Agent issue from His essence, others do not. These latter acts issue through the medium of other objects. Hence from the One Agent proceeded only the First Emanation or Reason; from Reason the Soul; and so on until we reach the elements. These elements

now become primordial and combine in ever more complex forms to evolve into an ascending series of existents which lead up to man and beyond. But why should the 'descending' series of emanations have taken a turn upward after the stage of elements had been reached, we are not told. We can only infer that though the One Agent is the Ultimate Cause of everything that is or comes into being, the multiplicity we observe has its origin in the Divine Will working through the medium of the various grades of being symbolized by the emanations.

Another dictum fervently believed in by many of the ancients and their later followers was: 'Out of nothing nothing comes'. From this it was inferred that the universe appeared or was created and shaped out of something already existing, 'chaos' or 'matter' or some other thing. God could, on this view, be conceived at best as an Architect or as 'the Demiurge'. Maskawaih contests this view. Every physical object, living as well as non-living, says he, is the result of the combination of 'form' and 'matter'. These two are always together. Form, however, changes but matter remains constant. How then do the different processes of combination resulting in different physical objects take place? It cannot be that one form is superimposed while the object

still retains the old form; a ball of wood, for instance, cannot remain a ball and also assume the form of a cube. Nor can it be said that when 'the ball of wood' became 'a cube of wood', its old form, *i.e.*, its 'rotundity' migrated into some other object. The only acceptable alternative is that 'the rotundity' simply disappeared into nothingness when that piece of wood assumed the new form of the cube. Now just as a new form can disappear into nothingness (without involving any contradiction in thought), similarly can a new form appear out of nothingness. And since form and matter are always together, what is true of form (in the present case) is also true of matter. Both appeared out of, *i.e.*, were created out of nothingness.

Hence it is proved not only that God is the Author of all things but also that all things were created by Him out of nothingness or non-being.

2.—*The Soul*

Can man's 'being' and his experiences be explained without postulating the existence of the Soul? Can sensibility, perception, imagination and intellection stand by themselves, each sufficient for itself, or must they all inhere in some substance which exists in its own right? Can Reason—first emanation from the Primal One—find lodgment for itself in the world of change anywhere else than in man's soul? Maskawaih is emphatic in his reply. 'The Soul exists. It is a self-subsisting substance which is not subject to death or decay!' The question for him is: *what is its nature?*

(i) To begin with, we are to note that 'it is not a body'; it is not material. The two, Soul and Body, differ in a fundamental respect. Body can 'accept' only one form at a time. A piece of wood cannot be a cube and a cone at the same time; a piece of silver cannot be a button and a ring at the same time. Acceptance of a new form implies that the previous form has been surrendered. But the Soul can 'accept' a number of forms, *i.e.*, it can apprehend a number of objects at one and the same time. As a matter

of fact the larger the number of forms received by the Soul the greater the keenness of succeeding apprehensions and the richer the variety of resulting mental processes. The perfect Soul, would, on this view, be able to apprehend numberless forms in a single moment. The Soul, then, is fundamentally different from the body. Whatever else it might be, it is certainly not material.

(2) That the Soul is not body is evident in this way also that every part of the body (taken separately) as also the body as a whole, is an *organ* with some special function or set of functions attached to it. But 'an organ' is such only for a *user*. Who is this user? Obviously it must be something or someone different from the organs (corporeal as they are) which it uses. It can only be the Soul, for the Soul is fundamentally different from everything corporeal and can control and direct the body and its organs.

(3) Is the Soul 'form'? It cannot be, for form and matter, though different are yet always wedded to each other. The Soul can receive forms but is itself distinct from the forms it receives. Had the Soul been itself form or had it a form peculiar to it, its capacity to receive all possible forms would suffer, just as if the eye were itself colour or had some colour peculiar to it, its capacity to apprehend

all possible colours would suffer.

(4) Is the Soul, then, 'life'? Not so, for according to our author, life consists in the *connection* of the Soul with the body. Death, conversely, is the separation of the two. Now the following considerations go to show that the Soul is not 'life'. (a) That the Soul is not itself life becomes evident when we note that on this supposition the Soul would be inseparable from the body. But the latter being material is the result of composition. The Soul, however, is not material and is not the result of any composition. It is a unitary something and is essentially 'simple'. (b) This argument is strengthened when we note further that the Rational Soul disdains the pleasures of the body. This would have been impossible if the Soul had itself been life, *i.e.*, the life of the body and its material form. For how can a thing disdain that on which its own existence depends? (c) Both life and 'material form' sustain and subserve the body. But the Soul does not *subserve* the body; on the contrary, it controls it and uses it as its instrument. And we have seen already that the user of an instrument is different from it. (d) The Soul does not decay with the decay of the body. In the best men the Soul continues to achieve new vigour even when the body is undergoing the decay

and infirmity of advancing age. Man's intellectual powers attain then to a maturity and keenness which are impossible when the body is full of the vigour of youth. The contrast between the Soul and body can be carried a step further. The greater the strength of the body, *i.e.*, the more thoroughly is it saturated with 'life', the less is the Soul capable of performing those higher rational functions which form the *differentia* of man. (e) Consider now the Soul's apprehension of abstract and *a priori* truths, of universals and spiritual Verities. These truths are beyond the ken of sensibility, sensuous perception and imagination, all of which depend either directly or indirectly upon the co-operation of the body. Only the Rational Soul, for instance, can judge intuitively that between two contradictories there can be no mean. That is why the more successful is the Soul in getting rid of sensuous distractions, the more easily can it apprehend *a priori* and spiritual truths.

All this goes to show that the Soul is not life though it imparts life to the body by coming in contact with it.

(5) If the Soul is neither body, nor form nor yet life, what is it then? Our author declares that it is a substance, self-subsisting and not subject to decay and death. And for this reason. Everything corpo-

real is the result of composition which itself is that form of physical motion which involves a change of quality with change of substance resulting in the appearance of a new substance. But there is neither composition nor corporeality in the Soul. It is a 'simple' substance and on that very account cannot suffer disintegration or annihilation.

It has been said above that the Soul is not itself life though it bestows life on the body by coming in contact with it. This has led some philosophers to declare (says Maskawaih) that life pertains in some sense to the essence of the Soul. On this view the Soul is not mortal because it cannot 'accept' death which is the antithesis of life. Of two contradictory terms only one can be truly predicated of a thing and life is already true (in some sense) of the Soul. Further, the Soul being a simple substance and not corporeal is also free from *defect* which, in our author's view, is closely connected with 'disintegration' and matter. This freedom from 'defect' is also a guarantee of the Soul's deathlessness.

(6) *The Soul's Motion*.—As contrasted with the body the Soul is *self-moved*. But what sort of motion is peculiar to the Soul? Since the Soul is incorporeal substance, its special motion cannot be physical. It cannot even be spatial. How then are we to con-

ceive of this non-spatial motion? Maskawaih declares that this peculiar motion is *circular*. (It is worth remembering here that in his view the motion of the Heaven also is circular. That is why the Heaven is stationary as a whole but moves in its parts.) Now since the Soul's motion is non-spatial and also non-temporal, the 'being' of the Soul is not subject to change and becoming. In the being of the Soul, change and changelessness are one. It is, therefore, immortal.

But though the Soul's motion is circular and non-spatial, it can have an objective. It can either be motion towards Reason or towards 'matter' and 'sense'. In the former case, the Soul is the recipient of 'divine effulgence' *i.e.*, it receives light from 'above'; in the latter, it bestows light on 'matter' and illumines 'sense'. The former constitutes the 'life' of the Soul and pertains to its essence. The latter, if too insistent, constitutes its 'fall'.

The term 'motion' then, as applied to the Soul, stands for what we may now call, a 'conative urge' which assumes the form of 'attention towards' something. In other words, motion will have to be understood now in a purely psychological sense. The only thing which such motion can have in common with physical motion is that it involves some change in/of

state, but this change in/of state is a 'changeless change' for it does not involve any change in the Soul's substance nor does it mean any change in 'space and time'. But since this motion is superimposed (again in a non-spatial sense) on corporeal objects, it inspires in them the physical motions peculiar to them. We cannot, of course, 'imagine' to ourselves this impact of the Soul's motion on the physical object.

(7) *The Soul's Salvation*.—It has been said that the Soul's motion is either 'upward' or 'downward', *i.e.*, either towards Reason or towards Sense and Matter. The upward movement is the 'return of the Soul to itself'; it enables the Soul to become absorbed in itself and thus to be one with God Who created it and Whom it reflects. God—The Unique One—bestows something of His own Uniqueness on the Soul which turns to Him. In the reflected Glory of His Being the Soul attains to its own perfection. Herein lies the Soul's *salvation* and its Chief Good. The Soul's perfection, then, consists in intense participation in rational activity whereby and wherein it is enabled not only to reach the secrets of its own being, to behold, for instance, in all their obviousness the spiritual Verities and abstract truths whose apprehension was latent in it as a spiritual being, but also

to evolve a peculiar uniqueness of its own born of God's Grace and the Effulgence of His Divine Light. This life of Reason constitutes the Soul's Supreme Good.

Whatever divorces the Soul from itself and makes it a stranger to itself, constitutes its 'fall'. When the Soul gets absorbed, not in itself, but in the life of sense and corporeality, it falls. This is its downward motion. This motion consists in a conative urge towards and complete absorption in a life of gross sensuousness, imagination, bodily pleasure and action begotten of and confined to the satisfaction of desires rooted in primitive impulse and instinct. A life of this type constitutes the Soul's Badness. Such a life kills the Rational Soul, and it is, therefore, the duty of every man who cares for his Soul's salvation to protect it from the impurity of evil desire. But this does not imply that salvation is only or even at all possible by a withdrawal from any association with the world and those who inhabit it. For man is by nature a social being. Left to himself he is extremely helpless. In physical structure he is least adapted (of all living beings) for offence and self-protection. But he possesses what other animals do not, *viz.*, reason; and it is only by 'rational co-operation' with others that he manages to secure

prosperous continuity for himself and his kind. He is born helpless: it is his fellow-beings who nourish and sustain him not only during this period of enforced helplessness, but also throughout the rest of his life. It is but just, therefore, that he should repay the debt he owes to others. Now every participation in corporate activity is a partial repayment of this debt. Of course, the discharge of this social obligation cannot be the same for all people in quantity and quality. But that every man should try his best to discharge it is obvious. Social life is, in short, not only a necessity but also a virtue.

But how are the details of social co-operation to be adjusted? How is one to know in what particular manner is he to discharge his particular obligations? How is one to know the details of his duty, of his virtue and of his conduct? In what particular manner should a particular individual 'acquire' the world and its goods so that the welfare not only of his own Soul but also that of others be ensured? Our author's answer is in brief this: Follow the Law of Islam, *i.e.*, the code of individual, social, moral and political conduct summed up in the *Shariah*.

(8) *The Supreme Good*.—The Soul's salvation on the earthly plane then consists in a life of rational co-operation with his fellows in society, in rational

participation in the world and its affairs and in the apprehension of spiritual Verities and abstract and universal truths. All this constitutes the upward motion of the Soul towards Reason and its 'return to itself'. The man who reaches this stage of theoretical and practical wisdom derives such spiritual bliss from it that no bodily pleasure can even remotely compare with it. Such an one has found his Good but in finding it he also discovers that this is not all the good that there is. There are stages of gnosis which transcend this stage and the seeker finds his Final Good only when his Soul has so purified and evolved itself that it is fit to 'gaze at the Countenance of Allah'. This is the Supreme Salvation.

But it is not very clear from our author's remarks if it is possible for man to attain to this Final Good in his earthly life. For the ordinary man it is clear that it is not. One thing, however, is certain. The Soul is not mortal. It is, therefore, necessary to consider what is its condition after the death of the body.

To begin with, we note that the multiplicity of the Soul's experiences does not entail any complexity in the Soul itself. Hence it can have different states after its separation from the body. The Soul *has*

these states, but we cannot use the words 'united' and 'separate' (on account of their physical and spatial associations) when trying to understand the mutual relation of these states or their relation to the Soul which has them.

Now just as in the corporeal world of 'spheres' each outer and higher sphere embraces and encompasses the inner and 'lower' one without any void in between, similarly, in the world of spiritual existents, some encompass others; for instance, Reason encompasses Soul, Soul Nature, and so on. This encompassing implies 'the determination and ordering' of the lower by the higher. The higher spiritual existent is completely cognisant of and determines and orders the lower, but the only thing that the latter knows about the higher is *that* it exists. This determination of the lower by the higher is *grace* conferred by the higher on the lower. But the latter can 'accept' only as much of this grace from its higher existent as it is 'fit' for. Thus the condition of the good Soul is that of 'grace abounding', while the bad Soul is always in pain and sorrow because, like the good Soul, it also receives what it is 'fit' for, *viz.*, the perfection of perfect badness.

The Soul's well-being consists in its motion towards its next higher existent in the realm of spirit,

viz., Reason. Hence its well-being after bodily death must consist in a purely rational and spiritual existence which it is difficult to conceive and certainly not possible to imagine. But man can prepare for this supreme consummation by learning to shed the bonds of sense and matter in his earthly life; for the goods beloved of man in his terrestrial existence would count for even less in the world of spirit than do the things he loved in his infancy in the maturity of his adult age.

(9) *The Soul's Knowledge.*—Knowledge cannot be a property of matter or body. Only the Soul can know. This much must be accepted as obvious. But Soul and body are in intimate connection in man in his earthly life. Thus man is both a corporeal existent as well as a spiritual existent. Hence also the twofold pull to which his Soul is subject. His Soul feels an urge towards its higher existent in the world of Spirit, *i.e.*, Reason, and it also feels an urge towards its lower existent in the world of corporeality, *i.e.*, Nature. Hence the Soul's knowledge is also twofold: there is knowledge conditioned by matter, corporeality, sense and Nature, and there is knowledge conditioned solely by Reason. But the Soul and body are so intertwined in man that it is not possible for the Soul to turn towards Reason unless it has

first mastered the world of Sense. Man's knowledge, therefore, can have two modes, 'the mode of Sense' and 'the mode of Reason'.

The *mode of Sense* expresses itself in the form of Sensibility, Sense-perception and Imagination, while the *mode of Reason* is expressed in Intellection. Just as Sense-perception is the apprehension of 'the sensibles' similarly Intellection is the apprehension of 'the universals' and '*a priori* truths'. Both are forms of apprehension and therefore resemble each other to some extent, but there are vital differences also between them and it is worth our while to note them.

Let us consider the resemblance first.

(a) In one respect Sensibility and Intellection not only resemble each other but also matter. Matter has the capacity to receive all possible forms but it is itself 'the negation of all forms'. This means that it has no particular form of its own before it accepts any. In the same way, Sense has no particular form of its own before it accepts any. The eye can see all possible colours simply because it has no particular colour peculiar to it; the ear can perceive all possible sounds because it has no particular sound of its own. Similarly, Intellection can apprehend all possible universals and truths because it is itself neither the

one nor the other.

(b) There is another resemblance also between Sense and Intellection. Both can accept external influence (*i.e.*, stimulation) without suffering any disintegration. A physical object, on the contrary, does disintegrate, either partially or wholly, under the impact of strong external stimuli. A heavy stone can pulverise a smaller and lighter one and the physical eye and ear can be permanently injured if the external stimulus be too strong. But what such a stimulus can do to Sense and Intellection is to add to their tempo and to actualize their potentialities.

Consider now the difference between the two.

(b) (i) Sensibility in all its forms depends in the last resort on matter, *i.e.*, on the interaction of the Soul with the external environment through the mediacy of the organs of the body. Now body, being physical, disintegrates either partially or wholly under the impact of strong external (*i.e.*, physical) stimulation. Partial disintegration is *fatigue*. Thus whenever the organs of the body are stimulated for any length of time, fatigue results and the efficiency of the organs concerned deteriorates. Sensibility suffers. Now it is quite otherwise with Intellection. It is entirely independent of the body and its organs. Hence physical fatigue does not reduce its efficiency

and keenness. On the contrary, the longer its pre-occupation with its proper object, the greater the accuracy and range of resulting apprehension.

(ii) With advancing age the original vigour of the body declines. The result is that every activity of the Soul which depends on the body for its instruments loses its edge. Sensibility deteriorates and the sense-organs become very inefficient and unreliable servants. But the rational activities of the Soul can continue with unabated vigour and as sensuous distractions decrease (through the decline of Sense) they may even receive an accession of strength which could not have been anticipated before.

(iii) So far we have considered Sensibility and Intellection in their intrinsic nature. Let us now consider them in relation to their respective objects. Sensibility in all its forms is concerned with particulars, *i.e.*, with concrete objects existing here and now, or with copies of them or with productions out of these copies. These objects, being particulars, change every moment and are characterized by an instability which (so our author believes) detracts from their 'being'. Intellection, on the other hand, concerns itself with the concept, *i.e.*, with the permanent factor in the changing particular. The concept represents the essence and substantiality of

the particulars of a certain kind. If the changing particular owes its impermanence to the factor of corporeality which enters into its composition, the concept, on the contrary, represents the participation of Reason and therefore of spiritual substantiality in the same composition.

The concept, however, is only the first stage in the Soul's upward urge towards Reason. It is the product of wedlock between Reason and Sensibility. Some particularity must always stick to it. It should point the way, therefore, to pure rational activity and to truths which transcend all limitations of space and time. These truths reveal new vistas and higher worlds to the Soul. And it is only when the Soul has made itself familiar with these higher worlds, worlds which cannot be described and understood in terms of space and time, that it can feel itself fit 'to gaze at the Countenance of Allah', 'the Cause of causes, Whose Purity can admit of no admixture, Who bestows Power and Grace on all and receives naught from any, Whose Oneness can admit of no manifoldness, the Source and End of all, the Origin of all Wisdom and the Fount of Purest Uniqueness.' The man who has reached this stage has found his salvation. In him perfect knowledge has coalesced with perfect action in so far as such union is possible of attainment for man,

Evolution

3.—*Prophethood*

That the universe reveals a process of development is evident in Aristotle also but that 'the various stages of being' have evolved according to a plan which can be set out in detail is not so evident in him or in other philosophers, Greek or Muslim. It is to the credit of Maskawaih that he realizes the importance and implications of the problem, and in the brief treatment of it that he gives us in the *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*, he reveals a breadth of vision and a profundity of insight which mark him out not only as a great thinker but also as a great biologist. He is not content with vague generalities. On the contrary, he gives us a clear-cut principle of explanation, a principle which is, in his view, also the law of evolution, and he applies it in detail.

The last stage in the series of emanations from the Primal One is reached in the primordial elements. These elements represent the last stage to which the (mental) analysis of corporeality can be carried. But they also mark the beginning of the process of evolutionary return to the Primal One through the various stages of corporeality and spirit. 'Diversity' appears in this reverse process. Why should there

be 'a return process' at all, we can only infer from our author's discussion of the subject. In the present writer's opinion, it is the Muslim in Maskawaih overshadowing the Aristotelian, for according to the Holy Quran not only does everything proceed from God but it also returns to Him, and it is only in this process of return that man's self finds purpose and fulfilment for itself. Man's individual, social, political, moral and spiritual duties belong almost entirely to this process of 'return to God', and Maskawaih's whole line of argument in this book shows how keenly he was alive to this task. Purely scientific interest in the understanding of the technique of development, especially in the realm of life, was certainly a very important motive, but equally certainly it was not the sole or even the primary motive, as both the title of this book (Salvation) and the title of this chapter (Prophethood) show. Maskawaih's point of view and hence of explanation is entirely teleological. His problem is the discovery of the limits (if any) of man's spiritual evolution and the significance and nature of his Salvation; and in surveying the Soul's long journey through the various stages of being, the problem of biological evolution comes in for minute examination.

Maskawaih declares that all existence is one, 'a

whole and that this whole is 'an organism' whose parts are most intimately interconnected. This 'whole of existence' is made of two worlds with no void in between them. One of these two worlds is 'higher' than the other, but the 'higher' penetrates and permeates the 'lower'. The lower world is the 'world of becoming', *i.e.*, of composition and decomposition, and Maskawaih's Theory of Biological Evolution is an attempt to explain the development of the various grades of life in this world. A purely biological explanation, however, could not have satisfied him, for it could only be partial. A full explanation must be in terms of the 'higher' world which is not subject to change and becoming, to decomposition and death. The spiritual urge which inspires and guides the process of evolution at the various stages of the lower world has its fount in the higher.

It has just been said that Maskawaih's point of view is teleological and not naturalistic. His principle of evolution is this: the Spirit, or that manifestation of it which is the Rational Soul, evolves from the humblest stage of existence, the mineral, to the stage of man and beyond. The 'beyond' stands for that being in whom 'manhood' receives its perfection, *viz.*, 'the prophet'. The prophet represents the

human race reaching its perfection. But for the ordinary man also there are similar and parallel stages of development, stages where his manhood becomes less and less corporeal and more and more spiritual.

Evolution has its stages. A stage is 'higher' or 'lower' in the scale of being in proportion to the emancipation in it of the Spirit or the Rational Soul from the fetters of corporeality. It is only on this ground that we can understand the superiority of animal to plant, of plant to mineral, of man to animal and of the prophet to everybody else.

The superiority of this principle of assessment of all evolutionary progress to such principles as 'natural selection', 'adaptation to environment', etc., is obvious, for a stone, a plant and even a dead body are all equally good instances of 'natural selection' and are all equally well adapted to their respective environments. They *are* and they survive in the form they do because of their natural or acquired fitness for it. If one existent in the corporeal world is superior to others, it must be so not because it has shown its fitness to survive by adapting itself to its environment, for the others have been equally successful according to this criterion; its superiority must consist in something which it possesses and

the others do not. Maskawaih declares that the superiority of one existent to others is in direct ratio to the degree in which the Spirit in each has emerged from the dead-load of corporeality in which it had been submerged. (In the mineral Spirit is asleep; in the prophet it has attained to complete freedom and to complete self-consciousness.)

The earliest centre of 'being' (in the real sense of the term) is, however, the plant and not the mineral for it is in the plant that Spirit first bursts successfully through the stage of the non-living. If, as the Gospel has it, 'the Spirit bloweth where it listeth', then the plant has certainly a share in Spirit for it can move and can actively react to its environment by assimilating food and by growing. This power of spontaneous movement and of active interaction with the environment in the pursuit of ends more or less clearly visualized increases as we mount through the 'spires of form' in the world of animals. In man consciousness becomes self-consciousness, spontaneous movement becomes self-controlled and self-directed action, 'more or less clearly visualized ends' become motives formed after deliberation and pursued with decision. Spirit or the Rational Soul not only attains to clear consciousness of its own nature but also becomes hostile to the world of matter which

appears to enmesh it on all sides. As our author graphically puts it, the self-conscious Soul is like the chick which at first was the egg but which after evolving its proper form breaks through the shell and discards it.

There is intimate connection between any two grades of being which are related to each other as 'higher' and 'lower'. The highest stage of the 'lower' paves the way for the lowest stage of the 'higher'. Thus the highest plant, the date-palm, is almost animal, and the lowest animal, *e.g.*, the slug, the snail or the oyster, is almost plant, so earth-rooted is it. Similarly, the highest animal, the ape, is almost man and the lowest man, *e.g.*, the 'sub-human' man at the extreme end of Negro-land or in some (South Sea?) islands is almost animal. The nobility or otherwise of a plant or an animal or a man is, of course, in direct ratio to the degree in which it has accepted the influence of the Rational Soul. Just as some of the characteristics of animals, *e.g.*, spontaneous movement and cutaneous sensibility, appeared before the stage of animality was fully reached, similarly some of the characteristics of man, *e.g.*, his intelligence and rationality, had already appeared in rudimentary form in higher animals before the stage of man was fully reached.

As has been noted above, 'development' for Maskawaih does not cease with man, as it appears to do with most modern biologists of the evolutionist school. The question: 'Why should the process of evolution cease at all with man?' troubles, in fact, every intelligent layman who hears or reads about modern theories of biological evolution, and Nietzsche was thoroughly logical when he posited his Superman as the rightful successor (and master) of man in the domain of life. With Maskawaih the criterion of evolution is, as has been mentioned above, the emancipation of Spirit from the corporeality in which it is encased at the various stages of being in the physical world. At the stage of man this emancipation is reached in supreme measure and is rewarded with increasing control of physical environment. But Spirit as the Rational Soul continues the pressure of its upward motion with the result that the texture of man's physical being also is transmuted into something better. (The influence of the Rational Soul continues to increase in intensity in human kind until we come across men of extraordinary intelligence, extraordinary character and extraordinary energy, masters in various arts and crafts, experts in science and industry, poets, thinkers and men of action.) But higher far than even these gifted

people are those unique men—the prophets—whose bright gaze penetrates into the inmost secrets of 'being' and for whose Soul the limits of space and time and corporeality cease to act as fetters. These extraordinary men receive light and grace in all their abundance from the Primal One and it is in them that the process of evolution reaches its term.

We have seen above that each higher existent in the scale of physical and biological being is distinguished by its possession of some quality (or set of qualities) not possessed by its immediate predecessor. Such quality (or set of qualities) forms the *differentia* of that grade of being. Intelligence as rationality, for instance, is the *differentia* of man. Now what is the *differentia* of a prophet who represents the highest stage in the development of humankind? Can it be 'the keenest intelligence' or is it something else besides? Maskawaih's answer in brief is: *Inspiration*. We must accordingly turn to the consideration of this quality as our author conceives it.

Our Soul comes in contact with the external environment through the five senses. But each of these senses has its specialized function and cannot do duty for a sister sense. How, then, are these various bits of sense-material brought together and harmonized? Our author believes that the impres-

sions of all the special senses are pooled in a Common Sensibility which not only receives them but can also distinguish between them and harmonize them. This Common Sensibility is itself Form and for that very reason it is not subject to the forms of the special senses whose results it receives. Common Sensibility marks (says our author) the highest development of the Natural Soul of the Body.

Imagination and Memory, however, are higher than Common Sensibility. But both are body-rooted, for their stuff is the echo or image of material provided by Sensibility. It is only at the stage of Intellection, the stage where Intelligence moves towards the Abstract, that the Rational Soul finds emancipation from the bonds of matter. It is through Intellection that man apprehends universals, concepts, 'a priori and abstract truths. It is 'Intelligence in the form of Intellection', then, that serves as the *differentia* of the species man. But there are some people who rise higher still. They are 'the prophets', the men of inspiration.

The 'man of inspiration' is 'a man of divine insight', by which is probably meant *not* one who 'has attained to' but one who 'is capable of' a vision of the Divine Verities. Our author tells us that if a philosopher is to be worth his salt, he should

purge his Soul of the impurities of corporeality by a very strict course of physical, moral and intellectual discipline. Such an one 'attains to' divine insight. To the Soul of such a man the Verities appear as self-evident truths, *i.e.*, truths which stand in no need of argument or proof.

But there are other people who are so pure of nature that they do not need any course of discipline to reach a vision of the Verities. The Soul of such a man is without taint of corporeality, and it mirrors the Verities as easily as the physical mirror reflects the images which it receives. Abstract and divine truths *descend* on such a man. He is the prophet, the man of inspiration. He receives Divine Grace directly from 'above' and he then descends from the higher to the lower plane of being, *i.e.*, from the world of Verities to the world of the sensibles for the good of the latter. Reason, first recipient of Primal Grace, influences his Intellection, the latter his Imagination and Imagination Common Sensibility. (Since his Soul is freed from the bonds of matter and space and time, his gaze can penetrate the past and the future, the realm of the corporeal and of Spirit, with equal ease.) The prophet descends to the lower plane for the good of the latter and he is compelled by the very nature of his 'descent'

to communicate to others the Verities he has directly apprehended, in the language of the sensibles (the 'material forms') which are the stuff of which the ordinary man's imagination is made. Here we can appreciate the significance of the remark of Maulana Abdul Quddus of Gangoh (quoted with approval by Iqbal¹ as marking the distinction between prophet and *wali-Allah*): 'Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.'

The prophet, then, descends to the lower plane of being for the good of the latter. The philosopher, on the contrary, has to ascend laboriously and for his own good to the higher plane of being by learning to shed with increasing success the bonds and snares of sense and corporeality. The result is that whereas the philosopher, in his statement of the Verities, has to drop as far as he can manage, the language and the forms of matter, the prophet, on the contrary, compelled as he is by the very nature of his descent, communicates the Verities he has immediately and directly apprehended in a language the people can understand, *viz.*, the language of the sensibles or 'material forms'. And since he has to

¹*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 124.

communicate the Verities to every type of man, he selects only such forms of expression as can appeal to the Soul of the ignorant layman as well as to that of one who is intellectually developed. On each individual he bestows of his Spirit, but to each he gives according to the measure of his capacity.

The prophet, then, is distinguished from the rest of mankind through his possession of a peculiar capacity, *viz.*, the capacity to receive inspiration. Our author's treatment of this quality indicates that it is something akin to Reason, and it is obvious that by Reason he does not mean merely Intellection and ratiocination, on account of which man's intelligence asserts its superiority to animal instinct and intelligence. Reason is for him, just as it is for many another philosopher influenced by Neo-Platonism, the first emanation from the Primal One. The prophet's share of/in Reason is greater than that of any other human being, and man's share is greater than that of the highest animal. That 'Reason is King and by its very nature commands obedience' is obvious according to our author, for do not animals instinctively fear and obey man and does not one man instinctively fear and obey another who is better endowed with Reason than he is? Hence it is that as soon as a prophet proclaims himself as such

to his people, the better spirits among them, *viz.*, those with a greater share of/in Reason than others at once accept his message and obey him. Inspiration, then, is the way in which Reason—*i.e.*, the first emanation from God—descends on the best of mankind, the prophets.

Inspiration, however, though the *differentia* of the prophet, is not the only quality which distinguishes him from the rest of mankind.

There are some forty such qualities, according to the orthodox, and Maskawaih appears to agree with this view though he does not enumerate them. One of these qualities, says he, is the capacity to have true dreams, but this quality the prophet has in common with some other gifted people. The ordinary man dreams because his Soul (during the repose of bodily sleep) refuses to remain idle and occupies itself with the manipulation of sensuous material stored in the memory. Such dreams are more or less fantastic and unreal. The prophet's Soul, however, turns to Reason for occupation during the period of sleep, and beholds the Verities as well as events which are yet to materialize. The result is a true dream. But this capacity to experience true dreams (which is possessed by some other gifted people also) is a gift of God and cannot be acquired.

What are the Varieties of Inspiration? Maskawaih believes that there are as many varieties as there are capacities or powers in the human Soul. These powers pertain either to Sense or to Reason. Out of the former only those powers suit as media of inspiration as are least contaminated with corporeality. Sight and hearing are two such senses because their apprehension of physical objects does not involve their coming in contact with them. That is why the prophet in the state of inspiration sometimes hears the tinkle of a bell and sometimes sees some one standing in front of him. Better than this, however, is when the Soul receives inspiration through its non-sensuous powers.

The prophet should be distinguished from the *kahin* (the oracle) and from the *mutanabbi* (the false prophet).

The prophet is the perfect objectification in the corporeal world of a perfect Form. This perfect objectification, however, is preceded and succeeded by certain imperfect objectifications of imperfect forms in the corporeal world. These are the *kahins*. The *kahin* represents a defective power which, however, is objectified in its perfection in the prophet of the age. The *kahin* feels the influx of that power in his Soul, but since the power is itself defective, it can

only express itself by means of gross sensuous media like arrows, marbles, the flight of birds, etc. Not everything, however, that he says is false, for such a man does sometimes catch fleeting glimpses of the world behind the veil of sense. But what little he does see of the Truth he cannot interpret rightly and the best that can happen to him is to be able to discover the prophet of his age and to express his faith in him.

The 'false prophet' is just an imposter. He lacks all that the prophet possesses and he dislikes all that the prophet likes. For him are only the things which suit his low nature. His ambition is to exercise sway over people like the prophet whose inspired words he quotes without coherence and understanding. He tries hard to camouflage the inherent depravity of his low nature. But he is soon found out. Prophethood cannot be aped nor can the prophet be concealed from mankind.



The end

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